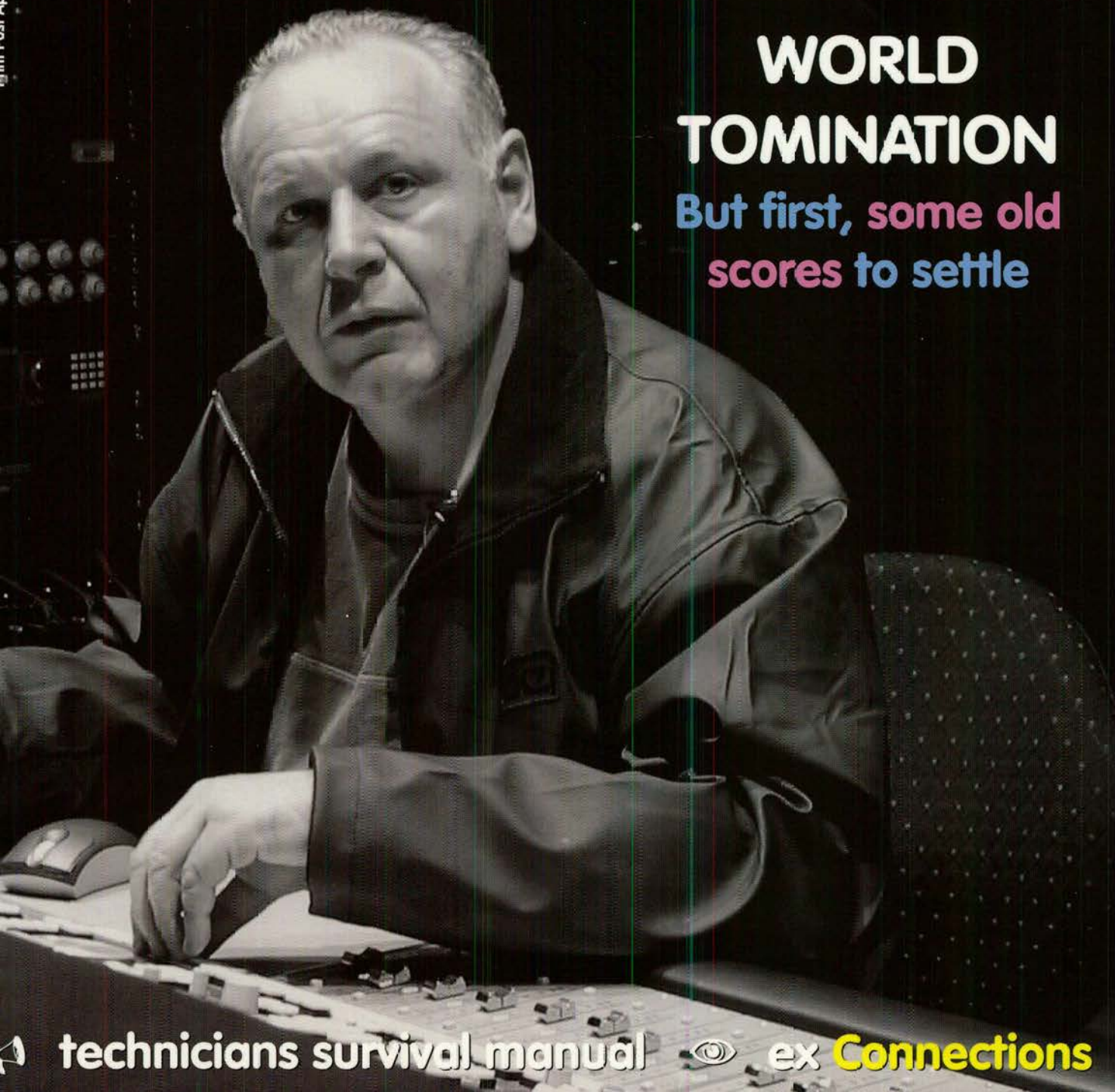


CX

WORLD TOMINATION

But first, some old
scores to settle



Get In Ear from here

PSM® 200 Personal Monitors

Your input

E2
Earphones

Wireless
Bodypack Receiver

Signal sent
to Wireless
Bodypack
Receiver

House Mixer

Wireless
TransMixer

Mix from the
House Mixer

Versatile mix control

The frequency-agile, wireless TransMixer (a wireless transmitter with two integrated channels) adds flexibility for creating your own monitor mix.



LED indicators
Input level, frequency.

Input level controls
Control the level of the mic/line inputs to help create your own mix.

Integrated mix control
Two mic/line, XLR-1/4" combo input channels for personal control of your mix.



Back Panel

XLR split outputs
Connect signals to a mixing console or other device without affecting original settings.

Quality sound

In Ear, high-fidelity, full range sound and great isolation from outside noise. Each pair comes complete with an assortment of interchangeable earphone sleeves for a personal fit.



Choose from three different sizes (Small, Medium, Large) for the best fit and sound isolation.

Sleeve options

Flex Sleeves
Reusable, pliable plastic. Allow for easy insertion.

Foam Sleeves
Compress to fit in the ear canal and expand to form a tight, quiet seal.

PRESENTING EUROPE'S LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPION LAB.GRUPPEN

MORE POWER – LESS WEIGHT – OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE



FP2200 – 2 x 650W at 4 ohms, 8kg



FP2400Q (Quad) – 4 x 380W at 4 ohms, 8.5kg



FP2600 – 2 x 840W at 4 ohms, 8kg



FP3400 – 2 x 1500W at 4 ohms, 10kg



FP6400 – 2 x 2300W at 4 ohms, 10kg

Lab.Gruppen are based in Sweden and have been manufacturing touring grade switchmode power amplifiers since 1987. They are one of the leading brands in Europe and have recently expanded distribution to include Australia and the USA. The flagship of the range, the FP6400, delivers 2300W per channel into 4 ohms and an incredible 3200W per channel into 2 ohms. It weighs only 10kg, is 2RU in height and only 347mm deep.

While the power to weight ratio is an important feature, it is the sonic quality of Lab.Gruppen that has seen many users change from both conventional amplifiers and other brands of switchmodes to the Lab.Gruppen FP series. Here are just some of the local production companies who are now using Lab.Gruppen.



Norwest Productions (Sydney & Brisbane)



Brisbane Sound (Brisbane)



Oceania Audio (Melbourne)



Soging Connections (Brisbane)



Bump Productions (Sydney)



Totaly Sound (Bunbury)



Lake Audio (Newcastle)



Megavision (Perth)

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THE 500 HOUR DISCO COLLECTION



EFP/5H

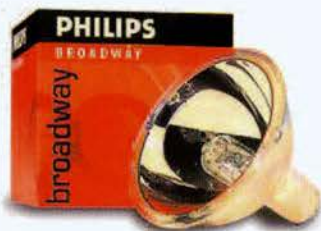
12V 100W GZ6.35 (500 Hour)

EFR/5H

15V 150W GZ6.35 (500 Hour)

ELC/5H

24V 250W GX5.3 (500 Hour)



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In order to deliver the perfect balance of lamp life and light output, Philips delivers you the 500 hour collection.

Designed especially for disco, moving beam and effects luminaires.

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for technicians!**

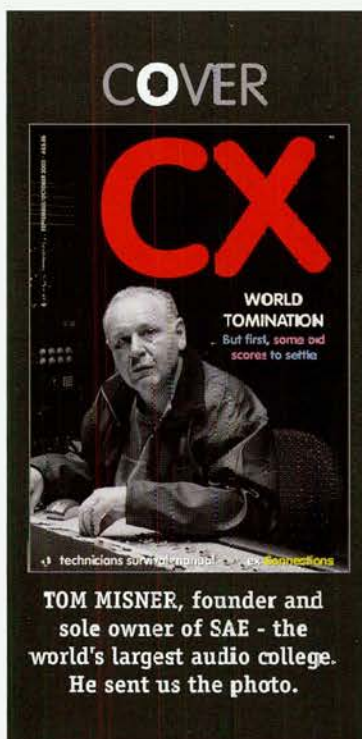
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VISION • STAGING**

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**TOM MISNER, founder and
sole owner of SAE - the
world's largest audio college.
He sent us the photo.**

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Juliusmedia

TOM MISNER'S MILLIONS

500 friends (plus Julius Grafton) were flown to the opening of the new SAE complex at Byron Bay. It would have been worth a couple of pages, but then Tom unveiled his book - The Misner Factor. Amazing revelations pour forth, leading to our major feature on an extraordinary guy who just doesn't seem to care what anyone thinks! Billionaire, fanatic, collector of cars and blondes. Obviously this is the way to amass a fortune. Read on!

Page 24

WE WILL ROCK YOU

The critics panned it, we saw it in London, it rocks! Now the first touring version has opened in Melbourne. We talk to the designers.....

Page 12

SYDNEY THEATRE

Beautiful building, where everything works like it should. A good case for consultation, and a model for how to do it right. We detail it, starting.....

Page 42

THOSE DAVIES BOYS

Lighting's unlikely couple share the reasons for the success of Chameleon Touring Systems.

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MAC 2000 WASH

We light the sky with the latest moving wash from Martin, the company who presently do no wrong.

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RWTV

How a club spent a million dollars on a TV station with PLASMA screens all over, and will earn it all back again. A good idea!

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\$1 million will buy you.....

- A new rehearsal studio complex (see Soundcheck, page 62)
- 75 Mac 2000's (Chameleon bought 15C. See page 52)
- A complete TV station (See RWTV, page 49)
- 20 Iveco Daily maxi-vans (See Motoring, page 64)

\$40 million will buy you.....

- The world's newest audio college (SAE, page 24)
- One beautiful new theatre (Sydney Theatre, page 42)
- Juliusmedia! (Just kidding, not for sale!)

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EX CONNECTIONS MAGAZINE

#4. SEPT/OCTOBER 2003

CX 5

Packed With Power!

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PMX ClubPack PA System Package

With 3x 200 watt power amps the Ashton PMX ClubPack PA system is packed with power and great features! Just \$1795.00!

The package includes:

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 - 200 watt RMS
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The all in one pack makes set up of the Ashton PMX ClubPack convenient and quick.

With the availability of plug-and-play add-ons, expandability is easy and inexpensive.

Check our new range of wireless products including Body Pack, Lapel & Headset - To be released mid September at the 2003 AMAC Tradeshow, available at your local Ashton dealer soon!



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We learn and adapt. Or we perish

▼ COLLAPSING STAGES

The collapse of three stage systems in the last few weeks has really drawn attention to the way our industry works, but there is nowhere near as much scrutiny as there would be if someone had been killed. To our knowledge, there has been no major structural failure resulting in deaths in the entrainment industry in recent years. And none of any note ever before.

Last summer the roof of an outdoor stage at a Chili Peppers concert broke during setup at Adelaide. Most of the load was at the ground, and it could be safely derigged. The Justin Timberlake collapse in Atlantic City was when the mothergrid was almost fully raised. The triffecta was the outdoor Nebraska festival stage which was flattened by a downburst of wind - this was the closest to disaster since 50 seconds earlier the stage was full of performers, who ran when they saw the front coming.

The message is, more than ever we need qualified crew and in particular, qualified and vigilant riggers. The outdoors Chili Peppers failure resulted in the show shifting venues - the production manager was not prepared to bring in a crane to take the weight of the roof. He simply said, safety is paramount. No one argued with him.

▼ CREW QUALIFICATIONS

The next hurdle to be felt as our industry restructures to accommodate The New (Safety) Business Order will be crew qualifications. At this time there are virtually NO specifically qualified sound, lighting or audio visual technicians working across the industry in the region.

Bad news: spiralling public liability insurance costs and conditions; along with ever tightening safety laws; mean that COMPETENT people must be in control of installations and shows. Being a licensed electrician, or rigger, means only you are deemed competent in your core activity.

Like others, Juliusmedia has seen this coming and has become a Government Registered Training Organisation (RTO) - the same status as a technical college, or TAFE. We are now a Production College.

It's our belief that a rash of similar training organisations will appear in the next year or two and start to offer a confusing variety of qualifications.

The qualifications that matter are Certificate Three, and Certificate Four, from the newly revised Entertainment Industry Training Package. Juliusmedia were, like

many others, on various industry review committees for the new Package.

A Certificate Three is a starter qualification, giving intensive training in sound or lighting. The Certificate Four follows on, it has internships, along with extension electives and proficiency training. *Certificate Four is the professional, working technician standard qualification.*

What is exciting - very exciting - is that the NEWLY revised qualification ladder has several great Advanced Diplomas which follow on from a Certificate Four. It gives people a higher level of qualification to obtain later on, down the track. Best of all, no duplications - you don't ever re-do any module or unit you have already passed!

Existing tech's can skip training and get a qualification via a Recognised Prior Learning (RPL), or Recognised Current Competency (RCC) assessment. Like all other RTO's, we are obliged to offer this. Unlike some RTO's we are happy to do so, and will provide the new qualifications at a low cost to working crew who meet the established standards.

Soon all professional working crew and technicians will be Certificate 4 qualified.

We are honoured, delighted and excited to be a part of this process. It matters a lot.

▼ STUDIO QUALIFICATIONS

Unlike the live sound and event industry, where almost no one has a relevant qualification, there are very many qualified studio engineers drifting around on the planet.

I've been noticing the difference between

Soon, insurers will demand every tech be qualified

studio engineers and live engineers. The studio comes wired and patched. The control room is acoustically treated. A studio engineer can sculpt and tailor sound to within a hair's breadth. It's a fun place!

But being trained within a recording studio doesn't equip you for life outside the control room. These are different worlds.

In recent times we've re-trained a number of studio school graduates who have needed real world help with setup, patching, equalisation and acoustics for live sound.

It's been cool to see/hear the creativity many people have unleashed doing their major project as part of their studio qualification. And it's great to see them recognise they need specialist training in live sound, in addition to their studio qualification.

Julius Grafton, Editor

Competition

We publish a couple of emails this month about the production and staging industry eating itself in Brisbane and in Adelaide. We had many more.

It is a story as old as time.

Business gets tougher as sky-high public liability insurance costs force rigging charges up by 25% before Christmas.

If you take a fee, you compete on the open market. You are a business. Many of our readers are a small business.

The recently formed Entertainment Technology Association (ETA) is here to help: see 'Business' on page 90. ETA is directly supported by subscribing to CX - subscribers become a member automatically.

Pictures

A note about photos:

SAE's Tom Misner supplied all media with one CD full of colour images for the SAE opening (feature, this issue). We used some and know they WILL turn up elsewhere.

We then asked Tom for some unique images, and he then supplied a bunch that I understand to be exclusive for CX. The cover shot was one of these. Our fingers are crossed.

Sometimes, such as with a couple in our last issue, we use 'supplied' images only to find to our horror they are also used in other magazines.

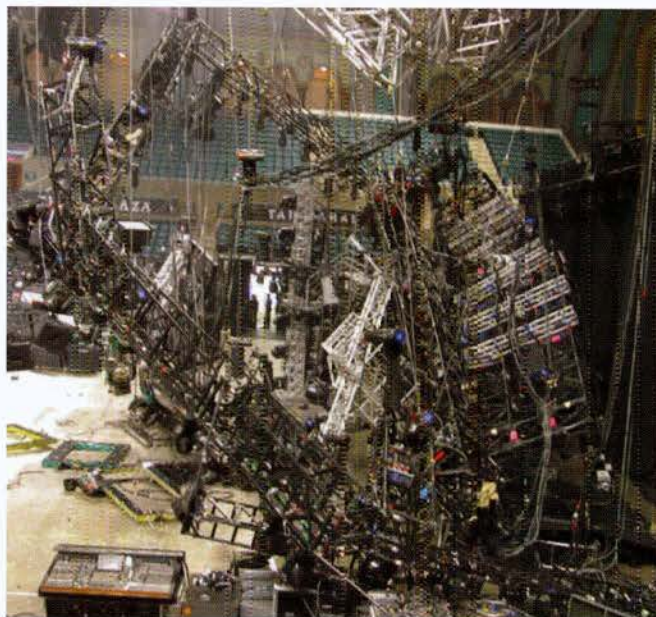
We ask for exclusive pictures.

Half a million

We have a brief email text news we send to 8,000+ people every week or so. We encourage you to join! Your email address is safe with us, we guarantee we will never give it away.

To join, all you do is email news-subscribe@juliusmedia.com or do it at www.juliusmedia.com where our daily news lives.

We have over 500,000 hits and 90,000 page views a month which is really helping increase subscriptions to CX magazine!

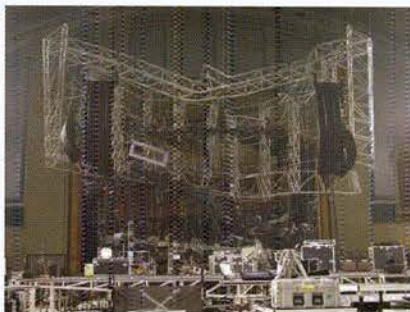


ALMOST DISASTER

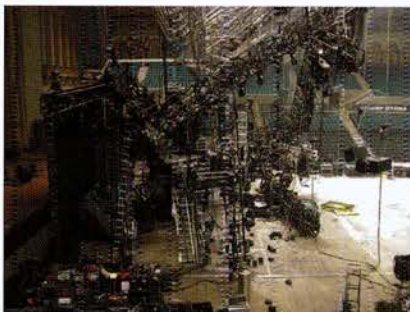
Flown equipment for a Justin Timberlake and Christine Aguilera concert fell to the arena floor during setup for a show in Atlantic City recently. The crew were raising the mother grid, with lighting vision and line array all underhung.

Breaking noises gave the 30+ crew time to escape, no serious injuries were reported.

Once the rig was in the air, the stage would be wheeled under. It takes no imagination to understand the outcome of a rig failure like this over the top of a performing act and audience, who would not hear the creaking noises just before the crack of breaking steel.



View from FOH, across the stage which wasn't wheeled in place.



EV Sx300 clone ban

Selling copies of EV Sx300 and Sx100 plastic loudspeaker boxes will land an importer in hot water, says parent co, Telex. They have won legal actions in the Netherlands against a couple of firms there, and are expanding their drive to (rightly) protect their copyright. Selling a trademarked or patented product leaves a distributor open to action later.

DL1 from HES

The Catalyst concept expands. Catalyst DL1 is the second generation offering in the Catalyst family of High End products. The original Catalyst combined a media server and moving mirror light with an off-the-shelf video projector.

The new Catalyst DL1 puts a digital engine in a package that has the look and feel of a moving light and the versatility of a moving projector.

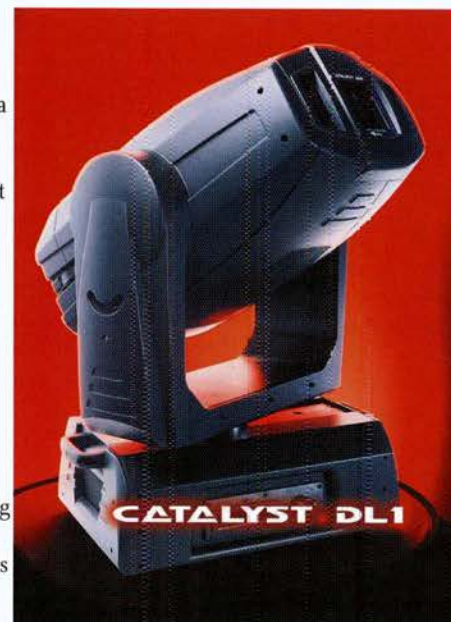
Users are able to take images from DVDs, videos and other types of media and display them onto a stage, wall, prop, screen or a set – with complete control over image size and shape.

The Catalyst DL1 also provides the ability to project Digital Aerials and provide uniform color and beam intensity. Unlike conventional moving lights where the beam field has peaks and valleys, digital lighting creates a flat, even field with a high contrast ratio.

Unlike many products launched like this, HES claim to be actually shipping the DL1 now! • www.highend.com

Neumann go mid-range

Neumann's new studio condenser TLM 127 has a capsule and electronic circuitry based on the TLM 103 – but at a mid-range price point. Thus the TLM 127 also has an extremely low self-noise level of just 7 dB(A) with a simultaneous max. SPL of 140 dB. The TLM 127 will be offered in a set together with an elastic suspension. RRP: A\$3699



GrandMA at Resolution X

Melbourne-based hire and production company Resolution X has recently added a fully-expanded (4,096 channel) grandMA console to its hire inventory. The grandMA was selected by Resolution X to meet its

growing need for an all-singing, all-dancing moving light console.

In addition to grandMA's flexibility, power, and stability as a programming platform, Resolution X's Tim Hall is very pleased with how quickly and painlessly Hog and AVO program-

mers are able to pick-up operations on the console, and how simple it is proving to learn from scratch.

One of the grandMA's first big jobs since arriving at Resolution X, has been at the studios of HSV 7 Melbourne, for Network Seven's latest game show "Deal or No Deal".

On this production the grandMA is outputting five DMX streams to a multitude of Martin and Clay Paky moving lights, in addition to the studio dimmers. The console has been used in conjunction with a wireless PDA, a floor computer, and an integrated Ethernet data network.



Tannoy i9

Small, slim and full range, that's the brief for the new i9 speaker column. It is loaded with 4 x 5" drivers plus 3 x tweeters. Switchable between low impedance and 70V/100V operation with a built-in 60W transformer, the frequency response of the i9 covers 80Hz to 30kHz, with a sensitivity of 93dB (1W/m). Contact Syntec International 1800 648628 for your nearest dealer.

EV's New Wireless

E.V. have stepped up their wireless microphone range with the new RE2 system (pictured in use below).

RE2 is very similar in appearance to the RE1. It also has the Clearscan feature that won EV a lot of buddies, because it means the receiver will do a 'look-see' to find best available frequencies, saving you the time and trouble yourself. In the busy spectrum world this is a timesaver.

Once the receiver locks onto a suitable frequency, you just grab the transmitter (mic or belt-pack) and set that transmitting frequency.

EV have got the cost out of the RE2 by dumping the USB port (which is used for software addressing of the unit) and meeting the market with slightly lower performance specs than the RE1. For example, RE1 does a fine job in the low frequency dept by reaching down to 30Hz. RE2 goes as low as 50Hz – in itself, good performance for wireless. The bandwidth of an RE2 system is quoted at 15Khz-full frequency response.

Altinex 16 x 16

ALTINEX has released video and audio 16 x 16 matrix cards for the MultiTasker modular AV system.

The MT105-112 is a high-resolution video 16x16 matrix switcher card that supports composite NTSC/PAL/SECAM video, S-Video, HDTV, and computer video. It can perform Vertical Interval Switching, and features ground loop isolation on all inputs.

The MT105-119 is a 16x16 Sync matrix switcher card that is used for routing separate H and V sync signals. Multiple cards are easily grouped together to form S-Video, Y-Pb-Pr, RGsB, RGbS and RGBHV matrix switchers.

Finally, the MT110-104 is a 16x16 Balanced Stereo Audio Matrix switcher card that provides 16 balanced stereo audio inputs and 16 balanced stereo audio outputs. It has individual gain control for each input.

Mipro's new mini PA

Mipro have developed a new lightweight, powerful portable public address system. The MA705 weighs under 1Kg and



delivers 50 watts rms. Perfect for school's, the Mipro MA705 can operate from mains power or in-built rechargeable batteries. The unit has XLR and line inputs, a line output and an extension speaker output. www.audiotel.com.au

Chroma is Brighter

The Pulsar ChromaBank is now 30% brighter than before, and Existing models can be upgraded free. ChromaBank contains 12 ChromaHeart packaged together in one linear lighting source featuring a total of 960 LEDs. It has a built in ChromaZone to power and control the unit, offering numerous internal effects and chases that can operate in stand-alone mode or with an external DMX/PMX controller. The fixtures use very little power and generate minimal heat.



ChromaBanks colour wash effect is flawless on sets and cycs, and very effective when installed beneath glass floors or walls.

MH4 at MECC

Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre has always been a Soundcraft venue, and when recently upgrading they installed the new Soundcraft MH4. • Reviewed in CX 1.

New Installation Speakers

Australian Monitor's new Install 10 and 30 offer sleek lines and curves ensuring they are suitable for most decors.

An integral and discrete bracket makes for easy mounting in an almost any installation.

The Install 10 is available in black or white. It features a 3 1/2 inch woofer and a tweeter while the 30 has a 4 inch woofer and a tweeter. They work at 8 ohms or 100V line.

www.australianmonitor.com.au



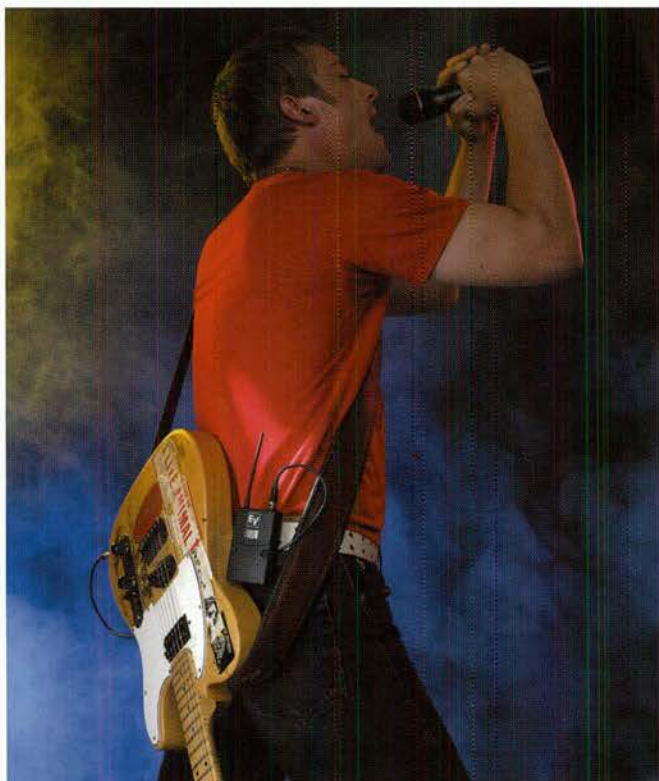
DiGiCo V2 software

The hot new D5 console is on Version 2 software, allowing four-worksurface networking, new security modes, more processing options, enhanced snapshots, improved bank layouts and extra monitoring.

FOH and Monitor consoles can share inputs with optional gain-tracking, and can each connect via ethernet to a second redundant 'mirror' console. Used like this, the 'mirror' desks copy all live show control, allowing fail-safe recovery with no audio loss.

Enhancements have been made to mute groups, input channel delay, dB readouts, talkback sources, talk buttons, MIDI message editing, and much more.

DiGiCo director Dave Webster comments: "We've spent the last year listening. Our response to that has been to implement the changes".



IJS take ODC

A sensible move in an over-crowded Brisbane production market: IJS Logistics has purchased ODC Productions Pty Ltd. This adds 24 Nexo Alpha E cabs to their inventory. By purchasing ODC, IJS will be able to offer their clients a diverse inventory of over 300 cabs, including EAW, Nexo & RCF. • www.ijs.com.au

Audace for Audio Telex

Audace Ltd, manufacturers of the Intelliplate programmable control system for audio-visual installations, has appointed Audio Telex Communications Pty Ltd of Sydney to distribute its products exclusively in Australia and New Zealand. The deal was brokered by Audace's global distribution partner Comsec International.

Intelliplate is a programmable control system for audio, video, lighting and other systems. • www.intelliplate.com

Balanced Technology

Balanced Technology is a new distribution company based in South Australia who have announced they have been appointed the exclusive Australian distributors for Brown's Precision Welding, Littlite, and Enttec products outside of Victoria.

Managing Director, Kristian Gardiner says "I am immensely proud to have such a well respected and proven range. When combined with our accessories, we really have something for almost everybody!"

Balanced Technology also stocks a full range of accessories, from hook clamps to cable straps.

Contact Kristian Gardiner on 1300 305 832

FBT GETS TAGGED

Fast moving Italian manufac-

turer FBT has appointed Technical Audio Group as its exclusive distributor for the Australian market.

Well respected for their premium MaxX powered speakers the new appointment coincides with a major expansion of the FBT range including the addition of a second series of powered speakers and a complete line-up of mini mixers.

FBT's new P-Series compact mini mixers offer 4 to 16 input channels with on-board digital effects and optional amplifier packs. Further additions to the speaker range include 10, 12 and 15" powered baltic birch ply sub-woofers.

• www.tag.com.au

Day 2 Night Moved

Day 2 Night Pty Ltd have relocated to:

Unit 33/2 Railway Pde
Lidcombe, NSW
Australia, 2141

Phone: +612-9749-5244

Fax: +612-9749-5433

• www.day2night.com.au

Compact Martin Line Array

Martin Audio - the UK maker of loudspeaker systems - debut a new compact W8LC line array. Though compact, the W8LC gives full-bandwidth and can often be used without subwoofers.

W8LC (pictured above) is a 3-way all horn-loaded device with a 12" diameter 3" voice coil neodymium bass driver reflex loaded to provide extended LF output.

Mid range is covered by two 6.5" horn-loaded drivers working together to maintain a 90 degree horizontal coverage pattern right up to the 2.5kHz crossover point.

Three 1" drivers mounted on in-line slots handle high frequencies. • \$15,995.

• www.tag.com.au



Robe at Twin Towns

Mick James of Venutech (Venue Technologies) has specified Robe Show Lighting ColorMix 250 ATs and Spot 575 XT wash fixtures for a new installation at the Twin Towns Services Club in Australia.

The venue provides 6 levels of entertainment, dining and leisure as well as hotel accommodation and is operational 24 hours a day.

The Robe kit is installed in the Images lounge bar.

Venutech chose the Robe products because they are well featured and easy to use and install.

Robe is distributed by ULA, headquartered on the Gold Coast in South East Queensland.

MAC 250 Entour

Built from the ground up for greater performance and featuring an all-new look, the new MAC 250 Entour (pictured, right) is the latest version of Martin Professional's 250-watt automated profile spot.

The Entour includes a number of important advancements including a superior optical system and new achromatic lens system for brighter output and unsurpassed quality imaging, while all new gobo designs and an

additional gobo wheel provide an abundance of new graphical effects. Other improvements include enhanced movement, a specially designed dimming system and a market tested, modular design that users will find pleasingly familiar.

The latest in pan and tilt motor technology produces both smooth and ultra-rapid movement, making the new MAC 250 fixtures the fastest moving heads that Martin has ever produced - and faster than competitive fixtures.

Movement range is 540 degrees of pan x 257 degrees of tilt.

If knocked out of position, a high-speed, automatic reset function realigns the fixture in seconds.



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Jerry Bruckheimer's Perfect Theater Experience



"When I watch the combination of D-ILA and D-VHS in my screening room, the clarity and color of the image are almost as good as the original film, and better than what I often see in theaters. I am thrilled to have the JVC system at work and at home."

JERRY BRUCKHEIMER, PRODUCER

Armageddon, Beverly Hills Cop, Black Hawk Down, Con Air, Coyote Ugly, CSI, CSI Miami, Enemy of the State, Flashdance, Gone in 60 Seconds, Kangaroo Jack, Pearl Harbor, Pirates of the Caribbean, The Rock, Top Gun



D-ILA Projector DLA-SX21



Pro D-VHS HDTV Recorder SR-DV400US

Jerry Bruckheimer's Perfect Theater Experience is a combination of D-ILA and D-VHS, only available from JVC. JVC's D-ILA projectors provide silky, color-rich images that — even close to the screen — do not show pixelization. Three models of D-ILA projectors are available for home theater, screening room or professional theater applications with native resolutions up to 2048 x 1536. JVC's D-VHS is currently the highest quality and most economical way to record and playback true high definition. No other format, including DVD comes close. To hear Jerry Bruckheimer describe the Perfect Theater Experience in his own words or for more information about D-ILA and D-VHS visit www.jvc.com/pro.

D-ILA® **DVHS**®

For more information contact JVC Professional Australia
NSW phone (02) 9370 8841 VIC phone (03) 8756 7852
email jvcpro@hagemeyer.com.au website www.jvc-australia.com

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JVC
PROFESSIONAL



They did! Queen musical rocks

Guaranteed to blow your mind – We Will Rock You opens in Melbourne

By Mandy Jones

For the last 15 months one of the hottest theatre tickets on London's West End has been for the Queen musical *We Will Rock You*.

Written by English comedian Ben Elton and created in collaboration with original Queen members Brian May and Roger Taylor, the rock musical is a celebration of the music of Queen and a tribute to the band's showman lead singer Freddie Mercury.

Using 24 Queen songs to weave together an original plot, *We Will Rock You* is a futuristic fable set in a time where music has been homogenised and rock is banned. Under the control of the evil Globalsoft Corporation kids are fed a diet of synthesised pop, and rebels are sought out and brainwashed. Without giving too much of the story away, a hero emerges and discovers that the power of rock will set them all free.

Melbourne's Regent Theatre has recently become home to the second production of *We Will Rock You*.

The \$7 million production re-unites the original creative team of music supervisors Brian May and Roger Taylor, and author and now director Ben Elton. They are joined by the original design team of production

designer Mark Fisher (Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, U2), lighting designer Willie Williams (U2, REM, David Bowie) and sound designer Bobby Aitken (Mamma Mia, Blast!, Grease). The show runs with an operational crew of 45, an eight piece band, and a cast of 33 performers.

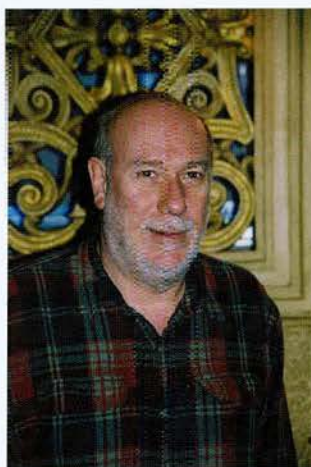
Following in the footsteps of its somewhat lightweight predecessor *Mamma Mia*, *We Will Rock You* is anticipated to run well into 2004 and from Melbourne will embark on a national tour.

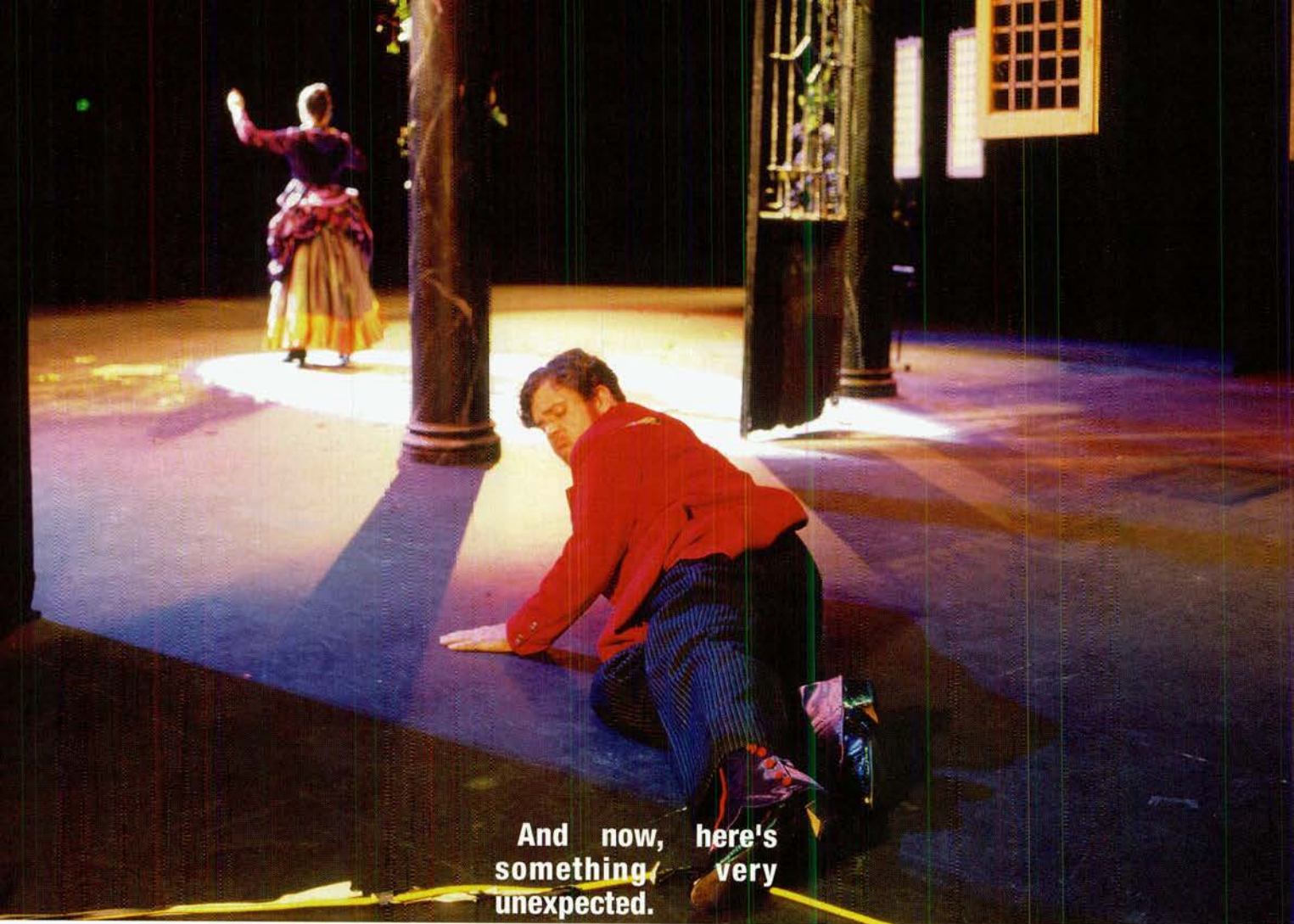
Cass Jones is technical director of the Melbourne production and has been involved in the project since January.

"What I normally do in this country is reproduce shows from London and New York whether it's *Miss Saigon*, *Mamma Mia* or whatever. But with this one, because it's the first production outside the original and because the original was in some ways a very organic thing, this has been very much like working on a new show."

Cass explains the entire set was re-designed by the production designer and built at the Adelaide Festival Centre Scenery & Engineering Workshops, and many of the overall approaches to the technical aspects of the show were refined from the original.

Cass Jones (Technical Director)



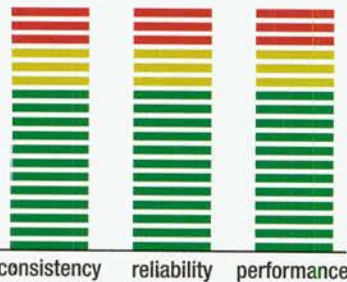


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"It has meant working with the designers very closely but also with the creative team to find the best ways of making the show work. It's been a huge challenge but it has also been very exciting to work on what is essentially from a technical point of view, a new show."

With more productions due to open in Spain, Canada, Germany, Austria and the US, Cass says it is likely that this Melbourne production will be the template for all future touring productions.

"It's been eight and a half weeks from the start of bump in to opening night and I'm very pleased with how it has gone. It has flowed very well and we're where we need to be. This isn't a particularly difficult show, it's just that all areas are extreme - the lighting is extreme, the sound is extreme, the video is extreme. It's a very big show in a very small space, with very high expectations from the creative team. It's an extreme combination."

For Production Designer Mark Fisher, the biggest changes in the staging of the production in Melbourne have been the placement of the live band, and the reduced size of the video wall. The live band have

been relocated from the side of stage as it was for the London production to the rear of the Regent's stage on a raised platform, and are kept concealed by drapes for most of the performance.

Mark explains the repositioning of the band has meant set pieces that truck on and off can be larger as they no longer need to clear the band platform at side of stage.

"It has allowed the Wembley Gates which are the background to the final scene to be much larger and bolder. Having the band at the back has also allowed Ben to be more theatrical and to do things that are quite his style."

The main elements of the set are a large truss rig which creates a rock-meets-theatre proscenium frame to the action. Additional vertical sections of truss are flown in at various stages of the show and the effect is awesome.

The Ga Ga world is established by a large platform of white steps with white statues lined up in fascist pose. The Wasteland is a pile of wrecked cars surrounded by cyclone



Mark Fisher (Production Designer) and Wil'ie Williams (Lighting Designer)

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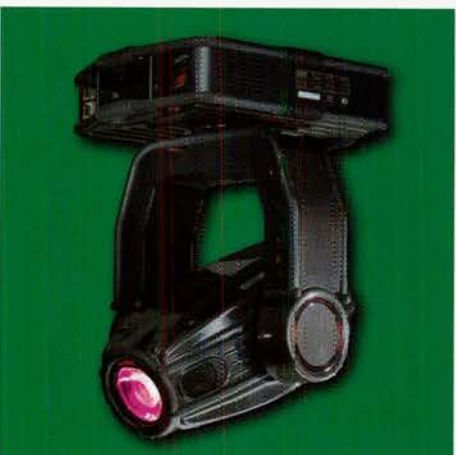
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Cutting one song saved \$300,000 since the LED screens didn't need to fly around

PUNTER'S PERSPECTIVE:

V-Dosc, video screens and lasers aside, *We Will Rock You* is a highly entertaining show. Ben Elton has written a clever script based around the music and lyrics of Queen, and as with all of Ben's writing, his sardonic wit is spot on. And it's good to see that as usual he has done his homework by including local references such as the MCG, Tim Tams, John Farnham and The Wiggles.

Fans of Queen will undoubtedly enjoy the show more than the uninitiated, especially with so many in-jokes and references made to their songs and lyrics in the dialogue.

Even the names of the characters give hints about the storyline, for example the hero, the prophesised dreamer whose name is Galileo, teams up with a young girl by the name of Scaramouche, so straight away you just know he's going to ask her to 'do the fandango' with him. And they do.

The lyrics of *Bohemian Rhapsody* take on a whole new meaning in this context as the characters search for the last remaining guitar on the planet - "the mighty axe of a great and hairy guitar god".

(continued next page)

fencing and broken streetlights which then transforms into the Heartbreak Hotel – the dishevelled world of the Bohemians.

"The only stylistic proposition in the show is that you have this very bright and clean Ga Ga Globalsoft world, and then you have this very broken dystopian *Bladerunner* type future where the Bohemians live so it needs a different physicality to create that."

A large elevator at the front of the stage is used to bring small set pieces such as a transit van and a Harley Davidson on and off stage, as well as to create a clever illusion with the signature throne and desk set-piece of the Killer Queen. As the Queen's 1 foot high throne trucks downstage it is positioned over one of the elevators where a prong extends beneath it and, after a few tense moments in the minds of the crew, lifts the desk 8 feet into the air with the performers on top of it - a neat trick.

Video plays a key role in the show in establishing Ga Ga land and the omnipresence of the Globalsoft Corporation. The screen is used to show live video of the Killer Queen in huge proportions on the screen in conversation with characters on stage, as well as to establish location and theme through virtual scenic backdrops.

"We had twice as much video screen in London as we do here. Basically this is 8 feet high x 32 feet across, and in London it's 16 feet high x 32 feet across and was made up of eight separate panels that could move

Bobby Aitken
(Sound Designer)



around, whereas here it's just one big screen that moves up and down, so that's the biggest change."

The LED screen is supplied by Blitz Vision out of London and comprises 80 Lighthouse LVP1010D type 10mm LED panels. The screen runs off a Dataton Watchout system and has an operational crew of two. The screen size is achieved by four panels joined together to create the 32 foot length. Each panel can display a single source or four individual sources, moving or still.

"It's not a very elaborate video system here – in fact they devote a lot of their time to moaning about it not being as good as the London one," Mark says amusingly.

He explains it was purely for financial reasons that only one video screen was specified for the Melbourne production.

"We've been able to restage the big numbers that used the two screens and the only one that I would say that really loses something is 'One Vision' because that's where we did our big move with all eight pieces of the screen moving around into different positions which is quite sexy, but you can only do that once a show anyway because after you've moved all the screens who gives a shit anyway? So it's a gag we



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don't have here but we save around \$300,000 in the process, so no regrets there.

Mark and Willie created the animation and footage shown on the screen in Mark's London design studio.

"We had to reformat the video for this production but it's all the same video we created for the original production. I did all the original animation of things like the Ga Ga kids, the exploding Stonehenge and the Globalsoft logos. The edited composite of video games and other stuff like that was Willie.

"Interestingly, even though it's far grander to have a much bigger screen, I don't think the show has lost anything. Willie and I were both very pleased we were able to reformat the video, and there were a few numbers where we didn't use the whole screen anyway. Less than half of the numbers were compromised by not having the two levels of screens so in that sense it wasn't a particularly big change."

Lighting designer Willie Williams says that the Melbourne production has meant a re-design of around half of his design from the original show. Willie says re-designing for this production was an opportunity to make the design more portable.

"We spent more time on the Melbourne show because we were aware that this show is what will become the model for what goes

everywhere else in the world. We know it's a hit and that it will tour, so now we have to look at ways to make it portable in the way that the London show really isn't."

Willie's rig reflects both rock and theatre influences by having a huge conventional rig providing coverage of the stage and set pieces, and a large intelligent rig for special effects and to give it that authentic rock look.

The Melbourne show is the prototype touring show. London wasn't designed to tour

reflected in the nature of the personalities involved in putting the show together. At one end of the spectrum you have Brian and Roger from Queen who are 80s rock heads to the max, and at the other end you have many other members of the cast and crew who are from a legit theatre background, so it meets somewhere in the middle."

The intelligent rig includes 25 x Martin Mac 2000, 16 x Martin Mac 2000 Performance, 4 x Studio Colors and 16 x 8 lamp DHA Digital Lightcurtains.

"I chose the Mac 2000s partly from a budget point of view and also for practicalities because if we're going to do this show all around the world Martin are fairly ubiquitous. I chose a Whole Hog II for control for the same reason. We were planning to experiment with the Whole Hog III but Flying Pig recommended we hold off for the time being."

Willie incorporated Digital Light Curtains

"The show is a combination of 50% theatre approach and 50% rock approach, and that's



Punter's Perspective (cont)

But even those who aren't Queen fans will still enjoy the show for what it is - a celebration of rock by a talented young cast and a timely warning about the danger of manufactured music and artists. - Mandy Jones

FOOTNOTE: I saw the London production - we sat at the front - and yes: the flying LED walls were a magic moment. But what stuck most in my mind was the meeting of rock and theatre, the FAT sound, big lights and the neat and cheeky choreography. It has it all. A fun show, no matter what the critics say!

-Julius Grafton

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into his design after being introduced to them by his associate Gerry Amies. Having never used them before he said they were incredibly useful in the rig and he planned on using them in future designs.

The conventional rig includes 204 x Source 4 profiles, 20 x Par 64, 46 x Source 4 Pars, 24 x DWE (4x1), 4 x DWE (8x1), assorted birdies, and 102 scrollers for Par 64s, Source 4 Pars and Profiles. Other fixtures include 30 custom police beacons, 2 x Studio Due Spaceflowers, 20 x D300 Diversitronic strobes, 2 x 36" mirror balls with custom floor yokes, and 480 Star Strobes spaced at 300mm intervals on the exposed truss.

The design also features two lasers supplied by Excitement Technology which are used to create cones of laser light in which the rebels are trapped by the police.

"It's interesting because the lasers are not terribly high power but when we get the smoke right and when they're not competing with a lot of light they're very effective. We have two on this show – one in the roof above the proscenium and one mounted in the rig, and they've actually been quite simple to use. Lasers are usually pretty complex things to work into a regular show and of course you've got to deal with the laser company who invariably have their own way of working, but it's been good and we get plenty of mileage out of them."

Willie explains that Ben's script is essentially a film script in the way that the action moves from place to place so quickly. When scene changes go well and it segue-ways well into another scene Ben refers to it as becoming more like a movie. To help inform the audience where they are,

Willie uses colour to evoke particular moods or with reference to particular characters.

"Because the laser is green all the Police scenes have a green tinge to them, and the underground scenes are all very orange with a sense of bonfires burning somewhere off in the wings. In Ga Ga land the colours are a sickly pastel sugary pink for this perfect world.

"We're less strict about it now but originally Mark and I were quite clear that the video only exists in the Ga Ga world so when we're with the Killer Queen or the Ga Ga kids or on any of those big production numbers because that's their virtual world. The original idea was when we went underground or where with the Bohemians there wouldn't be any video because they don't buy into that, but there are a couple of scenes now where we use the video screen as scenery which I'm very happy about. It was something we wanted to develop a lot more in the London show but it didn't really happen so it's great we've been able to develop it further here. As always, Mark and I have collaborated on pretty much every level which is always great. Obviously on all the video content and because the video screen puts out so much light it's a very major consideration in lighting a show."

A seasoned rock LD, Willie reveals he still finds working on theatre shows to be an entirely different experience, in particular when it comes to the programming.

"The biggest difference being that when you're putting a rock show or an installation together, the programming is generally done in the middle of the night because that's the only time you can get. So it's usually quite a private if not lonely process

Of course you have to deal with the laser company.....



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with your couple of assistants in a gigantic stadium and you're the only three people in the building. Whereas of course in theatre it's such a public process and for a while it really took some getting used to – the fact that you're programming and there's something like 100 people in the room waiting for you to finish. It took me some time to realise that's ok, that's the way it works and nobody's getting annoyed that it's going on.

"The quantity of people on stage is a mixed blessing. In many ways it's much easier because the act of lighting a show and how important it is, is really recognised within the theatre process so time is allotted and so many people are involved and invested in what you are doing. Whereas in designing a rock show you sort of have to do it by stealth while no-one else is looking, and get the focus done between drum checks."

Sound designer Bobby Aitken had heard many bad reports about the acoustics at the Regent Theatre so it was a pleasant surprise when he arrived at the theatre and found the characteristics of the room actually suited the show. The principal sound system in Bobby's design is an L'Acoustic V-Dosc.

"There are 21 elements in the system – the nearfield boxes are dV-Dosc and in the centre are ARCS which provide a centre vocal fill. It's a pretty normal left-right system although it's a pretty big system for a theatre show. There's a lot of vocal localisation in the centre because there's a lot of music but there's a lot of dialogue as well.

For front fills I use d&b E3s which are hidden behind stage, and there are lots of EAW JF80 surrounds on both sides."

Bobby says the loudspeaker elements are fairly classic for rock and roll concert sound. Sub-bass is used a lot for effect in the show, and also to get the weight into the music.

"Queen's music is quite weighty and it needs a lot of that majestic bottom end so there are 12 big double 18" sub-woofers. Half of them are L'Acoustic SB218s and the other half are d&b B2s."

The FOH console is a Cadac and with 110 inputs, Cadac's automation program SAM is used to run the show. Bobby explains there are lots of sound effects and multi-track playback in the show which are all handled by G Type software. Sound effects are fired off Akai Z8 samplers and a broadband connection is installed at the control position so that more sound effects can be downloaded as required.

"We spent months in London compiling all the sound effects, and because our director Ben changes things all the time we can download sound effects daily and edit them.

It makes such a difference being able to do that from the theatre – before that we'd have been down to a studio dicking about for days."

Being a show about Queen's music the band has to sound good, and even more importantly, the guitar has to sound authentic.

"The guitarist in the band plays Brian May guitars with Vox AC30 amps. To achieve that distinctive Brian May sound the amplifiers have to be fully driven so we have a couple of little soundproof boxes off to the side where the amplifiers live so they can do what they do. We monitor send them back to the headphones of the guitarist. It's pretty hard for the band, especially the guitarists because they're used to hearing it all around them. We also keep drums in a fairly padded room in order to keep down the amount of spill to stage.

"The panning of guitars throughout the show is all automated. We have some off-board devices which move the position of the guitars from number to number. As you can imagine, Brian is very interested in the guitars in this show, but because Brian is used to hearing studio stuff where the guitars are hard left and right, it's a constant... not battle... but conversation that Brian and I have - trying to pull the guitars into the centre, because if

they're hard panned, depending on where you're sitting you lose some of it."

The challenge is making a big rock feel for a variety of punters

But despite any differences of opinion over positioning of guitars in the mix, Bobby says working with Brian and Roger is a treat.

"There's so much to learn from them because they've been doing it for so long. Brian has such a distinctive sound, and Roger is great because he knows exactly what the drummers should be doing in the show. It's amazing to work with them."

Bobby says it's an acknowledged fact that on a show like this in a room like the Regent it will never sound the same in every part of the auditorium. The skill, he says, is just making it sound good.

"The challenge of the show is trying to create a big rock feel to a cross-section of punters. They're not all die-hard Queen fans – some of them are quite small kids or older people who don't like loud sounds, and then there are all these people in the middle who want it as loud as possible.

Getting that balance right – trying to get the feel of something big and majestic without removing ears is the trick. It's very even in a room like this – it was measuring around 104 – 106 at the back in London, and obviously you pick up a lot more sub-bass the closer you sit to the front. In fact sitting down the front is quite an experience."

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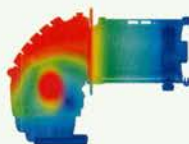
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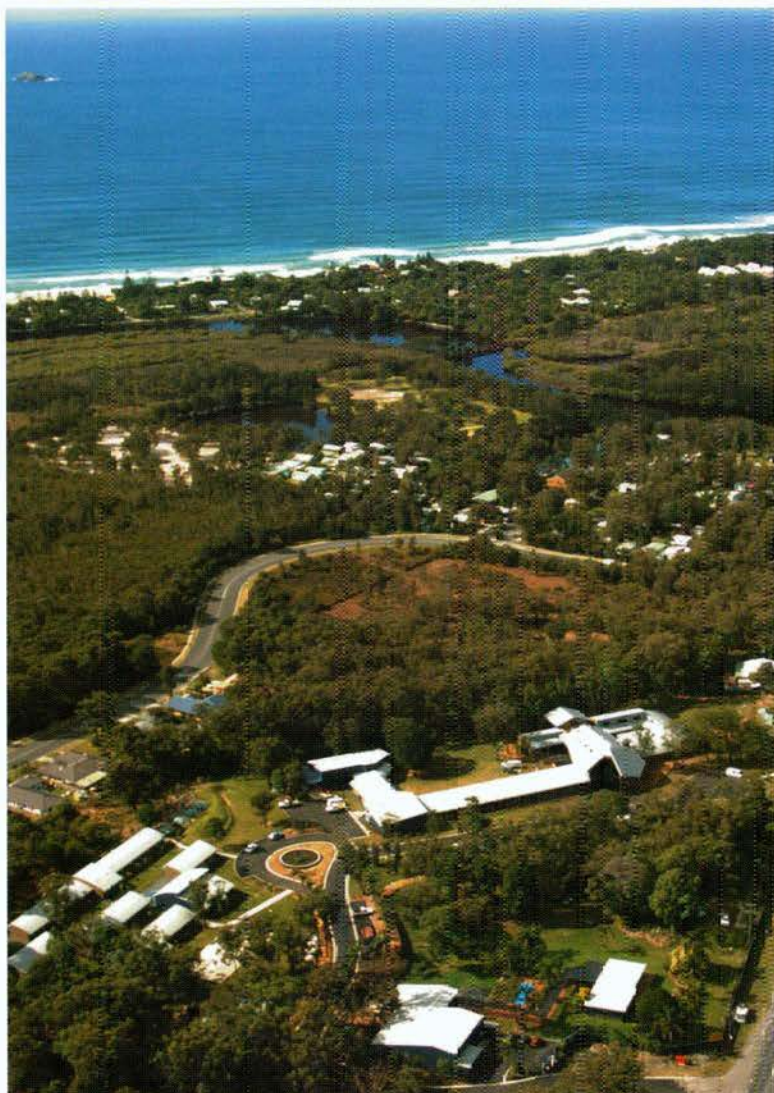
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Byron has seen all kinds of wealthy developers try to get all kinds of things going. The global holiday conglomerate Club Med failed after more than ten years to build a beach resort on land it owned there.

Then one quiet day not so long ago, a large and poorly dressed guy rolled into town with talk so outrageous that no one really listened to him.

He bought a 15 acre block on the northern edge of town, just when a boom in property prices was starting. Byron had been fairly laid back, but with the opening of a new expressway, it was suddenly just 2 hours by road from Brisbane.

The local council at Byron are notoriously hopeless, described as dysfunctional and anti-development. They were about to meet their greatest problem, an Austrian called Tom Misner.

Misner was telling anyone who'd listen that he was worth a billion dollars, and that he was planning to build the world's largest audio college on his land. He would bring over 400 students in, many from overseas, and the benefits to the town would be huge.

"The councillors thought he was a wanker", said Dave. "They figured his project was just another



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Julius Grafton discovers what is behind The Misner Factor.....

hotel, and that he was fronting something totally different. Plus the BRW Top 100 said he was only worth \$300 million. He'd come up short in their eyes".

But Misner was working on the project as if it would go ahead, and he was gathering local support. Business people and the local newspapers all saw the upside. What happened next is the stuff legends are made of.

"He had his plans before council," said Dave. "And he knew they were going to put him on the slow burner and screw him around. So he went into the meeting, and told them they had 12 hours to approve the project, or he'd go buy land at Ballina (down the coast) and do it all there. He was deadset ready to walk! Because they were always being compared to Ballina, where you CAN do business with the council, and because the whole town saw the merit, they were put on the spot, and so they approved him".



Tom Misner, accepting an ENTECH award



Larry Anthony - the federal government member for the northern rivers, actually made an interesting speech

Building the complex was a battle of wills against the council, who Misner described as dysfunctional. "It is endless stupidity. You can get destroyed by the system here. There are weird rules, with no logic. I made the mistake of planting some palm trees in a line, and had to stop work, because you are not allowed to plant palm trees in a line at Byron."

As Misner tells it, he got basic approvals from Council, because he didn't have an architect. He knew what he wanted, in his head, so he had a slab put down, and a structural engineer and a builder follow him around. The complex grew building at a time.

It cost A\$25 million to build, and A\$15 million to fittout with equipment and finishes.

The new SAE complex is the world HQ of an organisation that now has colleges in over 40 cities worldwide.

CX attended the opening at Byron Bay as one of over 500 invited guests who were all flown to Byron by Tom Misner. Every SAE manager and their partners were there.

The opening was held in a massive tent outside the main entry, within the sprawling 15 acre site. Extensive ground lighting was supplied by ELS, and an excellent banquet

and beverages were featured.

SAE's director of education, Clive Pascoe did a fine job tying together the introduction and getting the speeches underway. A large contingent of government and academic types were on hand, and we were unlucky to hear some excruciatingly boring speeches from some seriously uncharismatic people.

Pascoe, Misner and Larry Anthony - the federal government member for the area - all were interesting.

"We are paid nothing", an SAE manager moaned

Anthony spoke lucidly, was excited about SAE and what it had done for the region. He spoke about creative

talent, human capital, and how SAE was a step towards reversing the brain drain from Australia. He also paid tribute to Misner, "a big man, with a big heart, and a big plan", and cautioned that possibly due to the convict past of Australia, there is a tendency there to cut people down.

I spent the night talking to SAE people, looking to compare the contents of Misner's explosive new book, 'The Misner Factor' with reality. I found it easy to validate the quite open disclosures in the book about SAE's operating philosophy.



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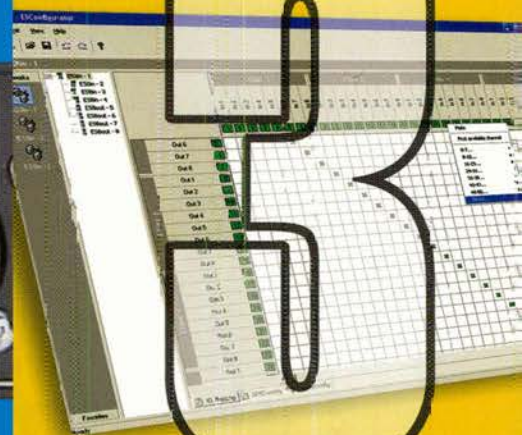
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TOM MISNER'S JOURNEY

"We are paid nothing", a manager complained. This matched a complaint in the book, by none other than Misner's director of operations for Europe. "But there is almost a culture of personality worship here," said another manager, looking across the tent at his colleagues.

"We seem to worship the guy!"

Misner hires graduating students as teachers. This means his staff costs are low, and he doesn't need to train them, since they've just done the course they are now teaching. They don't have any audio career ladder except SAE, and being typically

young they look at the relocation possibility as a promotion.

"Treat 'em mean and keep 'em keen is the philosophy here", a manager tells me. "I see him (Misner) occasionally and say, 'Hi Tom!' and get a grunt in reply".

In his book Misner talks openly, as do others. Some of the material is explosive in obvious ways (see other article). But there are a lot of things that come out which will raise eyebrows. One is cash. There is repeated testimony of students paying Misner, and the cash going into his pockets – without a receipt.

This is played out by the theft of \$80,000 from the SAE safe in Wentworth Avenue (Sydney) – money that is described variously in the book as a slush fund, and to pay the builders.

These events are all old, there is no suggestion anything like this happens today. SAE is a company incorporated in the Netherlands, where international business is taxed more leniently than in Australia.

Another revelation in the book is that Misner's reluctance to pay people may affect the quality of the education that SAE deliver. This is because the incredibly flat management structure at SAE results in lack of direct supervision of individual colleges. Tom himself reports in the book that he makes surprise visits to his schools, and once caught a manager selling drugs to students.

There are now several regional managers for SAE, but the reluctance to hire outsiders and to pay properly, allied with the lack of systems earlier on, caused and can still cause problems.

Part of the strength of SAE is its decentralised network. Each college is a small business in a different territory. If things go wrong,

"Treat 'em mean and keep 'em keen is the philosophy here", a manager tells me.

"I see him (Misner) occasionally and say, 'Hi Tom!' and get a grunt in reply".



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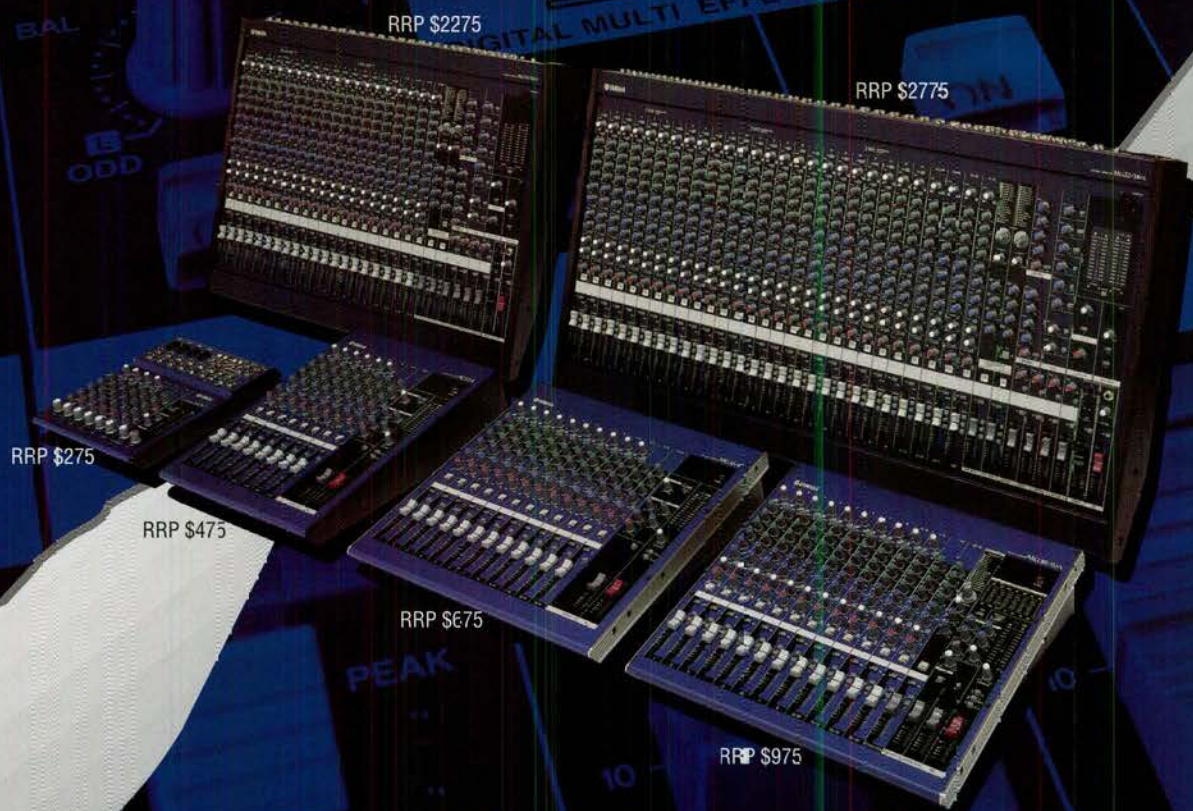
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- The new 15 acre SAE facility is an aesthetic masterpiece, and no expense has been spared in terms of design and finish. The student toilets have marble finishes.

- Access to each of the 31 studios is by high tech swipe key, with access levels determined by students' enrolment. On site accommodation is supplied for 60 students, with extensive kitchen and support facilities.

- There is a Studio 301 complex on the site, which features almost every brand of top notch audio recording equipment.

- There are up to 96 work stations in class rooms, and the whole facility feeds off two server farms with over 6000 gigabytes of storage. The complex is very attractively landscaped, and all building and studio designs were done by Misner himself.

which they rarely do, the college can close down and move out. In one case, documented in the book, this happened almost overnight! But many years ago.

Tom Misner is an incredibly fascinating individual.

He happily reports in his book how he won his latest love, Janette, who was working in the first class cabin of a Qantas flight from London to Singapore. Misner only flies first class, or economy – business class is second best, he says. Janette Reith (*pictured below*) is a striking woman with a graceful and almost serene carriage. She is the kind of alpha female that an airline would want in the first class cabin.

When they met, Misner managed to withhold the increasingly important information that he was (and apparently still is) married to, and separated from, Katrina, who reportedly refuses a divorce. "Everyone at SAE was on pain of death to not mention her", Janette recounts. The startling news that Misner was, in fact technically married with children, was only shockingly revealed years later, when Janette was pregnant with

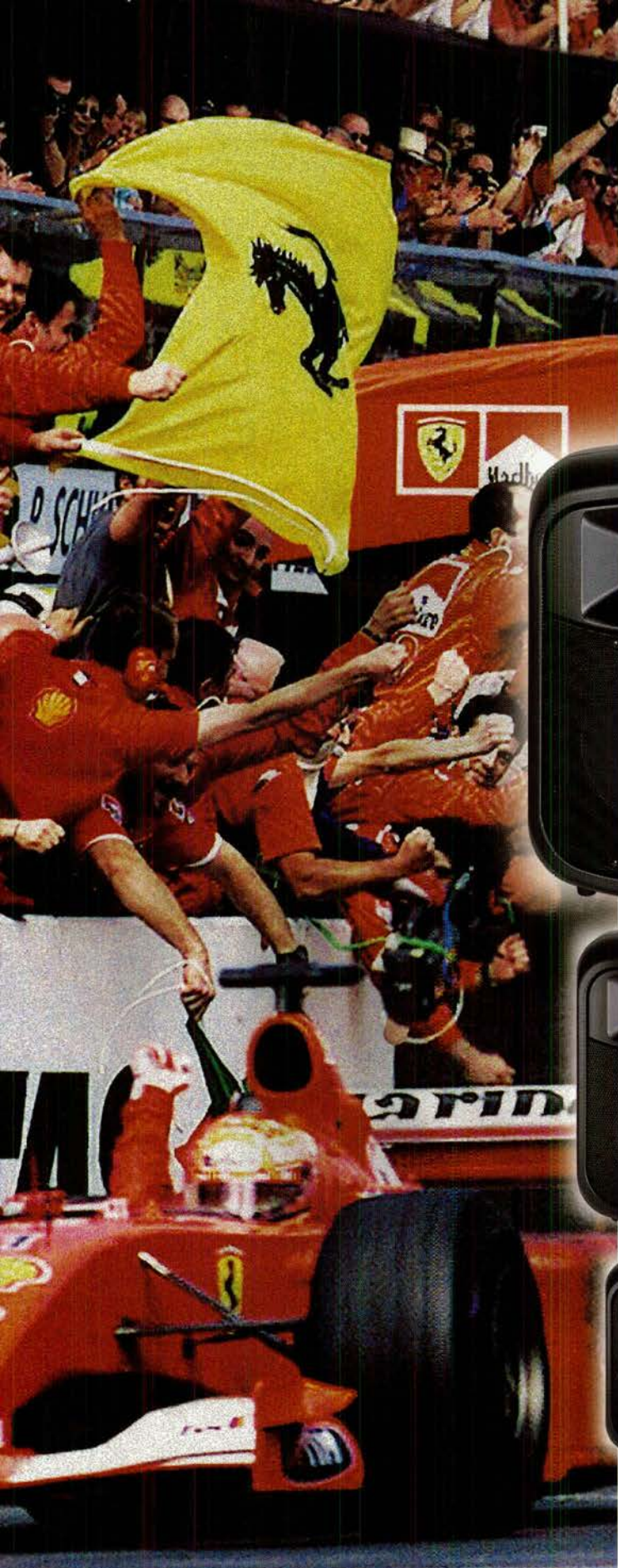
their daughter, Yasmin (*pictured at right*). Naturally this did not go down well.

Whatever ructions arise from the book, and there will be plenty, Tom Misner will manage them with his usual formula. He will keep his cool, and try to goosetstep through. The force of his personality, the reach of his empire, and the depth of his wealth will insulate him. •



The Misner Factor: inside SAE. Next page>





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Studio One

The Misner Factor: money, studios - and sackings

The Misner Factor – the Official History of SAE Institute is compelling reading. I read it straight through, all 270 pages in eight hours. Publishers usually sanitise books, but this one goes for the jugular. In the opening pages, one of SAE's first teachers is described (and named) by Tom as a large girl, "a lesbian - big and butch. I guess you'd have to call her a typical stereotype dyke." He then praises her teaching ability.

In part this is what makes the book readable. It is a blow by blow account of the way Misner scammed, charmed and bumbled his way through the early days, establishing the world's largest chain of audio schools. Misner delivers his account via Robert Alexander, a British audio journalist who has also worked at SAE at some stage.

The book spans the early 1970's until now, and was released at the official opening of the greatest studio audio education campus on the planet, SAE Bryon Bay.

If you've ever crossed Tom Misner, then you're right there in print. A bewildering array of people drift in and out of the book, and some of their sins are serious – like theft, drug dealing, and fraud. Others like Martin Cass, who owns JMC Academy, are just guilty of having the audacity to compete with The Tom.

There's a couple of present and former Australian audio equipment distributors who emerge unattractively, one allegedly once wrote a rubber cheque to pay for advertising in Tom's magazine at the time, called *Australian Sound and Recording*. The magazine and its yearbook are trumpeted in the book as the only of their kind in the 1980's, overlocking the more successful Sonics magazine and yearbook that ran 14 years until Connections killed it in 1993.

Another distributor had the temerity to pull loaned equipment out of SAE and to go and back JMC – which is why Tom says that even today there is almost no Tascam equipment in any SAE studio, worldwide.

By Julius Grafton

Being a control freak can have a downside...

Tom Misner hates hiring anyone to do something he thinks he can do himself. This is why he avoided an architect, and saved himself as much as 15% of \$25 million when he built the new SAE complex at Byron Bay. He pulled that one off.

But the philosophy backfired with his opening party. He didn't employ an events professional to manage the event, and while aspects like catering and theming were OK, the actual staging and production was abysmal.

(continued on next page)

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We learn one SAE manager had a cute arse and wiggle....

OPENING PARTY

(continued)

The sound system was provided by David Burke, a local contractor who was so nervous he couldn't eat. "This is all the sound you can get for \$500, and it is not enough", he said. Quite correct. He had his normal van system – 2 JBL composite boxes on top of subs, and 2 BOSE 802's as rear fill. It really struggled.

The band were a distorted mess, a shame since they were the excellent nine piece Doug Williams' LR Mix.

The internal lighting was horrible too, a laser played out randomly across everyone's eyesight, just begging for a \$5,000 Workcover fine and a couple of lawsuits for damaged retinas sometime in the next 18 months. The poor lighting operator had to try to use a Mac as a followspot for the Elvis act. Classic case of not enough budget!

There was little management of the event, so the increasingly frazzled Professor Clive Pascoe struggled to get the speeches started. Some walk on music, decent sound, and a stage that was more than a riser without rear drapes would have helped.

SAE may be one of the leading recording schools on the planet, but in terms of event sound and vision, the opening left a lot to be desired.

While dealing with equipment distributors, there's a great chapter about the ineptitude of the people working for Ampex in the early days who, says Tom, loaned him two multitrack machines worth over \$40,000 (equal to about a quarter of a million of today's dollars) and then forgot to ask for money. Two years later he paid them \$3,000.

Tom was by then exacting some kind of campaign against the beloved equipment distributors who, he editorialised in his magazine, were doing nothing to assist in lifting the punitive tariffs that were in place, ostensibly to protect local manufacturers. He pointed out there were no local manufacturers.

An Adelaide based importer allegedly took \$65,000 from Tom for a console with automation, and didn't deliver the automation. Tom names the guy, and goes a lot further with a personal description that is flamingly defamatory. Alexander obviously discovered the guy is deceased and unable to sue....

But you can excuse Tom for the bias in the book being skewed his way – because it's his book. Alexander digs around, like any journalist should, and details fairly accurately a kind of 'anti Tom' society that operated at the upper echelons of the recording industry in Australia. There's a

last laugh element, because Tom has prevailed in spectacular style while most of his critics have either lost their minds, their jobs, or had their studio purchased. By Tom.

The book isn't all about vengeance though; the characters appear as part of the landscape of the times, in an industry that was peppered with shonky people. Back in the 1980's it was easier to be a rotten person in business, and Tom wasn't alone in enduring the ebb and flow of fortune. He doesn't come out smelling of roses either, and tells in all honesty how he became acquainted with the tax laws in Australia, courtesy of a snap audit by a Mr. Cox from the tax office.

More than a few times there are deals unmade, because the other party misrepresented some aspect. It emerges that Tom is good for a handshake deal, as long as the other party doesn't try to change the rules.

The personal observations in the book are not politically correct. Sharon Quin was the wife of long serving SAE Brisbane manager Michael. We learn she had a cute arse, and a special kind of wiggle when she walked. She went on to be an outstanding manager of the London SAE after her marriage ended.

A Sydney staffer is fired, after being described as a 'fat, lazy cow'. Someone else is robustly referred to as f---wit - and it wasn't as a term of endearment. Obviously Alexan-

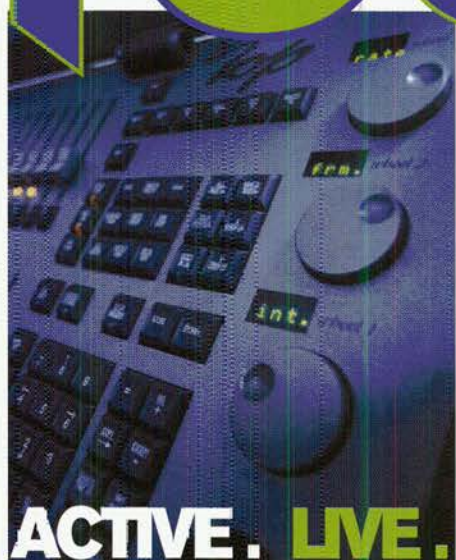
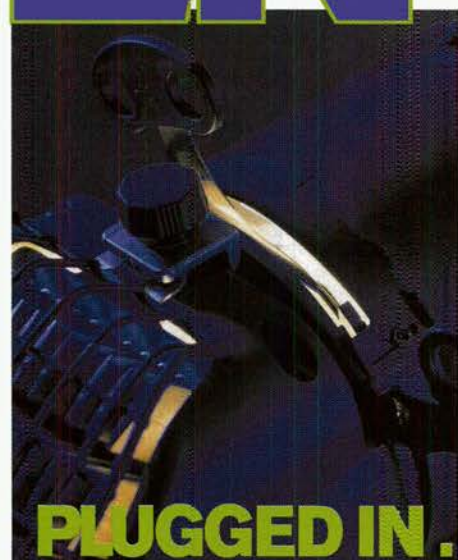


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der has also established this guy is deceased and thus unable to sue Misner, who is amongst the 200 richest men in Australia, and worth one billion dollars by his own estimation!

SAE has seen its fair share of duplicity, with a series of staff fired (and named in the book) for dipping into the till. Most serious was the theft of \$80,000 in cash from the safe in 1988. Once again, the suspect is named in the book.

The book details the pathway the organisation has taken, from very casual and almost ad-hoc teaching and record keeping, up to university standards today. Current European operations manager Rudi Grieme is, like most SAE staff, a former student. The organisation finds teachers amongst the best students, and then finds managers amongst the best teachers. Rudi wanted to enrol at the new Munich school in 1986.

"So I came down to Munich in late July 1986, found the school and went in," recounts Rudi. "It was in a run down building that didn't look very nice. I went upstairs for what I thought would be an interview or entry exam, and that was the first time I saw Tom. He was sitting in a room lying back on a chair with one arm behind the back of his head, the other lying on the table. He had no shoes on, and dirty

socks, and he was playing with a gold creditcard between his teeth!"

The story gets better.....

"Tom didn't even bother to show me around, he just said, 'OK, you want to do the course, here is the registration form, where's the money?' So I said to him, 'What about the entry exam?' 'Oh yeah, the entry exam. No problem,' he says. 'So he opens a draw, and took out a Walkman, a piece of paper, and hands it to me saying, 'ten minutes, OK?' When it was complete I handed it back to Tom, who glanced at it and said, 'Its fine you're accepted, now where's the money?'"

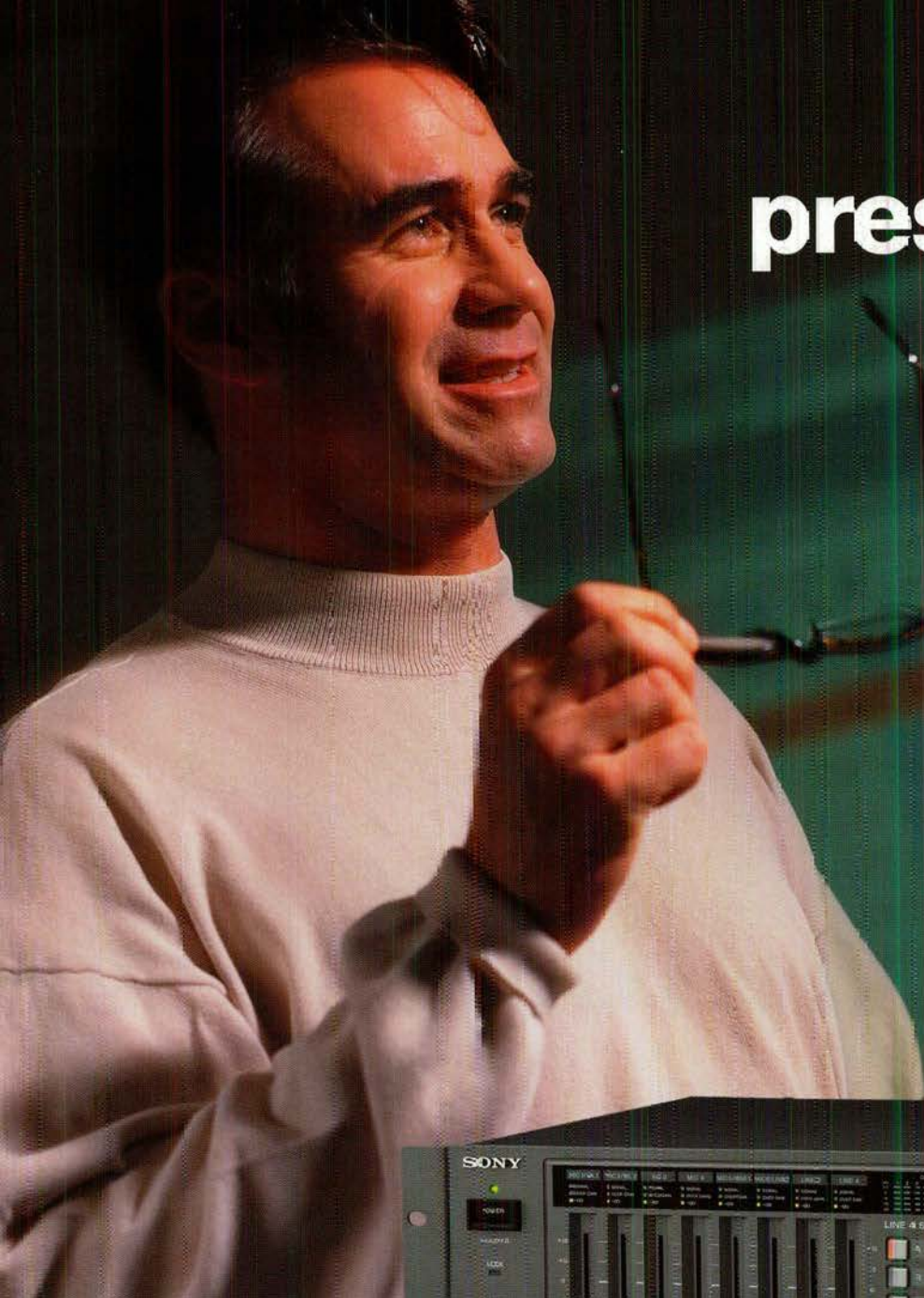
It's plain to observe that SAE didn't then have many, or sometimes, any standards at all. It seemed the organisation took perhaps years longer than it should have to get up to scratch – because of Tom's drive to expand, rather than to manage the detail. And he resisted formal and proper management and course structuring until it was almost too late. This aspect is probably ancient history now, which makes the honest telling in the book possible.

Amongst the roll out of new SAE colleges were more than a few setbacks, and the L.A. franchise was amongst the greatest debacles. A wealthy woman (named in the book, of course) assured Tom she had all the right connections to get the school accredited in

**"He had dirty socks,
and was playing with
a gold credit card
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The Porsche ended up costing three times its value

the USA, and of course it didn't happen. Naturally students were enrolled and were being trained at the time. So SAE did a midnight runner, with manager Iain Everington and crew stripping the place bare overnight. Tom then relocated the 16 students to any SAE property anywhere in the world they wanted, at his cost, so they could finish their courses.

Little is left out of the book, or so it seems.

Tom had a German girlfriend called Tina who stars in a chapter about how a Porsche 911 convertible is shipped from Europe to Australia but because of a mistake, apparently made by Tina, it arrives 161 days after initial purchase in Europe. It had been calculated to arrive two days later, when it would have crossed a legal threshold and been deemed a second hand car. Instead, a massive tariff tax of \$70,000 was slapped on the car.

Possibly because this is how things are done in Germany, Tina goes off in a big way at the Australian customs people who then quite understandably decide to make life as hard as possible. A fine is slapped onto the car's legal owner (Tina, on behalf of Tom) and in court she goes against Tom's advice and utilises five willing barristers to try to argue technicalities. The judge is not amused and throws another \$70,000 fine at her. By this time Tom has the car (which he

paid for originally) and has also paid the \$70,000 tariff as well.

As the book tells it, Tina is left to her own devices and her dad pays the \$70,000 fine – so Tina decides she wants the Porsche. Tom won't give it to her, so she sends a couple of heavies after Tom. He sends two heavier heavies after her heavies.....

There is great mirth and a sense of achievement with the recount of the now infamous purchase of Studio 301 in Sydney, where Tom says he enticed the un-knowing 301 staff over to his facility with promises of food and drink, then told them his greatest regret was not naming the place 301. "They all go 'too bad, huh' and then I tell them I just bought 301!" Naturally, another couple of names pop into the narrative, one of whom is a 301 staffer who is described as being fired for asking for three times what she is worth. This chapter reeks of vengeance.

Perhaps the saddest aspect of the book is the treatment of Tom's second wife, Katrina. She is portrayed as a snob who married Tom for money, yet is the mother of two of his children, who he freely admits to loving greatly. Aged 3 and 10, they will doubtless read Tom's views on their mother in the years ahead.

A sordid episode involving her brother and allegations of fraud in an Asian SAE by her brother go towards the description by Tom



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of her whole family as dysfunctional.

Indeed, in the closing pages of the book, Tom counts meeting Katrina as one of his greatest regrets.

The book ends on a high, with detail of his now eight year relationship with Janette, with whom he is dad to three year old Yasmin. They all live in languid splendour in a house on a hilltop overlooking the ocean at Byron Bay, and Tom Misner is described by the author Robert Alexander as more relaxed than he's ever been.

The new 15 acre SAE College at Byron Bay is a sensational facility. SAE will open more and more colleges in more and more cities, and Tom will grow exponentially wealthier.

But he could be remembered most for this book, and for all the wrong reasons.

What Tom probably wished would be an honest rendition of his life and times, is sometimes turned into a vicious score settler by Alexander, who is either too clumsy to understand what he has done, or maybe he is too influenced by his UK homeland tabloid media. Perhaps he just gave up and completely submitted himself to Tom's strong character.

More ominously, I suspect Misner knew he was flaming, defaming and libelling his enemies, and just told Alexander not to worry. This theory was virtually the spin Misner put to me at his SAE Byron Bay opening night bash where 500 people were flown in from around the world. I thought I would do the right thing and warn Misner the book was dangerously defamatory. At least he still had a chance to recall it, since the first copies were only those sitting on



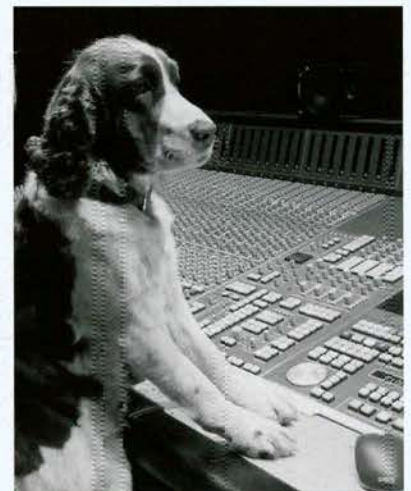
the 500 chairs at the dinner that night.

I pushed through the crowd of fawning European SAE staff, local identities, imported studio celebrities and grovelling flunkies to tell Tom he had a legal problem – I counted 18 of them – with the book.

"Yeah, I defamed people. Especially my (ex) wife!" he chortled.

So now the book is out there, and Misner can expect a slew of legal actions. •

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Wraps come off Sydney Theatre

She opens in January, and the builders have just handed over the keys. Julius Grafton reports:

Sydney Theatre Company are just across the road from the new theatre- in the wharf to the right of this new set of apartments, whose developer built the new theatre, with assistance from the Stage Government.

Sydne has gained a beautiful new theatre, opening in January but in final fitout right now. Sydney Theatre is on Hickson Road at Walsh Bay, in The Rocks – opposite the Sydney Theatre Company wharf theatres. Sydney Theatre Co will run the new 898 seat theatre, which is a space for rent. It will feature their productions, and others.

The new theatre is carved out of an historic bond store, which architect Andrew Andersons has built into a stunning space, making an excellent live theatre.

Original bond store finishes are retained wherever possible, and the foyer sets the tone.

Rough recycled timbers form a feature wall. The public spaces have all the ambience, light, and feel that go towards making a normal human feel good.

Backstage you find the right mix of elements. Theatre consultant Dennis Irving has delivered a package that should work very well.

For starters, there is no fire curtain, so there is no need to leave slots or build knockouts in sets. The whole auditorium and stage are one continuous smoke space, with sucking fans in the roof if smoke needs to exit.

The theatre has double false prosceniums – 5.5 to 7 metres high, and 10 to 12 metres wide. The stage floor is fully removable if lifts or traps need to be added for a show. It isn't the kind of work one undertakes without major reason, but it can be done. Everything is bolted into position.

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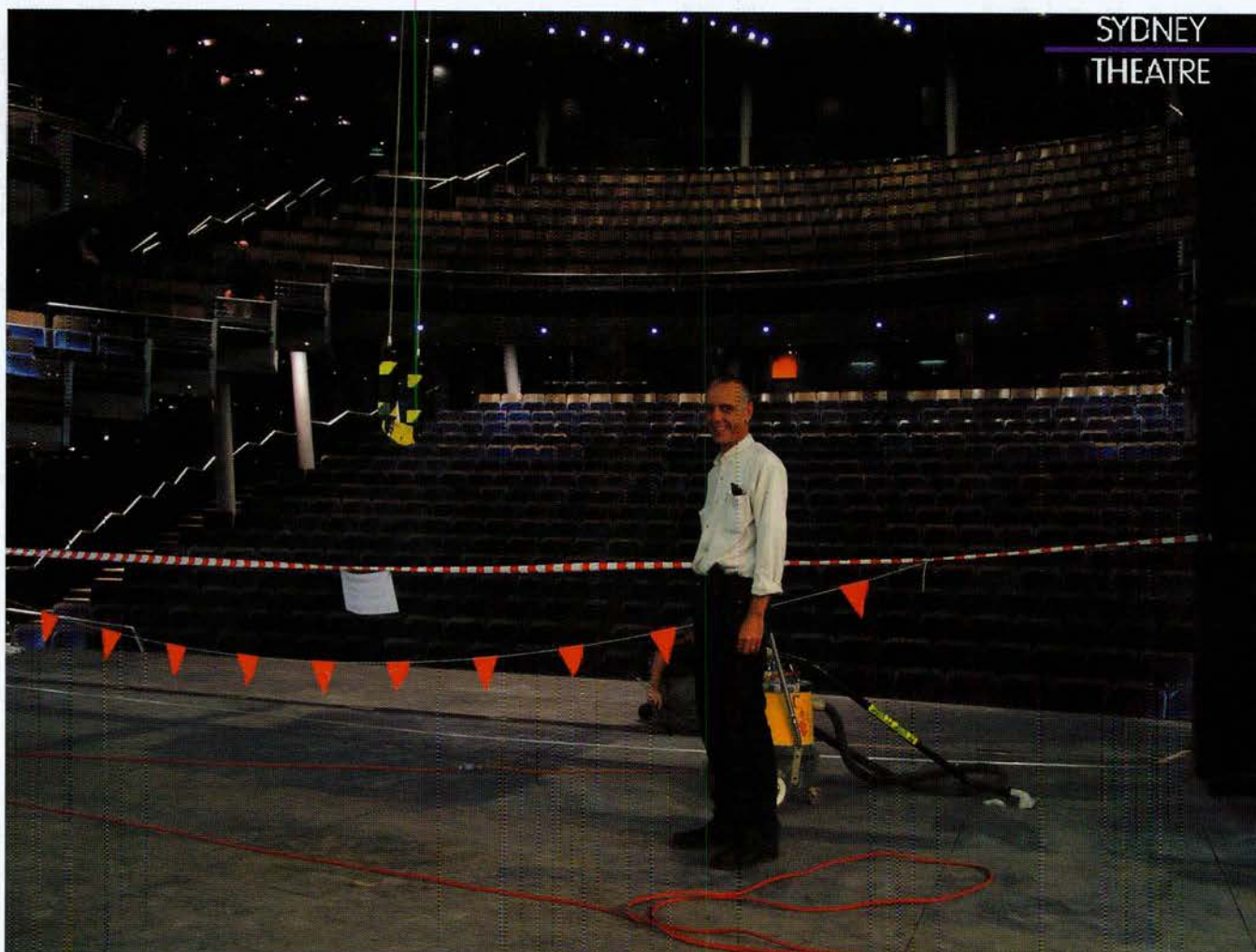
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Marcus Kelson (Technical Manager)

they can fly out at 2 metres a second – fast. The fly out speed reduces on a curve as the load increases. They are at 200mm centres, so if a heavier load needs to travel fast, two bars could be combined. There are 10 spot hoists on stage, each rated at 250kg. Each lighting bar is relocatable, so each flying bar can be for whatever you like: softgoods, lights or props without discrimination at the design phase.

The two most upstage bars can keep travelling down through floor traps, so cloth's can be dropped down to the substage.

The flying system was installed by Jands, along with the orchestra lift, the curtains, the lighting and the communications system. Jands teamed with Stage Technologies for the flying system, which boasts a Nomad Controller.

Coda Audio installed the audio system, which features Meyersound self powered loudspeakers. Arup were the acoustics consultants. There is no carpet in the auditorium to liven up the space acoustically.

There is so much fine architectural detail in the building it is hard to reconcile the final bill of around A\$40 million. This is not a lot of money for a major city building

project of this kind.

Outside is a perfect brick arch, with tapered bricks made in Gunnedah to match those of surrounding historical buildings. The back of the theatre sits against the bedrock of the city – a vertical carved sandstone wall. It leaks, so coloured dye was put into every known source of groundwater around the nearby city. No dye turned up in the water that slowly oozes from the stone, so the source couldn't be stopped. The solution is an old one – sumps, and pumps. No problem, because it is a scenery store.

Likewise the orchestra lift couldn't really be made the old way, using screw jacks that go down into a hole – because the holes would fill with water, being under sea level. Instead, Jands and Dennis Irving proposed a Serapid lift, which is a French designed self building chain system. The lift is in three sections, and there are safety features for days. OH&S was properly considered in this theatre design!

Up high, over 600 new lighting fixtures come in Selecor and ETC colours. There are two lighting bridges, and you can stack lighting bars vertically, and winch up the ceiling panels to accommodate the beam. Up in the grid is the motor room, and there is

*\$40m doesn't
seem THAT much
any more!*



Serapid lift detail. Marcus stands under the orchestra lift (top), and this is how the self climbing chain works. Neat, huh?



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Jands teamed with Stage Technologies to design and install the 60 powered line flying system. This is the Nomad Controller.

It's a quality venue with a lot of thought invested

Back wall weeps, the Sydney aquifer is a strange beast, the source could not be traced. So water just gathers in the sump and is pumped out. Common.

The ceiling wrinkles up (right) to accommodate LX bars.

even a lift from the stage to get things (like dimmers) up there.

There is no patch room because all 600+ outlets go to a dimmer. There are two dimmer rooms for Jands HP6 and HP 12 dimmer racks. Technical Manager Marcus Kelson was quite enthusiastic about the dimmers, which have a quick disconnect feature on the back if service access is needed - without the requirement to unplug anything.

AL DMX is transmitted via radio.

Continuing our tour of high spaces, the followspot perches are open (without windows) and the lighting box sits between with a Strand 520 console installed. At the back of the stalls is the sound control room, with opening windows. The console can be positioned just in front, or even in a sound pit located at rows 3 and 4 from the rear. With these seats removed, a sound engineer could stand at a submerged console without losing sightlines from behind.

There are eight dressing rooms, a band room which is located quite suitably in the substage area, and a large wig and makeup room. There are mirrors for 32 people. All rooms are very convenient to the stage, and have disabled access. Wheelchairs can be accommodated in various areas of the auditorium, not just at the back, like in many theatres.

The loading dock is a real one, capable of accepting any conventional truck.

Stage prompt has adequate wings, while OP has a large area. The stage management console was built by Jands, and PA People were a contractor for the communications system.

Actors who have toured the new theatre report they are thrilled with the sense of connection - even up to the back of the circle. The auditorium seating is in an arch so that the back wall of the circle is a full 2 metres closer to the stage than the nearest comparative venue - the Drama Theatre at Sydney Opera House. This helps a performer by making it easier to project to the back row.

Finally, it was out to the stunning foyer and up to the green room, which was once the accounting office at the bond store. It boasts a small triangular strong room, for which a use has not yet been found. Original ironbark beams and little features like an old switchpanel add to the atmosphere. The green room has deeply polished original boards, as do the adjacent two production offices. These will be home to Marcus Kelson (Technical Manager), Toni Glynn (Head Electrics), and Kevin Sigley (Head Mechanist). One administration person will also be based at the theatre, with all other functions managed from across the road at The Wharf.

On the way out, at ground level, is the Rehearsal room, which is a very useful space.

When the new Sydney Theatre opens on January 10, Sydney will be the better for it!

** Thanks to Marcus Kelson and David Cotgreave (Production Manager) for the tour!*



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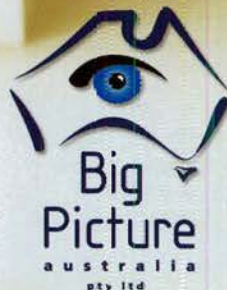
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DJ's defended

Great article in the last issue regarding an often unseen & much overlooked problem with (not all) DJs (and club owners).

As a DJ of 20 years I have show a lot of up & coming guys & girls the art of DJ'ing, including care & maintenance of equipment. Most just want to show how good they can mix a few tracks together, without a thought of the crowd and how that sound is getting to the crowd.

The equipment side is an unknown & often unimportant issue until it stops working (it wasn't me), most just don't want to know. Sad but true.

DJs who do listen to advice re sound (and lighting) get alot further after the glory days have passed them by. Alot of the owners on the other hand, couldn't care less about the gear until something goes wrong (maintenance costs money, it's still working why bother).

They'll just keep asking for DJs to pump up the volume, doesn't matter that it sounds like shit but "we need it loud in here", like DJs have a magical spare volume supply that will make the clubs often cheap, underpowered sound system do amazing things in a already overcrowded room.

Most DJs I know are able to maintain & fix most problems. Just wish the DJs with some knowledge (and the others) would get a break from all the slagging off that we cop from "others" in the music industry.

By the way, we don't all get rolling drunk every night & get paid mega dollars to spin discs.

I wish.

- Steve Gunn

That Cover

Wow, when the latest CX popped into the letter box I thought it must have got mixed up at the printers with Ralph or FHM!

A very fetching pic of that

well known model Tits Akimbo, by the look of it. But what was the connection (no pun intended, this time) with the industry?

Could it be lighting? Possibly, although there were not many effects. Could it be audio - maybe a new flesh coloured radio mic? If so, where on earth had she hidden the belt pack?

In the end I couldn't work it out so I just checked the credits inside - of course, it was a video wall. Smacks head and utters a Simpson's "D'oh"

And you say the mag's not available on newsstands? Pity - more covers like this and you'll be pushing Jugs and Biker Babes off the shelves!

- Duncan Fry

AMX and Enttec

Re the article about the Bankstown Sports Club (last issue) - it mentioned that the AMX system controls the lights. To be precise, the AMX system calls up cues in the DMXPlayback that it controls using the RS232 port. There are 3 DMXPlaybacks controlled by the same AMX system.

In many articles about jobs, people tend to forget to mention the smaller products that make it possible to get everything talking.

Ever tried programming moving lights or some fades with an AMX system ?? Good luck.

Plug in a DMXPlayBack or a DMXStreamer and the job just got a lot easier.

- Nicolas Moreau
ENTTEC Pty Ltd

Last issue our Emails page carried some flames regarding the Amplifier Comparison in May/June CX. Final word goes to Jeff Mackenzie, who has eloquently put everyone (including us) into their place. Go to www.juliusmedia.com and jump to article # 325

8-track question

I need some help.

Do you know anyone, preferably in Brisbane, who would have a working 1" 8-Track recorder? My recorder which has not been used for about fifteen years is having problems with its "piles" - and that is another story!

I have a couple of master tapes that were recorded in 1973/74 that I need to dump to the studio's HD24 so that the recording can finally be completed.

Any assistance you might be able to give would be greatly appreciated.

- David Gibson

• Email us: mail@juliusmedia.com with any answer for Dave. -Ed

Brisbane Production

Good article Julius.

This is so true. I would also like to add that this situation often affects us smaller production businesses as well.

When these big guy's are not getting the work they are often tempted to move into our arena and take our bigger jobs just to keep their guys working. This is understandable from their point of view.

However, when they get busy again and go away, we are left to compete with what they provided and at a price that they themselves would not be able to compete with.

Just a thought for those smaller production guy's in the industry like myself who have experienced this at one time or another.

- Richard Autenzio. Show Biz Sound Brisbane.

• Brisbane is enjoying/enduring some ultra savage competition as several Sydney based sound and lighting firms have started operations there. In addition, the local players are slow to consolidate - in the face of almost twice the tonnage of production equipment being locally available compared to just 2 years ago. -Ed

Discount Disasters

I have been working in audiovisual production for the last nine years.

One thing I am having at present trouble dealing with and understanding is the discounting disaster that our industry has fallen into, and it is only getting worse.

When I first begun I worked for one of the largest staging companies in Australia they taught me that discounting was the way to win new business and to reward loyalty to ongoing clients.

It now appears to me that that method is entirely wrong and over time has the most negative consequences to the entire industry.

The discounting tool has been totally abused to the point of one of the first things potential new clients will ask you is what is the discount rate you are prepared to offer.

It's almost to the point where I see us equivalent to the infamous rug industry and we all end up getting the same level of respect! It has gone from a selective loyalty tool to a given right which has a profound effect on the profitability of suppliers.

It would almost appear that the marketing of these companies in question is solely based on the discounting tool to win business rather than have their product & service stand up on its own.

Like the old adage that if you only make ten dollars per event its fine but only if you are doing ten thousand shows! But if you are only doing 10 shows you need to get out of business!

Its behaviour like this that's leading this industry into decline and we are all going to suffer the consequences in the end.

You have to wonder who it benefits in the end.

- Eben Nicholls - Adelaide



CLUB TV

New idea, great install, pays for itself

Anton Jarvis
investigates.....

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RWTV is a revenue generator, or it will soon will be, say the folk at the massive Revesby Workers Club in Sydney's south west. They have an in-house TV network that broadcasts to 14 Plasma screens, cunningly placed so one is in sight wherever you are in the huge venue.

The idea is simple, according to Marketing and Entertainment Manager Linda Joannides. "I want to get people converted to members, plus communicate messages within the club". The system does that brilliantly.

When I walked in, my eyes were drawn to the video. There were a series of upcoming concert events, with music clips. Then a message came on about the ramifications of a new turnover tax that the NSW government has imposed on clubs like Revesby. In the space of a minute, I'd been informed.

"I got sick of looking at posters in the foyer", says Ed Camilleri, the CEO. His club loses between \$300,000 and \$400,000 each year on entertainment, after spending more than \$65,000 a month on it. Promoting entertainment is a core activity at the club, which has a 1000 seat auditorium that hosts a wide variety

of acts.

Linda comes from a TV background, so her mind's eye had RW TV figured out well before she sold the idea to the board. They were impressed, and signed a cheque for a million dollars in favour of Bob Miletic's SVL Electronics. Bob's right hand man is Tim Chapman (pictured above), who walked me through the system.

In the editing and creative management area is Nathan Richman, who was hired from a TV background by the club to generate content. He has a networked system that has a content or source PC, a digital scheduler, and a character generator. The club can mix images in from TV, cable, DVE, or various camera points wired through the venue. The system allows live crosses.

Every Plasma screen is networked to a matrix, on an AMX NetLinx integrated controller. "It's the only way to do this kind of system at broadcast quality" Tim tells me. Audio is also networked on a 14 way matrix, via Peavey Media Matrix. This way, an individual Plasma screen and its nearby audio speakers can carry a unique programme.

The club use the system in amazing ways. Example: they can move people around, by having a celebrity appearance in a bar, or a contest draw. Because there are live cameras, the immediacy of an event is amplified. Another interesting factor is the promotion of new gaming products. There are severe limits for manufacturers of poker machines to promote a new machine or game. But within the club, this kind of promotion is easy on TV.

The Club is hitting on some gaming and liquor suppliers to buy advertising and run co-promotions over the system. "This is a cross between cable and a community channel", says Linda. "It gives us a real time response to marketing. We had a Sunday breakfast which only drew a few people. We put a pancake advert up and had 45 people the next week!"

With 80,000 visitors a month, the club aims to build membership and keep them coming back. External advertising is an important part of that mix.

Revesby CEO Ed Camilleri is worried about the new turnover tax on club poker machines. The NSW Government announced it recently, for phased introduction starting September. It rolls on until the present 17% tax becomes 40%. That will nuke the club business says Ed. And we believe him.

St George Leagues club in Sydney has a \$5m auditorium rebuild ready to go - now cancelled. Every club has postponed or cancelled expansion works.

Clubs spend on entertainment to provide a feed for gaming - and are the second largest employer in NSW. Revesby alone may be forced to cut up to one third of staff by 2007 if the phased introduction of the new tax is completed.

Clearly this isn't good news for CX readers.

Vision Dude Nathan Richman and Marketing and Entertainment Manager Linda Joannides



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Those Davies Boys

The brothers behind Chameleon Touring Systems hardly ever put a foot wrong. The firm has grown in double digits every year for the last 15. Julius Grafton reports on the reasons why...

The Davies boys are an odd couple. They run Chameleon Touring Systems, which was started by older brother Tony, now aged 37. Brother Greg is an accountant; he works from home, and drives the company Mack prime mover interstate when a load needs to go to the Brisbane branch. Greg doesn't look like an accountant, and Tony doesn't look like the Managing Director of a multi-million dollar company either.

Chameleon is a very large lighting production company, headquartered on the edge of Sydney city, and boasting some very solid growth. Right now Chameleon has systems out with *The Lion King* and *We Will Rock You*, two new shows that have had considerable length runs overseas. Chameleon also have gear on *Mama Mia* (which has just extended for another 18 months) two *Cats* tours of Asia, *Le Mis* in Mexico City, *Nutcracker on Ice* and the *Barry Humphries/Dame Edna* tour.

Other Theatre tours throughout the winter have included *Opera Australia* and *The Australian Ballet* at the Capital Theatre. Along with an extensive range of current theatre productions including *Blue Room* (Theatre Royal), *Scaromooch* (Theatre Royal), *Bangarra*, *Bell*

Shakespeare, *Leader of the Pack* and a regional Opera tour.

The firm has a dry hire operation, and Tony insists that looking after someone today with a Par 56 and a couple of profiles will pay dividends later on. "Everyone has to start somewhere – from small to big we try and take care of all markets".

Visiting Chameleon is fun, because it has a good feel, a showbiz feel. They run a Christmas party every year that is an industry must-do event. The old main warehouse has a drive in dock, with a demountable office to one side. There is a very sizeable floor prep area, because lighting systems are notoriously hungry for space in the build up phase. Then there are high-bay shelves and stack upon stack of cases and pallet cages.

Out back is a dimmer world, bay upon bay of cabling, a rigging dept, and across the courtyard is a moving light facility. There is a yard large enough for a couple of rigid pantech's and the two trailer pans.

Upstairs are the office's which have a professional showbiz kind of feel. The memory of Roger Barratt is alive here. He was Australia's

INSIDE CHAMELEON

greatest ever Lighting Designer, and he mentored a young Tony Davies until he passed away suddenly in 1995. Between Roger and Tony, all styles and forms of lighting work came to Chameleon. Today the firm is extremely well positioned.

Chameleon is like a large machine, which produces lighting on demand. Some days the demands are extreme, like when The Matrix film production called for 600 single Par 64's on hooks with safety wires – straight away. "You have to speak what they want to hear, and not say 'no, it'll take us a day to put it together'" asserts Tony. "I said OK, I'll send you 200 this afternoon, 200 in the morning, and the other 200 after lunch. They were very happy with the solution!"

"I am always working an equation in my head. What is the purchase price of a light, how long will it last, what will it cost to maintain, and what will the demand be? I have that equation continually going". It is going when Tony's mobile produces a lighting designer who simply must have eight Wybron CXI scrollers – and they are not in stock. "I'll buy them tonight", Tony tells the guy, "and they'll be here in three days".

Chameleon purchases a lot of lighting equipment. They have strong lines of credit, built up via Greg's assiduous management of the treasury. Equipment is bought, hired, and paid for slightly later.

Tony insists that if a lighting designer specifies a list of equipment, then that list is what they should get. If there is a problem with an item, he calls the LD to negotiate. "Working with Roger (Barratt), I came to understand the LD. You can't just tell them they can't have what they want, and give them a list of stuff you will supply instead. They will turn on you."

Business isn't all about filling exotic specifications and buying new lights, Chameleon do a lot of shows where they specify the equipment too. They have account managers with a difference – experienced lighting people who deal with a client, design the show, arrange the crew, book the equipment and the transport, and make it happen.

There's no operations manager at Chameleon any more, "if one person tries to do that job, they go mad", says Tony. Rather he has an experienced person in charge of his small fleet of trucks and drivers, to manage movement of equipment.

When the trucks return to Chameleon, they park in the yard and very early the next day a crew of five logistics people unload them and put away everything on the floor.



The place is prepped for the day ahead, then the team of five moves on to assembling systems, supervised by the account manager.

It's a far cry from Tony's first job, at the now defunct Lightmoves. He went there for work experience, and got a job on Saturday mornings while still at school. Friday nights he did lights for an Italian disco, where the DJ was Emmanuel Ziino – now owner of Show Technology who import Martin. Chameleon are his largest customer, they've just purchased 150 Mac 2000's – about \$2 million worth.

Tony went full time at Lightmoves in 1982, and started taking leave without pay to work lights on some rock tours. "I wanted to see Australia through the window of a Tarago. It was exciting!" But Lightmoves decided not to hire lights to bands anymore, so Tony offered to buy their one touring rig.

Chameleon was born.

The next few years were a blur, as another rig and then another was added, loans taken and repaid, and miles clocked up with bands. Roger Barratt was a growing influence on Tony, and they shared an informal arrangement where Tony warehoused and looked after Roger's large inventory of theatre

Greg Davies' idea of relaxation is to drive the Chameleon Mack Valueliner interstate.

"It gives me the chance to clear my head - once I'm out of the city."

"You can't tell lighting designers they can't have what they want"

THOSE DAVIES BOYS

There are stories about Tony and Greg going the biff....



lighting equipment.

Roger would tour and light opera and theatre, and had a growing list of event clients. He was the master at simplifying a lighting design, and truly got things done efficiently. Tony's energy and rock lighting experience fitted well with Roger, and the two both grew their businesses in parallel.

"He taught me so much. He did Pirates, and instead of 70 1K Fresnels, used Par cans instead. He said the producer didn't care, and seventy times four dollars a week is way better than seventy times ten dollars. Plus the lamps last 2000 hours instead of 700 hours."

They won the contract to provide equipment for Miss Saigon, which meant a big finance lease to fund buying much of it. The expansion meant a move to new premises, the exiting warehouse, which back in 1995 looked like an empty jet hanger. The die was cast, Roger and Tony were headed for partnership, when Roger suddenly fell ill with leukaemia. He was buried within months. "We had just moved in here, We had just built his office next to mine. He didn't even move into it."

"It was a turning point. We were geared up and heavily committed, with increased overheads and then suddenly instead of the 2 of us pulling in the work from different markets, it was just one of us and a lot more debt."

That he managed to hold and build on Roger's business speaks volumes about the tenacity of Tony Davies. He grew up, fast. "I'm

a different person now", he says. "I scream and shout a lot less, and when I do, people listen." He once carried a nickname, The Human Hand Grenade. There are stories about Tony and Greg going the biff, but these days Greg says Tony is only 5% as volatile.

Tony has a direct manner, and doesn't suffer fools gladly. He has a youthful charisma, almost a boyish charm, and appears uncomfortable with the notion of insincerity.

Brother Greg, the quieter of the two, is very hands on. He rigs lights, drives the semi interstate, and runs the company accounts from home. He says accountants are logical people, and the way he explains the decision to buy trucks is logical. "We don't pay holding times on pans – we unload when we want, we have the flexibility with a couple of trailers, we can store stuff on site".

Between them, the Davies boys know their business, which is spread across corporate, theatre, rock, film and TV, and dry hires. When one sector is down, there is usually another area that is up. Plus, they know who is who in the zoo, with the outcome that they have virtually no bad debts. An example was Pan, the ill-fated mega musical flop that smelled bad to everyone except the producer. He was offered a discounted rate, if he paid the whole season's lighting hire up front. Naturally the show didn't run the whole season, but Chameleon was paid in full.

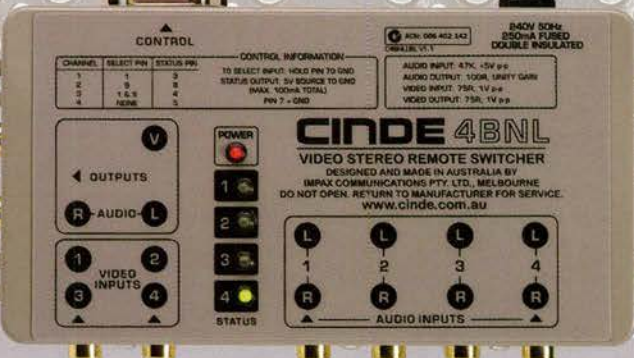
Chameleon is a good example of a successful business built on hard work and good relationships.

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2.4GHz wireless - the dream is reality

Like hungry carion, audio professionals have long coveted new bandwidth. UHF is too crowded. We were told 2.4GB was too hard. Until now!

I tested the new Sabine 2.4GHz wireless mic system, and can report this is a very solid leap forward for wireless. The 2.4GHz band is freely available worldwide for low power domestic stuff like cordless phones, and computer wireless local area networks. For this reason, professional wireless microphone makers have avoided the bandwidth, and stuck with the more limited UHF frequencies.

Sabine's new system is called SMW 700C, with True Mobility as the tagline. It comes in single or dual channel, and has two aerials so it looks like a standard wireless system. The receiver has a host of dsp stuff inbuilt which gives a clue to why the thing works.

Sabine won't say exactly how it works - they have a proprietary thing called 'Smart Spectrum'. They tell us what everyone already knows: that 2.4GB is full of low powered stuff, that there are no high powered TV signals up there to blast users like happens with UHF and VHF before it. Smart Spectrum seems to be the secret of the century, because other major wireless makers have told me 2.4GB is far too hard.

The handheld mic transmitter has an Audix head, and uses a single C cell battery. They claim 10 hours life, and supply a rechargeable battery, plus the mic clip can even trickle charge the mic. Battery cost and drama is no more with this animal!

Because you get great battery life it is almost inconceivable the transmitter is doing analogue to digital conversion. But the receiver has dsp on board, it has a Sabine FBX feedback eliminator function, a compressor limiter and de-esser, and most interestingly, a thing called Mic SuperModeling. This lets you switch from

the standard Audix OM-3 sound to several models - including Shure SM 58 and Beta 58. Truth be known, I couldn't really detect much difference. There are four models on board; I assume more will come later.

Sabine quote extended frequency response, claiming 20Hz to 20kHz, sounded natural, companding at 10dB, and distortion were way less obvious than for any previous wireless system.

The mic has 70 frequencies or channels, a little window and readout tells you what channel you have chosen. Likewise the receiver can be switched easily. It shows battery life remaining and has a five segment signal monitor.

Hunting and pecking wireless frequencies isn't a lot of fun, it remains to be seen how many weird 2.4GB things may turn up - especially if your show is a corporate gig. But we endure problems with unauthorised UHF frequency intrusion too, so this would not be a new problem.

One big aspect of any new system is wireless range. Sabine quotes 100 metres and that is what we got, line of sight. Strangely our \$4,000 UHF comparison unit gave up after 70 metres. The UHF works better through walls and down corridors; the Sabine struggled once it got past the fourth wall. But with wireless, line of sight is everything.

Overall it looks like Sabine have stolen a march on the major wireless system makers. Their new system works very well, sounds natural, and with 70 new frequencies it is set to make life easier for audio professionals everywhere.

• RRP is A\$3899 for a single ch. system.



Julius Grafton compared the new Sabine with a leading \$4,000 UHF handheld. Provided 2.4GB proves generally useable in the field, then this is a winner!

MISSING YOUR MAG?

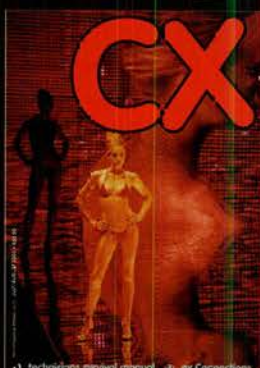
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Drums, Microphones, and Drummers

A story with a headline like the above is a story seeking a punchline. But seriously, we had a contest and tried a bunch of live microphones up against a 'dream' lineup of studio mics. So is this an easy contest? The studio mic's must sound better, right?

Anton Jarvis reports

Drums and microphones are very uneasy companions, just like sound engineers and drummers. The idea of sticking things like microphones and stands in the way of a brute armed with sticks doesn't make sense.

So we went to see Tim Powles, who is in the upper echelons of audio usefulness, since he is a drummer who is also a producer, and a sound engineer. The CX database had a 98% match for Tim with the words Drums and Engineer. Plus he is a nice guy too, despite a tendency towards latte with a dash of skim milk. Yuk.

Spacejunk is the studio where Tim works, it is in the sensationally well vibed old ATA building on Sydney's Glebe Point Rd. There are three levels of studios, including that of building owner and muso Col Joye. Tim is in partnership with David Jacobsen, who is almost arrived and running late both days I am there.

This is a story about drum sound, because I was curious just how different a well sorted drumkit with a good drummer would sound live

mic'd in a studio. Tim played with The Church, who have reformed. His drum sound and style is one that I am familiar with.

In Spacejunk, Tim has a live room large enough for a band, and in the corner is his Mapex Orian Traditional kit. It's a custom kit with each drum size slightly different. He has a variety of snares to choose from.

Some of these mic's have extreme humps in response...

The strangely absent David Jacobsen has perfected what he claims is the drum

kit mic up from hell, which is where I come in. The kit is ready and mic'd with studio mic's.

In the kick drum is a classic Sennheiser MD421, a dynamic mic that has a multiple select bass roll off switch. The 421 is a great all purpose mic, more often used on rack and floor toms. Tim likes it in his kick.

Just slightly outside the kick is a Neumann 147 tube condenser, probably one of the

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Soundcheck Studios

Missing: grunge.
Present: great PA
Place: Soundcheck

Rehearsal studios are usually a bit downmarket, but Sydney's new Soundcheck Rehearsal Studios have raised the standard. The complex took a year to build, with a warehouse in the inner west at Belmore fully gutted and rebuilt.

Builder and owner John Martinovich decided he wanted a superior facility, so he did a quality job on the building, which is in an industrial area that has plenty of parking.

Entering the building you are hit with funky colours, and a large 110 square metre studio (pictured, bottom right) immediately

inside the roller door. This studio works for pre production, you can fit an average sized production rig in there and there is 3 phase power. It is air conditioned, like all the studios, and has a PA featuring a 24 channel Midas Venice console. Eight powered EV SXA250 wedges do the monitoring job, with four third octave equalisers.

Manager Nick Rice (pictured, left) selected Midas Venice mixing consoles for each of the six studios – a quality point not seen in any other rehearsal studios we know of.

The other five studios are equally well equipped, each with a 16 channel Venice, four SXA 250 wedges, a dual third octave dbx equaliser, and a Fostex DE-10 effector.

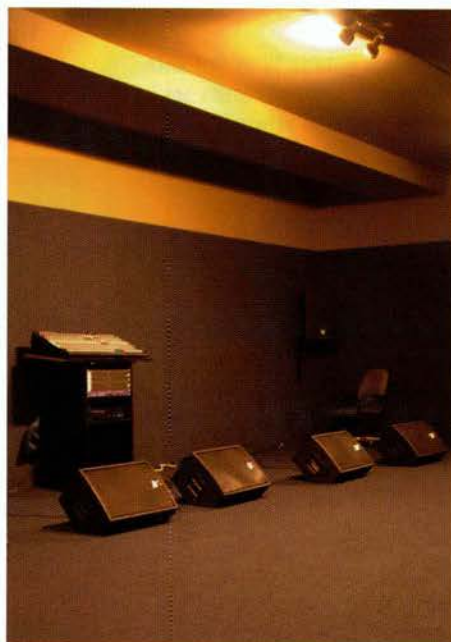
The place is clean, functional, and the rental rates start at just \$20 an hour. +61 2 9740-8311.

Soundcheck cost around \$1m to establish.

- Fulvio Colaiacolo (pictured bottom left) established his new recording studio, The Sonic Factory, conveniently within Soundcheck. It is a very nice space, centred on a ProTools HD3 system with a new Yamaha 02R-96 automated console.

Fulvio can record from some of the rehearsal studios, and has a neat little live room too. He is no stranger to the recording biz, and has a lot of neat kit - like an old AWA preamp, Neve pre's, old Pultec EQ's, Urei 1176 and AMEK 1998 compressors.

Contact him on +61 2 9758-4244.





Greg gets a girl (and does lights!)

Sally Brandstater is Head Teacher of Performing Arts at Picton High School. She writes:

I spend a large part of my week working with a group of 17 year old students teaching them both music and Entertainment Certificate 2.

Early last year we had our first Entertainment event. I allocated them jobs accordingly. At the end of the evening towards the end of Bump Out Greg came up to me. "Miss, (and I waited for some complaints) that was the most fun I've ever had, it was so good. What do I have to do to get on the lighting desk again next time?"

A few weeks later we were organising the crews for our big Performing Arts Night. I explained that we would set up on the weekend prior to the show and those that attended both days of Bump In would get first priority for jobs. Greg was so excited because he was going to run lights for an enormous event.

A few days prior to the event Greg came up very worried and asked if it was true that if he didn't help Bump In, the only job he'd get was selling tickets at the door and sweeping the floor after the event. I confirmed it. He was upset and told me he couldn't help. A few minutes later he asked if he could have 24 hours to reschedule his life, so please don't give his job away.

I asked his friends what he had on because he hadn't given me any reason. Greg had not written the dates in his diary

and after weeks of working up courage had asked a girl on his first ever date.

He came into school the next day all smiles. He had rung up his potential girlfriend and rescheduled their first date to the following week. How many 17 year old boys would postpone a date to spend the whole weekend working at school?

Greg had a lot of fun operating Miniscans, Golden Scans and running FOH lights.

A few months later the big dance festival comes along, again Greg is running the desk. Again there is a problem. Greg's girlfriend (the same one) has postponed her birthday party twice because of Greg's Entertainment commitments has finally set the date. It's the date of our Bump In. Again he faced with a choice - party or operate lights. I'm amazed the girl still speaks to him because he did such a good job on the lights for the dance festival.

This year Greg got to drive Mac 250s and 300s on a Hog desk. He was promoted to lighting supervisor for this year and had to instruct year 11 students.

It is amazing the dedication and commitment these teenagers have to their learning. I'd recommend completing a Certificate 2 in Entertainment for any young person regardless of their final career aspirations.

• Certificate 2 is taught at some high schools.

NIDA cutoff

October 1st is the closing date for applications to NIDA, the premier trainer in the entertainment industry. NIDA is based at the University of NSW grounds at Kensington, just east of Sydney city.

NIDA offers degree and diploma courses, with stage management, lighting, sound and a range of dramatic courses available.

More at www.nida.edu.au

New Courses arrive

Brand new Certificate and Diploma qualifications have arrived with the new Entertainment Industry Training Package in Australia. The package carries industry and govt endorsement and is a heavy rework of the less popular CUE-98 package.

Very few people were trained under the old package.

New national qualifications shortly available include:

- Certificate Three (Sound or Lighting specialities) - which delivers a tech ready for on-the-job training.
- Certificate Four (extends from Cert. 3, adding advanced units and electives. The Cert 4 is logically delivered with workplace internships.
- Advanced Diploma in Stage Management - and Advanced Diploma in Events and Venue Management. These are new and exciting, as trainers (like Juliusmedia, owners of CX) will be able to deliver a double advanced diploma packed with a Certificate Four - due to a chunk of units being common across the three qualifications.

SAE open Byron

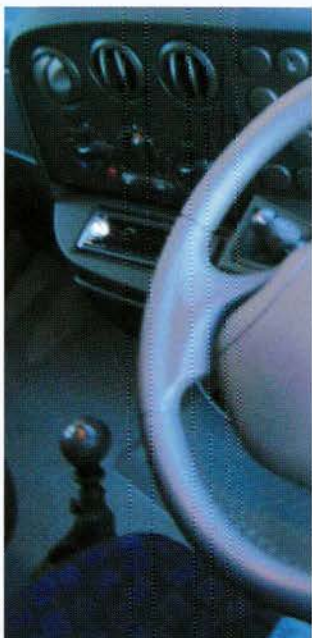
Featured at length elsewhere this issue, SAE are enrolling students for their new Byron campus. Expect to pay around \$11,000 a year plus board for fulltime study there.

SAE Byron is the most lavish and well equipped studio audio training facility on the planet.

Details at www.sae.edu



Ricki Cook (left) need a big van to cart his PA equipment around.



When looking for a commercial large van, my mind was already set on a Sprinter. Yep, got to have a Merc!

Other people suggested trying the Ford Transit (you've gotta be kidding me, way too many people have way too many problems with those things) and even the VW Transporter, but no one even thought about Iveco.

If you've seen what the previous models look like, then you'll realise why.

But I was open to any suggestion, after my business partner Nick had done some research and a whole heap of test driving, he came back assuring me that the new Iveco's weren't too bad and was worth a look at as an alternative to a sprinter. So off we went down to Sydney Truck Sales, who are the biggest Iveco dealer in Sydney I believe.

After test driving a 2003 model TurboDaily my thoughts were: not too bad - actually this van is really good. It had excellent pickup and did not have any problems accelerating in a higher gear. Iveco have changed the look of the Daily's, they look much more attractive than the previous series.

The first thing I noticed was the six speed gear box, its nice having a first gear that can actually take off on a steep descent fully loaded without having to rev really high. The other thing I noticed was the turbo comes on boost fairly low, 1500RPM in fact which is where it gives its 320Nm of torque.

The model we purchased was the TurboDaily 50C15 which is the middle of the C class.

It has a 2.8L diesel with an intercooled

turbo and a max payload of 2.835T. The GVM is 5.2T but you can order the van de-rated to 4.49T so you can drive it on a standard C class license. Its wheel base is 3.3m and has a total length of 5.997m long.

The internal dimension are 3.520m long and 1.9m high. If you require something larger, they have a model called the 65C which is 7.012m long and has a max payload of 3.86T; its internal dimensions are 4.560m long and 2.1m high.

The final decision for us was the fact that the extra money you would have to spend on the Merc's extra options that the Iveco came with standard, like the useful 270 degree rear door hinges.

The Iveco is not a walk through van, so you can't get out of the drivers seat and walk into the back like couriers do. In this industry most vans would have the cargo area (I'd hate to be in an accident with out one, a heavy case on wheels has a lot of momentum when you come to a complete stop) but in the case of the Iveco it has a metal wall between you and the cargo area with a safety glass window that (trust me on this one) does not break when been hit by a case.

Also above your head, instead of a lot of useless space, Iveco have put in a small items/ luggage storage area that are accessible from the rear. So far we have not had any problems with the vehicle; it should prove to be a good, reliable investment.

Any Iveco enquiries can be made at Sydney Truck Sales, who will also organise us a dealer option to have the cargo area lined with ply panelling if requested.

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Best Live Sound returns with LRB / BSG revival

Ern Rose snuck into George Martin's studio....

The benchmark for really great live sound in Australia was once called The Little Fiver Band. Sound engineers, crew and record producers from everywhere all agreed on that one.

Now the core of that band are back, but they are unable to use the name as it was assigned to a former member, who has a

band that tours the USA called The Little Fiver Band. When we wrote about this online at CX Web, we had a flurry of angry emails from people on both sides. It makes exciting reading. (Go to www.juliusmedia.com, and start with article 163).

The new (old) band is called Birtles Shorrock Goble, or BSG for short. It comprises lead vocalist Glenn Shorrock, with guitarist Beeb Birtles and songwriter Graeham Goble. BSG did some shows last year, and then cracked a deal. BSG have been signed by Universal Music Australia and will release a DVD and an album set for International release later in October.

The DVD will be called 'Full Circle', itself a song written by the band in 1980. It was recorded at the Forum Theatre, and is a project of Stream AV, owned by new BSG manager Paul Rodger.

Ernie Rose is the guy who engineered most of LRB's live shows and many albums in the 1970's and 1980's. He has returned to the road, from his Metropolis Studio. When BSG appear live, we have calls and emails asking how it sounds go good. The answer is Ernie.

There is a story about Ernie Rose that may just be a legend. I can't find out for sure, because Ernie himself is a very modest guy, who tries to avoid my calls as he doesn't want the very great fame of media exposure in CX.

In 1981 LRB went to George Martin's Air



Studios in Montserrat, West Indies. It was destroyed by a volcano recently. Recording on Montserrat interested them because they wanted to be away from home with as little or no interruptions while they recorded Time Exposure. It wasn't a happy time for the band, and Mr. Martin did tend to work gentleman's hours. The story goes that Ernie was sneaking into the studio at night and remixing some of George Martin's tracks!

Fast forward to 2003, and the band are in The Forum Theatre in Melbourne for three nights. A Thursday night production rehearsal lets Stream AV get the looks right, and log some extra shots for more version choices when the proper two nights of shows are shot.

The two shows went really well, and continuity was maintained with all of the nine band members wearing the same clothes. Stream AV had three of everything to choose from. Michael Costa told me what came next.

"We had rough VHS continual footage of each show from the video truck, so we could make decisions about which version (of each song) looked best. It had a rough mix straight off the desk which sounded really good".

Ernie Rose recorded each show for audio direct onto Soundcheck, the new 48 track hard disk recorder that is an option with the DiGiCo D5 live console. Using the D5 was a new experience for Ernie, who did a one day course with Random Audio, then took the D5 for an OB mix of the John Farnham final, final, very last, definitely concert. He then specified a D5 for a series of warmup dates before the DVD session.

"It was fun", Ernie told me when I cornered him. "The D5 was a very good answer for what we did, it sounds fantastic and is easy enough to use after a little kickstart". Ernie enjoyed the ability to set scenes of snapshot automation, although came unstuck briefly.

The DVD title track, "Full Circle" opened the show, with the three voices singing from the wings. These three open mic's were one snapshot. Ernie managed to recall that scene by accident during one show, effectively muting all other microphones. That's an 'oops' moment! "There's lots of options, so there's lots that can go wrong", Ernie says.

Once the shows were over, Ernie exported the files from Soundcheck in Pro Tools format, and carted them away on a couple of 200 gigabyte drives. He had some work to do identifying files, because the file transfer process produced some un-named files, and detective work was required to figure out which version was which. In the digital age, version management is a very big deal.

Tracks were condensed as to which version



was best useable, and then the audio vs vision argument was allowed to run its course. In the old days of making a live CD, you could just overdub stuff if you didn't like it. When there is vision locked on, your choices narrow.

Ernie then let go, because the project belongs to Stream AV, and Michael Costa is the guy there who has mixed the audio for the DVD. "It's a funny situation", he told me. "I really respect Ernie, and am in awe of what he's done. But I also have a long history with Graeham (Goble) and have done mixes with him for a long time.

There was tension, which presumably goes towards making the DVD a better product. Graeham Goble is a notorious perfectionist who wrote most of LRB's world hits. According to Glenn Wheatley, Graeham famously once purchased one gross (144) pairs of underwear for a US tour, so he wouldn't have to wash them. They all went home for his wife to deal with after the tour.

BSG have a large lineup of crackerjack young players behind them, and the musical strength of their relatively few live shows has already seen the band build a solid old and new following. •

(Anton Jarvis)

Live and tight - and the best singing band in the world, according to many!

Tension between vision and audio makes a better DVD!

Paul Rodger, Jamaka Rahebe, Michael Costa. Paul and Michael are directors of Stream AV, Jamaka is the Art Director.



HELP!

Marissa Jenson is a clinical psychologist, and HR head within an arts complex. Send your dilemma or request to: mail@juliusmedia.com. Marissa regrets personal correspondence cannot be entered into.

I feel very down.

It's winter. CX is full of OH&S and Insurance Crisis bad stuff. I read about Swampy passing. My fees are down, competition is up, cheap Chinese equipment is everywhere. I have no qualifications. I'm getting older. I drink more. My wife is getting fat, old and grumpy. My kids don't idolise me anymore. My jokes aren't funny. I'm going bald. I'm not interested in sex.

I feel lethargic. No one really knows who I am.

My car is dirty. My dog is lazy. My cat only wants me for food. The goldfish is floating on the top of the tank. The bin tipped over and rubbish was blowing about when I got home late to a cold house.

My mother died last year. MY MUM. She understood me.

My sister is working in a massage parlour to support her three kids and her gambler husband. I hit her husband at Christmas and broke my middle finger.

I think my health is bad.

Can you PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE help me, Marissa?

Dear down and out,

I am SO SORRY to hear of your mother passing away and all your troubles. Winter is a harder time for some more than others and you sound like you have had your fair share of tragic events these past few months.

You need to take a break and give yourself some well deserved time out.

It is wonderful to hear that you care so much about your sister but maybe there is a more practical way that you can be of assistance to her. There are plenty of community services available here in Australia that can help out in time of need.

I think that besides giving yourself some leisure time to wind down and let go of the stresses that have built up, you may need to consider seeing your family doctor as you seem to be suffering from a circumstantial depression brought on understandably from the buildup of the pressures in your life.

When a series of stressful events happen particularly after a major loss as you have experienced with losing your mum, our resistance to other maybe more minor occurrences can leave us feeling depleted of energy and resistance.

You would do well to have a general check of your health and take the necessary medication to aid in your full recovery-physically, mentally and emotionally. Talking to your family doctor can help a great deal to alleviate your concerns.

I think that you will find given the right help, or boost with supplementary vitamins as recommended by your physician and being able to properly grieve your loss then you will be able to change your perspective and feel a whole lot better.

Talk to your family about how you feel, gather comfort from socialisation with your mates. Try to find a mate to talk to - not always easy, since men bottle up. Have you expressed this so eloquently to anyone else?

I am sure that some of them have experienced what you are now feeling.

Remember that you are not alone.

We all experience these feelings of despair at different times in our life.

Perhaps too you may like to take up a therapeutic exercise programme or sport as this will give you a natural high.

There are many positive solutions available to you that once explored will enhance your life and maybe bring new opportunities for improved well being and a new lease on life.

Let me know if you need any referrals to recommended services for you or your family.

Best wishes for a prosperous Spring.

Marissa.

** Note to all: Down and Out may be amongst you, please keep an eye open and help him. He is probably hiding his pain.*

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Australia's oldest AV dept rebuilt

Memo to hotel managements: Keeping AV in-house can actually make more money!

David Knott (right) and his preferred AV installation contractor Robert 'Dutchie' Vanderent pictured under THAT ceiling in the ballroom

Sydney's Wentworth Hotel has defied the trend for hotels to outsource their AV departments - and reaffirmed the move by spending a lot of money refurbishing.

The reason the Wentworth - now named Sofitel Wentworth Sydney - has resisted the move is purely financial, according to AV manager David Knott. He says outsourcing AV can slow down, or fail to maximise, a property's performance.

"We can use the Ballroom for three functions a day", he says by way of example. The ballroom is the centrepiece of the hotel's function capability, it will seat 600 for dinner. The Hotel has a slew of other function and meeting rooms, including a new boardroom.

Wentworth was for many years managed by Sheraton, who at once stage surveyed function and business clients to discover that 20% of them choose the property because of its in-house AV team. Talking to David Knott, it is easy to see why.

Because the Wentworth always had a premium ballroom, it has had an AV team since 1966. Before David came on board in the Sheraton days, the AV team was run by John LeStrange, who went on to form L&W Technical Support.

David expanded on the differences between in-house and contracted AV. "We have the equipment we need, when we need it. The philosophy of a contract AV co is to buy and remove the infrastructure, so they can hire it back in at the customer's cost. The hotel gets a one-off return on the book value of its equipment. But I have clients tell me at some properties, they can wait for hours for something to be brought in for outside. Clients quickly get to the bottom of a problem."

Wentworth has now been virtually rebuilt with the architects working around the heritage listing that prevents some demolition. The building is the tallest steel and brick building in the southworld, and the ballroom in particular has a ceiling you can love or hate (above) that had to be retained.

This made life interesting for David and his preferred AV installation contractor Robert 'Dutchie' Vanderent. The roof already has a bunch of rigging points fixed between the horrible panels - and is now wired to suit any dream.

Wiring is a mega part of any new work, and the Wentworth is no exception. Dutchie has wired the forthcoming Cat. 6 standard. "The cable has as much fibre, but with a tighter twist, and mechanically separate pairs", he said. "I saw it going in at the Uni of Technology, so we figured we would be expansion proof if we use it here".

Cat 6 cable has 8 pairs, the same as Cat 5, and the one used at Wentworth is made by Belden, called DataTwist.

Likewise all vision, dmx and audio points are overwired, so the ballroom can be used in two different orientations - wide, or long. The AV dept. has custom made trussing to suit whichever stage is used, and a whole lot of Futurelight MH 640 and MH 660 moving lights which are always rigged - and ready for use.

In wide room mode, the ballroom can even have a motorised 34' cyc - a screen that was installed when wide screen

slide shows were 'the bomb'! There are also several video screens in the ballroom, including one on a light-track than can be zoomed into position. Neat!

Up high, the house audio system is supplemented with EV's new EVO installation speaker product (pictured below, right). It is a full range 8" speaker in a tuned enclosure that installs really easily. David is really impressed with these.

David isn't locking any other production firms out of the Wentworth, either. He says it is relatively common for outside firms to come in, and to hire some of his equipment - because that is more cost effective than bringing everything in. It is an enlightened attitude, and one that finds its way back to the minds and hearts of the ultimate client who pays for the function!



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Collaboration? Who are you kidding!

It's dog eat dog on the film set. Finally, it's gone too far. Guntis Sics is mad as hell, and he isn't going to take any more. It's clear many hit films contain stolen concepts. He may go legal - you read it in CX first!

I heard somewhere that the dirty little 'C' word was at the heart of good filmmaking. That's right folks...

Collaboration. Not being familiar with that concept, I thought I'd look it up in the dictionary. As luck would have it the barman had a Shorter Oxford just lying around and placed it gently onto the bar in front of me. Eight schooners and two middies fell over.

I took another slurp of my martini and slowly mouthed the following:

Collaboration : noun: 1. Wholesale theft of someone else's idea. 2. Something they teach you in film school that you forget the instant you graduate.

Collaborate, to : verb: 1. To pretend to listen attentively whilst secretly plotting to claim the idea as one's own. 2. To stab someone in the back with a very sharp knife.

Suddenly I had a bitter taste in my mouth and it wasn't the lemon peel in my martini. I spat it out anyway just in case. A tall, blonde Margarita picked the peel off the floor and sauntered over.

"I think you dropped this" she said popping it back into my drink, "I noticed you were reading a book, are you OK"

It was an old line and I fell for it but I was in the mood to spill my guts.

"Actually, no, I'm not. I've just realized that my so-called colleagues have been ripping off my intellectual property under the guise of collaboration. Brazenly and wantonly."

"Wantonly?" she said in a slightly giddy tone. "what do you mean?"

I didn't know what I meant but I carried on regardless.

How could I have been so blind for all these years? My paranoia was bubbling to the surface but explaining this wasn't going to be easy because I had no proof, not one shred of hard evidence that some of the greatest ideas in film history had been mine, even if I didn't know it at the time.

"Give us an example!" shouted a Pint of Guinness from across the room. "If you can that is".

It sounded suspiciously like a challenge to my keen ears.

I slapped my feet up on the bar.

"Just for starters take a look at these thongs" I said, "ring a bell do they?"

He looked blank.

"Where do you think Lizzy Gardiner got the inspiration for the famous thong dress that Hugo Weaving wears in Priscilla, Queen of the Desert?"

I eyeballed him with my fiercest look.

"Well, I suppose you are wearing a rather nice frock tonight." He quipped.

Damn. I'd forgotten the little red number I'd slipped into earlier that evening but I had to make the most of it.

"Well, I like it."

The blonde Margarita activated a couple of brain cells.

"Correct me if I'm wrong," she fluttered, "but aren't you just a sound guy who gets hired long after the key creative work has been done?"

I needed another martini urgently.

"Bartender!" I called out, "get me another one of these will ya."

"Yes sir"

"Oh, and make sure it's shaken, not stirred."

I turned to the Margarita and the gathering crowd.

"Sure, on the face of it that's true, but the influence a sound recordist has on the final product can be out of all proportion to his credit."

"That's a load of bullshit!" came a voice from the back of the room. I narrowed it down to either a Scotch and Dry or a Gin and Tonic.

"Go ahead punk," I said, "make my day. Someone ran out of the room."

"Look, I'm not saying that we write the scripts or do any actual casting, but sometimes it's just a throwaway line, an action, something we wear to work that triggers ideas that end up in the movie. Take that film 'The American'. One day I happened to be chatting with the director and he was complaining that the script didn't have enough irony in it, and I said wasn't it ironic that Brendan Fraser was an

American and yet I could hardly hear him with a Schoeps mic capsule shoved halfway down his throat and maybe the movie should be called 'The Quiet American'. ha ha ha."

"What did he say?" ventured the Schooner of Guinness.

I took a deep slug of the martini and tears welled up in my eyes. I pulled the toothpick out of my eyelid and continued.

"Not so much as a thankyou."

The crowd drew a collective breath.

"On another occasion I was chatting to Baz Luhrmann while we were shooting Moulin Rouge, which at that time was a gritty docudrama about a love triangle set in a sleazy part of Darlinghurst. I merely commented that the stunt guys who'd been doing the kickboxing scene looked like they were doing the can-can. The rest, of course is history."

"Don't tell me...." panted a Small White Wine from the corner.

"Yes," I said, "we collaborated."

A tiny, pig-tailed Brandy Alexander piped up at that point.

"I bet the cinematography department collaborates with sound people all the time, they always speak very highly of sound." She said.

Maybe I'd accidentally fallen through a wormhole or something and ended up in an opposite universe. I chewed on the olive and contemplated a new reality.

Come to think of it, it was uncanny how as soon as I found a position for my sound trolley, the whole camera team would come rushing over wanting to put the tripod in that exact spot.

The penny was dropping big time now. Waves were crashing, trains were chugging through tunnels and chimneys were collapsing to the ground. Then suddenly an epiphany hit me like a ton of bricks. Or was that a tonne. It didn't matter.

"Oh fiddlesticks!" I swore.

"What's the matter sweetpea?" asked the Margarita pouting with concern.

"It's been staring me in the face all these years. It's the actors! Actors have

Baz Luhrmann stole the idea for Moulin Rouge. Guntis can prove it...

been collaborating with me, blatantly using me for their characterization, whatever that is."

It was all coming back to me.

Bill Hunter downing a can of VB in one hit (any movie he was in)....that was me!

Guy Pearce losing his memory after a big night (Memento)....I did that every weekend!

Russell Crowe in a drunken punchup.....hello Saturday night! (OK, that's not actually in a movie...yet)

Hugo Weaving and his sunglasses (Matrix).....I wore sunglasses!

Sam Neill being scared of Dinosaurs (Jurassic park).....me too!

The Schooner of Guinness put a comforting arm around me.

"At least the women aren't ripping you off."

"Don't count on it buddy," I said, "you can't tell me that Nicole's character in Moulin Rouge didn't have a little bit of me in it, can you? Is it really just a coincidence that she had a hacking cough and I had one at the time as well? I think not."

"Even the animals in Babe have an eating style similar to yours", offered a voice from the back of the room.

"They're robots you moron!" I shouted.

But it was true. I wasn't safe from anyone or anything. Even small furry animals were crawling up my arse, a

common sensation in Hollywood.

Suddenly I was as mad as hell and I wasn't going to take it any more. I looked for a window to shout from but unfortunately we were in a basement. I felt violated, stripped of my own personality and there was only one thing I could do about it. From now on I would simply keep my mouth shut at all times and just record the sound. No more off the cuff comments or suggestions. No more outrageous or flamboyant behaviour, I would wear nothing but bland, primary coloured clothes and I would paint my car a basic fire-engine red.

I decided also to hop on one leg whenever I was in public. No utterance would escape my lips, especially not on a film set or near any aspiring actors. The film industry was on it's own and I was sure it would soon be on it's knees.

I scanned the room nervously, for all I knew they could all be out of work actors, the bars of Sydney were full of them. The barman gave me a quizzical look. I turned to the crowd like Russell Crowe in Gladiator.

"Friends, Romans and Countrymen," I declaimed, "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in the world, I walked into this one. My question is, what if this is as good as it gets? If this is the truth, then you can't

handle the truth!"

I was shouting now.

"All I can say is, nobody throws me my own gun and says run. Nobody. Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night."

With that I plowed through the crowd, but as I palmed my way through, one poor fool got down on his knees and begged me to stay.

I couldn't.

"I don't want to talk to you no more, you empty headed animal food trough wiper!" I bellowed.

I farted in his general direction to drive the message home. Besides, the guy

looked a little like a hamster and what was that smell? Elderberries?

It was hard hopping up the stairs to the front door, but I was deter-

mined now to preserve my dignity. I paused at the top wanting to throw one more scrap at the panting masses below.

"I'll be back." I said

Where the Austrian accent came from is anyone's guess, but I took it as an encouraging sign that my wellspring of creativity hadn't completely dried up.

That 'C' word may be the buzz du jour, as they say in the classics, but for my money the old fashioned but honest 'F' word suits the film industry to a 'T'.

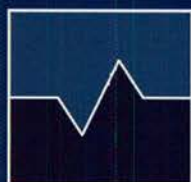
Even the animals in Babe copied Guntis!

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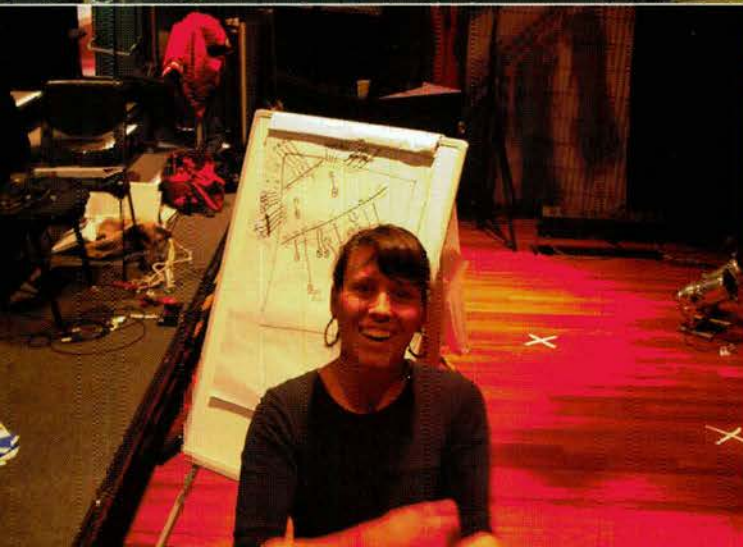
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When BRIGHT isn't BRIGHT ENOUGH

Reviewing the Martin Mac2000 Wash

The Martin Mac2000 Wash is the latest addition to the Martin family of moving lights.

John Grimshaw took one for a quick test drive – now with sunglasses off and the bright spots in the vision now fading, we can share what we found...

This is a wash light – no gobos, ripple effects, iris or any other 'focused' effects. So the features list might seem a little short for those unfamiliar with lighting design: CMY colour mixing; Variable CTC (Colour correction); 2 colour wheels; Variable beam size (zoom); and Barn doors (optional).

The Mac2000 Wash also comes with optional Fresnel, PC and Wide lenses.

One of the first things that you notice when you open up the 2k Wash is the unusual configuration for the zoom control. In a conventional fresnel, the spot/flood control is achieved by moving the lamp and reflector assembly in relation to the lens.

Move the lamp/reflector close to the lens and the light floods out wide. Move it to the back of the housing and the beams 'spots' in. Obviously it would be a little tricky (and dangerous) to move the metal halide discharge lamp inside the housing. Other manufacturers have usually taken the path of using a diffuser to widen the beam – sometimes this is a variable diffuser or it could be a par shaper. However, these options do not really provide an effective variable zoom as does the humble incandescent manual fresnel. Martin however have done some quite different and very interesting.

They have fixed the lamp position in the usual place at the back of the housing, and focused the

light up the centre just as is done for the 'profile' version of the Mac2k. In order to emulate the effect of the variable zoom, they have gone back and looked at how the manual fresnel works, and replaced the moving lamp/reflector with a specialised lens that emulates the position of the lamp/reflector.

With the beam of light shooting out in a straight line from the lamp housing, the light beam strikes the lens and is spread out in a controlled way so that if this lens is moved up close to the front lens, the beam is flooded by 70%. Retracted all the way to the back of its movement, and the beam 'spots' in nicely. To get that extra little narrowing of the beam angle, the lens has actually been sliced into two parts, and can be snapped out of the way for the narrowest possible beam.

This design is a real innovation in lamp design, because it is the first fundamental change for the last 60+ years in the way the lenses are managed. Just looking at the design, you can see this is a far more efficient way of directing the light through a wash fitting, because the amount of light lost to the housing is considerably reduced.

The test unit was initially run up with the housing off so that the internal operation of the light could be viewed during the review. What this also did was show how much spill light was lost

inside the housing – and the answer is very little. That means that most of the light generated by the lamp is going where it should be – out the front lens.

Conventional light manufacturers should take a good look at this design (no doubt patented), because not only does it manage the light path more efficiently thus increasing output, the chances of blowing a lamp through shock during focussing would be mostly eliminated.

Running Tests

Up and running, this lantern was bright. VERY bright. Far beyond the ability for my light meter to actually make a reading within 3m of the unit. Sunglasses on, the lantern was manipulated to see its movement speeds and quality. As expected, the Mac2k Wash is not the fastest moving light on the planet – it has quite a bit of weight to move around. While this is bound to disappoint the Vari-lite devotees (and their ultra-fast response lanterns), the unit is certainly not slack in movement speed – more than adequate for most applications.

The colour control is VERY smooth, with absolutely no tell-tale signs of mottled colour at any point of a colour fade – in each of the CMY and CTC variable colours. The beam output appeared perfectly flat with all of the lenses. This includes the fresnel lens where it was not possible to see any of the concentric rings projected onto screen specially set up to try and pick this fault.

The fixed colours have all of the usual suspects, including a UV effect filter which was quite effective due to bright output of the unit. Apparently a future upgrade to the Mac2k Wash will be the ability to swap out one of these fixed colour wheels for another variable one. Show Technology indicated that the first one that is likely to become available will be a variable red filter (for the purists that just can't get the right red from CMY, and don't want to 'bump' to the red in the colour wheel), followed by a variable blue filter wheel.

Testing for the barndoors showed up some interesting issues which lighting designers should consider if they are planning to use these lanterns for the first time. The four doors are controlled by separate channels in the DMX stream – as you would expect. The programming of the doors by Martin is quite smart because no matter what levels you try to set the doors at, they simply will not hit each other. This has the advantage of making operation of the doors reasonably failsafe. The disadvantage is that you may not be able to achieve the precise look you need if you barndoors are too close together.

In a theatrical context this problem could be overcome by 'extending' the size of the barndoors with a little creative gaff and blackwrap work, but a reasonable amount of testing would need to go into what the subsequent results would be of doing this.

There was another interesting discovery in the

use of the barndoors. A minor problem of barndoor wobble. While the smooth movement of the pan and tilt did not cause any significant issues of wobbling doors, the barndoor mechanism's own 90 degree rotation caused quite dramatic 'jitter' movement in the doors. That means that rotating the barndoors is not something you would want to do with light coming out the front end of the lantern. Obviously, this is not a significant issue (who would really want to rotate the barndoors 'live' anyway), but certainly an issue that lighting designers should be aware of.

In terms of operational noise, the Mac2k Wash is not a silent fixture. While the obvious intention for the unit is for use in a theatrical context, the steady background noise of eight of these units would be quite identifiable in a 2000 seat theatre during a quiet scene. This is unlikely to be a problem in shows like "We Will Rock You" or "The Lion King", but the opera lighting designers should not to get too excited just yet.

In any case, the most significant feature of this unit is the sheer intensity of the light output. While it is possible that the residents of my quiet Blue Mountains townships thought that a close encounter was here on the night this writer tested it, it was in fact the wash with the PC lens fitted. With this kind of output, the lantern would be a serious contender for stadium events like Olympics, or the Rugby World Cup opening event.

An interesting point on the lenses – the PC lens glass protrudes significantly from its housing, so special care will need to be taken when handling and travelling this lantern with that lens fitted. Also, the PC lens is very heavy compared to the other lenses, so this is certainly something that should be changed while the lamp is accessible on the ground. At the opposite end of the scale, the wide beam lens is quite light in comparison, and looks somewhat like a Par64 lens.

The barndoors are fitted with their own lens – which sits between the fresnel and the wide beam lenses in terms of beam width. The documentation indicates that it is possible to fit any of the other lenses in the barndoor unit, but the lens for this unit has apparently the optimum beam angle for using the barndoors. Time will tell if lighting designers agree with Martin on this point.

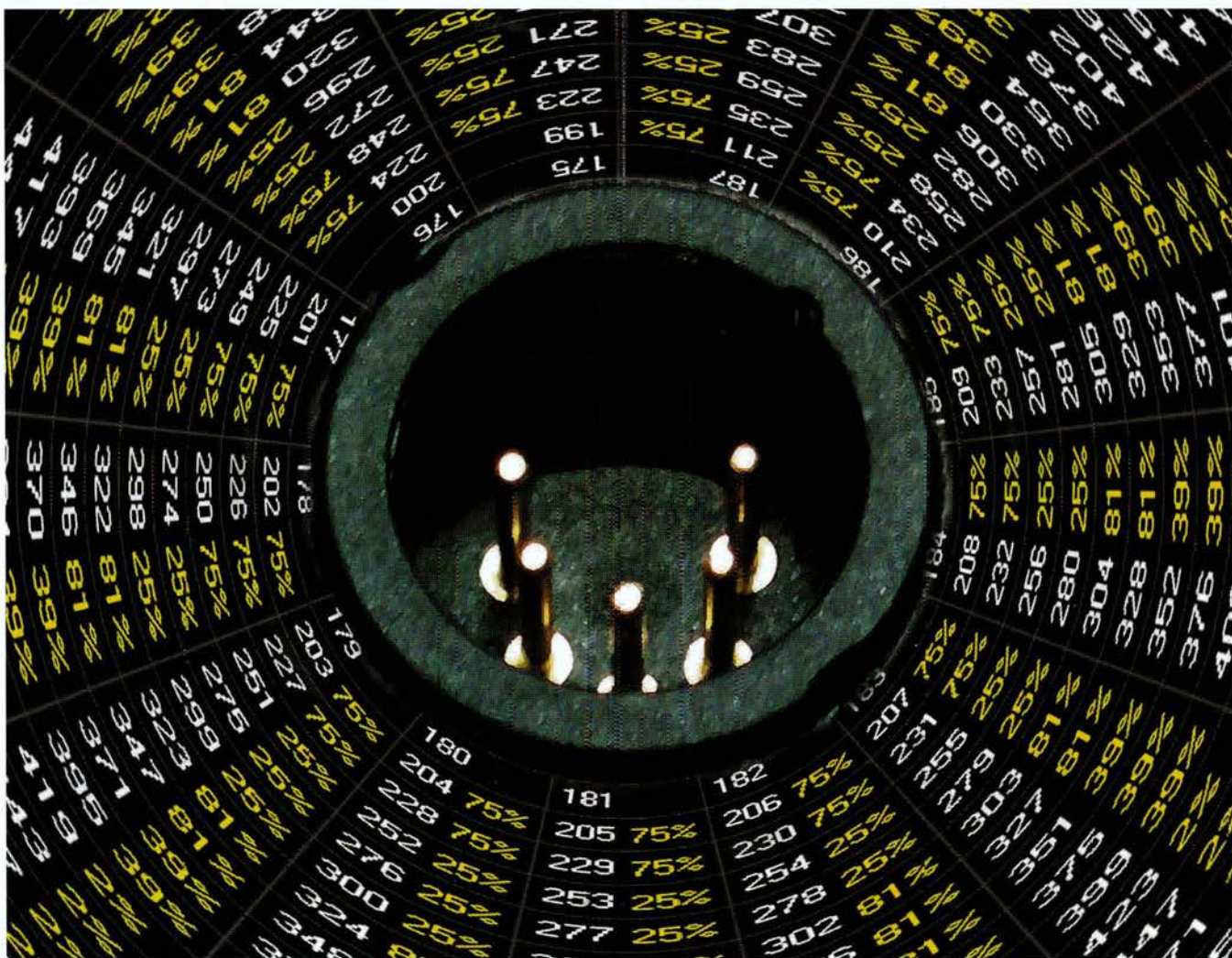
Finally, this lamp certainly lives up to the all-round quality the previous Martin lanterns have achieved and lighting designers are used to. Aside from the brightness, the quality and evenness of the diffusion and colours make this a very versatile unit.

Interesting sales point for the Mac 2k in Australia....

According to Show Technology, there are some 400 x Mac2000 profiles, 130 x Mac2000 Performances and 80 x Mac2000 Washes in the country at the moment.

That is more than 15,300 DMX channels of Mac2000s!





Easy Show Control – with DMX Listener

What initially started as an exercise in seeing how complicated DMX software really is to produce, John Grimshaw posed a show control software concept to a software developer. Some months later, he came up with this...

As we discovered in the last issue of CX, there are many examples of software to replace lighting desks, design lighting, and offline edit a show. However, there are almost no "off the shelf" pieces of software that we were able to find to allow a standard lighting desk to control a computer and its software. In particular, software that would be useful in a show like audio and video playback and PowerPoint. This was the concept given to Peter Grimshaw, and the results are breathtaking.

This piece of software (with a hardware DMX to USB interface) is designed to allow the automation of numerous simple show activities. It uses the DMX output from any lighting desk to trigger these actions.

In its most basic form, this software provides a display of exactly what levels the DMX stream contains. In other words, Lighting Designers can now have a remote display of DMX levels during rehearsal or the show itself without interrupting the desk operator.

Or, Lighting Technicians now have a DMX diagnostic tool to fault find the DMX stream itself. Place the DMX receiver at the end of the DMX chain, and you can "see" that the data is making its way to the end of the DMX chain and therefore to every lantern on the chain. Another use could be if your lighting desk does not have a video display, or if you want to watch a different display, but still see the channel levels.

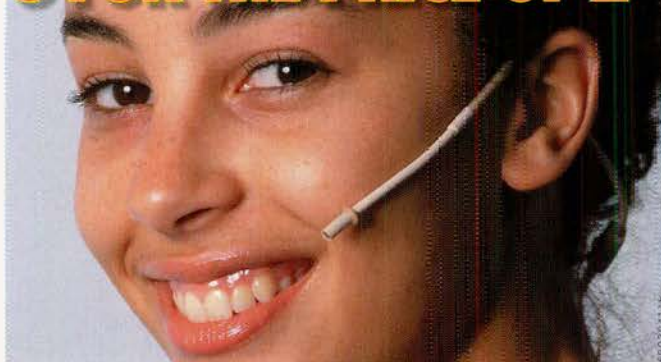
These are all interesting and useful applications for the software, but the real advantages lie in the ability for the software to control the computer itself. To understand this, it is best to get a little bit of an understanding about how the software works.

The Software

The software has been built in two parts. One is the DMX Host – which receives the DMX input from the lighting desk and gives it to the computer. The second is the DMX Listener – which displays the DMX channel levels, and controls the computer as re



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quired. The DMX Host (with the input hardware) can be installed on a separate computer to the DMX Listener if there is an IP Address connection between the computers. This is usually an Ethernet or WiFi network connection, but it also means you could use the Internet – but we'll get to that later.

The DMX Host can serve any number of DMX Listeners on a system (depending on how many licenses you buy). The system we tested allows two simultaneous DMX Listeners to attach to the host.

One Host has one 5pin input, and so only listens to one DMX Universe, but according to the documentation, additional hardware can expand the number of hosts more or less indefinitely. Each DMX Listener can tap into up to four DMX Hosts at the same time, giving the user the ability to monitor four DMX streams (2048 channels) in the one Listener session. The author of the software tells us that other than the speed of the computer's CPU, there is really no limit to the number of DMX Listener sessions that could be run at the same time.

Installation

The set up we looked at for this article involved a single DMX Host running to a DMX Listener via a hardwired local Ethernet network. Installation was very simple, with a supplied executable file installing the software, and the drivers for the USB DMX-In installed after they were manually selected from the supplied CD Rom.

When DMX Host is run for the first time, a relatively simple interface guided us through the process of attaching to the USB hardware, and then it began what it calls a 'host session'.

The DMX Listener was then started. While it had to be told what 'host' to listen to, without worrying too much about the settings for the connection we were able to very easily get the DMX Listener showing the levels from our DMX test source. This all took less than 5 minutes.

Show Control

What we really wanted to play with was the show control part of the software, and the number of options are fairly comprehensive. To make the show control operate, all you do is double click on a channel, and that brings up a suite of options that you can make that channel operate. These were available from a drop down menu, so we went though and looked at all of the options available:

- Application Control – this allows DMX Listener to control ANY piece of software

you have loaded onto the computer. Minimise, Maximise and Swap commands bring the application the 'front', while a 'Send Keys' action can manipulate the software via whatever Hotkeys that software uses to function.

- CD Audio Control – Audio track playback control for automating audio cues from the built-in CD-Rom. Interestingly, this can make the CD-Rom operate like a professional cuing CD Player – limiting track playback to a single track if needed, and cuing to specific points on the CD.

- Audio Control – This feature controls the volume, balance and mute over the audio that is outputted by the audio card selected as the default output device.

- Cue Control – Allows the lighting desk to display cues by number or text and trigger events like audio files. We will expand on this interesting little feature a bit later.

- Document Control – This works like the Application Control, except that the control and 'send keys' commands are sent to a specific file you want to open rather than the whole application.

- Media Control – to make the DMX Listener directly play audio files without loading specific media playback software.

- PowerPoint Control – to make the DMX Listener directly control PowerPoint to playback a 'presentation'. For those that know a little about PowerPoint, this feature would thus allow complex visual display and audio playback on demand and on cue with the lighting. It can combine video files, still images, text and audio files in whatever way you need to present it.

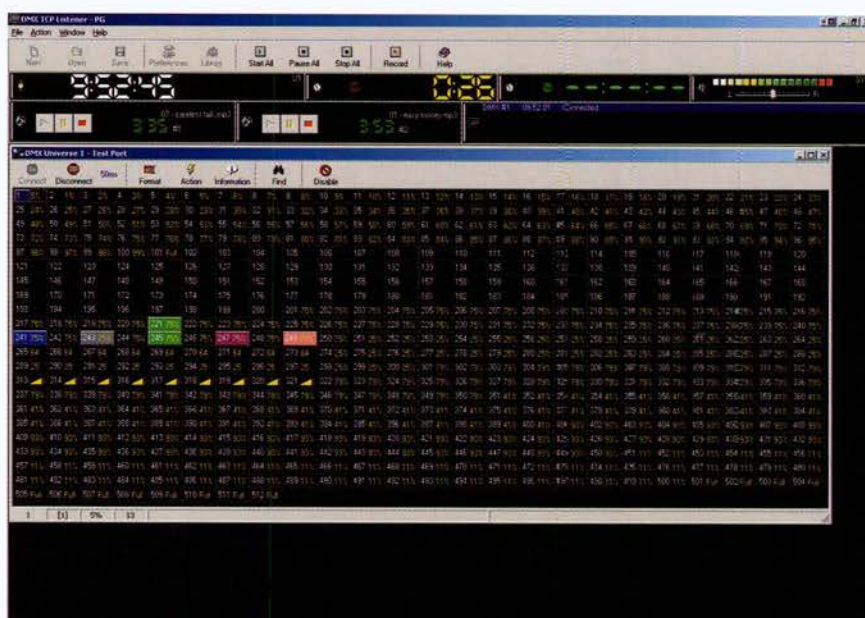
- System Control – This option is mostly aimed at allowing the user to control the two



This is the main interface of the DMX Listener. The coloured channels indicate that those channels have defined actions. Below this, we set up three rows of channels to show the different display options, with each row showing (in order) Hex Values, Calculated Values, and a graphical representation. Other things to note about the interface shown...

There are two displays of the current Media playing (in this case, audio files but it could be CD tracks). This display operates if you use the two internal players, rather than external software like WinAmp or Windows Media Player.

Also worth noting the volume control display moves if levels are adjusted by the program; the two stop watches (the yellow one is going); and the real time display. Not shown are the Cue and System Message displays.



Pricing

A software/hardware package including the USB DMX-in and DMX Host/Listener (two licences allow a maximum of two DMX Listeners to the DMX Host) will cost \$900. If you have your own DMX input hardware, the software only version will be \$450, but you should contact BTM Innovation to see about having that hardware supported by the DMX Host.

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stop watches built into the system. Useful for giving a stage manager a running time of the show, or a particular cue. These stop watches can also trigger actions at specified times, so you can use them to run other external events.

- **External Programs** – The software has some predefined keyboard definitions to control a few popular PC applications. In this release, the applications include WinAmp 3 and Windows Media Player but the software author tells us that more applications are on the way.

You can set each channel to perform just one action described above, or make that channel perform up to 100 different actions – one for each percentage point of the level. The number of actions for a channel can be specified to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 20, 25, 50 or 100. There is a further setting called “All” which actually enables 255 actions per channel, but you will need to be able to manipulate DMX levels in hexadecimal (0-255) rather than percentage (0-100%).

Just looking at the above features, you can see that is opens a range of possibilities, including audio playback control (cuing AND levels) for theatrical performances, to sync a corporate presentation (or parts of a presentation) to lights, and playing video files on demand.

One of the more interesting features we explored was the Cue Control feature, and with this you can replace much of the repetitive tasking for a stage manager in a show. Things like tannoy calls to cast and crew can be automated – and because the system is controlled by the lighting desk, you could easily set up the system to cope with subtle and major changes in curtain times. The cueing can be performed by audio files playing into the tannoy and/or talkback as well as via a message displayed on the screen. A screen displayed message could easily be converted to a video signal (many computer video cards can do this without purchasing more hardware), and that signal can be distributed as required.

Another interesting aspect to this software is that, with a bit of setup, you could use it to coordinate huge shows in different areas of a city (or even in different cities around the world), because the whole thing can work though the internet. We tested the DMX Listener in Sydney connecting to a DMX Host in Adelaide, and the lag-time on the display was barely noticeable.

In all, there are many features of this product that are only available on the most expensive of lighting desks, and there are some features that are not available by any other readily accessible means – a very impressive tool. It will be interesting to see what the lighting and show designers out there can do with this.

Possible Applications for DMX Listener:

DMX Diagnostics – The data that is sent around the venue to control those lights is susceptible to all sorts of problems – unterminated lines causing reflected data packets, sub-standard cable reducing the quality of the signal, old or well used connectors can deteriorate the signal significantly, and maybe the desk itself is sending strange data.

DMX Listener enables a technician to see the actual DMX values being sent – either as the actual 0 to 255 DMX data, or as 0 to 100% levels most of us are used to. If placed at the end of the DMX chain, you can diagnose if a fault is at the lantern/dimmer or coming from the desk by bypassing a suspect unit/cable and seeing if the data remains corrupted.

Lighting Designer's Tool – After plotting the show, the Lighting Designer watches many of the subsequent rehearsals so at the he/she can tweak the levels as needed. Unfortunately, the lighting desk is often not easily accessible to see the channel levels, so the DMX Listener can be used by the designer to watch the show levels from anywhere there is either a DMX point, or an Ethernet connection to the computer that is receiving the DMX. Wireless Ethernet would allow the designer to see the status of the desk from anywhere within range.

The software can also take “snapshots” of the DMX data and mark these as cues. This data can be saved as an alternative way to save the show data. Then during show playback, a display shows if the currently output DMX data matches a specific cue – maybe the stage manager will be able to see what lighting cue they are up to. According to the author, a future version is planned to be able to read and save shows into a number of lighting desk formats – making show conversions from one format to another considerably easier.

Show Control – This is the function that the software was originally designed to perform. Any of the received DMX channels can be allocated to trigger almost any action that the computer can already do. The primary way this is achieved is via a specialised keystrokes system, where any application that can be controlled via keyboard commands can be sent preset commands via levels of specific DMX channels. This obviously requires a little bit of setup, but once the computer knows how to interpret the DMX into keystrokes the rest is easy.

The software also has some other built in show control options, such as direct control over Microsoft PowerPoint presentations. Next and previous slide transitions and jumping to specific slide locations, and even some control over the size and placement of the image within the screen. DMX Listener can also directly play most forms of media including sound files and CDs, fade the audio levels and balance of an installed soundcard, as well as muting the output signal.

This combined with direct control over audio file selection and playback puts which can give total control of complicated sound effects options into the hands of the show designer.

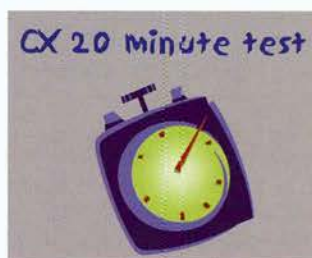
This is the USB device that is designed to be used with the system.





InnovaSON Sy80, the Global Console

There are 80 faders - and they are all identical. You choose what you want them to be. This makes the Sys 80 stand alone compared to others!



The French contender!

Last issue we detailed the British DiGiCo T5, and the Japanese Yamaha PM1D. Also in this exalted company is America's Euphonix, who make slightly more broadcast skewed consoles. We'll look at them soon!

Applying the same 20 minute test to Innova SON's Sy80 console as I applied to the DiGiCo D5 and the Yamaha PM1D is not as simple. Because without a background briefing on the Innova SON, you can't readily discern what is going on.

This is because the Innova SON is simpler. Confused? Let me explain.....

Walk up to the Sy80 and you see an attractive and apparently simple work surface. The designers appear to have taken a leaf from aviation digital cockpit design, because less is better. There are no profusions of coloured lights to confuse you, and just one elegant 17" LCD screen.

There are eighty faders, each with an illuminated signal ramp above it, and each with a couple of switches. A four character screen tells you what is happening with each fader. There is a simple central section, with buttons and a trackball. Then there is a

cluster of rotary controls to the right of the screen.

I try to burnle my way through, using the patch already set up on the board. The desk is set up for this session with things I understand, like drums, Rhodes (keyboard), vocals and things that are obviously inputs. But some of the faders are electronically labelled weird for this particular project by Dominique Delguste who is, after all, from Europe. They do things slightly different there.

I can select a channel and alter EQ with the four way fully parametric EQ nicely detailed on the screen. And I am happy and able to adjust input gain and operate the noise gate and compressor.

But I can't see how the signal departs the desk, because there is no formal output section!

This is where Innova SON have possibly stepped ahead of their competition, depend-



ing on your point of view. The Sy8C has can have up to 80 inputs, 80 outputs and 48 busses. You would use two busses for stereo outputs, the rest can be auxiliary outputs, groups or matrix outputs. You select what, and you assign it to one of the 80 faders.

So once I have had that explained, and come to understand the way the desk is labelled for this particular project, I can make sound.

Now I've mixed and equalised, I am thinking, "how can I send some vocal out an auxiliary send to an effects unit?" When I select the channel, there is no apparent auxiliary control anywhere.

Scratching for a moment, I realise the auxiliary busses have been defined - created out of the 48 available busses. So the auxiliary one master fader is over at the top right, on the upper bank of 16 faders. When I select that channel auxiliary master all other input faders suddenly snap to become auxiliary one sends! Other desks do this too, but they also usually have the old, traditional rotary auxiliary 'send' control, either physically on the panel, or emulated on the screen. InnoVA SON said, "Why do we need this?" and they were absolutely correct. Unnecessary and possibly this is a better way!

Looking closer at the surface, the

simplicity sinks in.

When I look at The Screen, the master fader display is still there - despite the actual fader state being tied to whatever is selected for auxiliary one. I'm just one button away from normal desk functioning.

The numbers don't add up when I think 80 inputs and 48 busses, because there are 80 channels (faders) on the surface. So how do I go down a layer?

"We don't do layers", says Dominique who is patiently observing me bumble around his console. "We have a deployment zone instead."

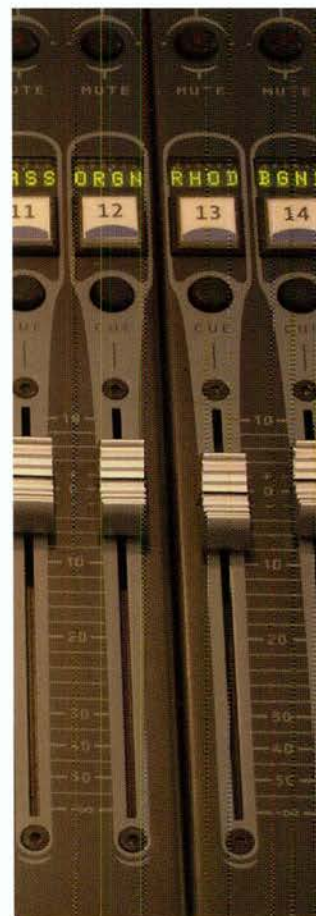
This is a cool idea. What you do is this:

Select a group of channels, like drums.

You might want them to be patched to the first eight faders on the surface. The ninth fader becomes their master like a VCA master.

Now imagine you've also patched four backup vocals to faders one through four. But they are already part of the drum setup, right? Touch fader nine ten - the drum master, and collapse the first eight channels. Relabel them - one to four are backup vocals, now fader ten is the backup vocal master.

You need to see it and to touch it to love it. The idea of layers, where eight or twelve





Standard screen (below). All screen views have a button. You can see all channel status on the lower part of the screen.

faders have layer 1, layer 2 and so on, is obsolete at Innova SON. You are really in control of your art, because you are deciding what ANY of the 80 faders will do, on any memory page file.

If it was my setup, I'd send all my collapsing (deployment) channels up to the top right 16 faders, with the masters for each set, like drums, percussion, brass and so on down under on the 16 lower faders.

So I've had my 20 minutes, and I can

scoot around the console without hassles.

Now let's talk memory pages. Now I can set up my own project, where all our stuff is labelled and identified using the little digital scribble strips.

For my hypothetical project I have a total of 56 inputs. Plus my effects returns are in these channels, with these little labels:

57	Lexicon left	486L
58	Lexicon right	486R
59	TC M3000 left	TC-L
60	TC M3000 right	TC-R
61	SPX 990 left	SX-L
62	SPX 990 right	SX-R

Now I want these masters on my Sy-80:

- 14 x auxiliary sends
- 15 'vca' style masters (not really voltage controlled amplifiers, but they act like that!)
- 2 stereo 'A' system masters
- 2 stereo 'B' system masters

... for a grand total of 96 'channels'. But I only have 80 faders on the control surface. So here's what I do:

Establish the 12 auxiliary sends and the 4 master system faders on the upper right bank of 16 faders. Then the lower bank of 16 faders are the vca masters. So the two right hand blocks of faders are all output related.

There are 3 blocks of 16 faders left - 48 all together - but I have 62 things to control. Now I'm going to utilise a 'deployment' section of the desk! The way I do this is to allocate a fader for all those deployed



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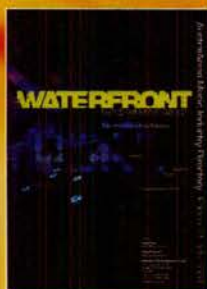
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channels that I want to use – let's say drums as they normally utilise the most number of channels for any group of instruments. I choose a fader, say it is the fader nearest the master section I just made. I call it DRUM and then link it to the first 9 faders on the desk at the far left. This fader is, for arguments sake, fader number 48.

Faders 1 – 9 are now drum faders, with all 9 drum inputs. I have them linked to the expanded master which has been located at fader 48. By selecting fader 48, faders 1 through 9 all show their respective drum channels. But if I select any other input fader 48 again, faders 1 through 9 collapse back to nothing! They are available, again, for input allocation!

In this way I can start my percussion patch at fader 1, so that faders 1 through 9 also control percussion. I can link them to another deployed master fader, on – say – fader 47, so that I have just 2 master faders that will select between drums or percussion. I have now effectively put 18 input channels on to two faders. It's like making a layer, which is how Yamaha and DiGiCo deal with extra inputs and less faders but not loosing access to my main mix.

I'm still short a bunch of faders, so I'll just do the same thing with the string section, and set up a strings master. Under After strings, I'll put the brass. Then I'll make a guitar master, and under after those faders I'll put the keyboards. Do you see what I mean?

Innova SON have taken the control surface and said, 'you decide, sound person, where you want stuff. If you are left handed, throw the master section to the left! If you are dyslectic, have your stuff in random, confused order everywhere! And if you are a stage monitor engineer, fill the console up with auxiliary sends. You are well catered for as well.'

Whatever I decide to do, I can have another lot of patches and settings on another project file. Each project file has pages, and each page is a memory snapshot of the entire console. There can be up to one thousand pages in a project.

In typical use, I'd be recalling pages as cues, and I can set a crossfade time for them.

There's a lot of depth in the

software, with things like a 'Relax' button that lets you take a channel, or some of a channel's features, out of the memories. So you could hold the main vocal fader level at whatever it is currently set at, unaffected by heaps of changes between pages.

Innova SON have a couple of detail changes to the control surface and the software coming as this is written, ahead of shipping the Sy80 during the life of this issue. Something they can do that wasn't on the prototype is give a warning if one of the dual power supplies on the control surface fails. Another feature in the 'that'd be nice' dept would be some user assigned buttons, so you could have some important pages (or desk settings) accessed with a single button stroke. All live digital consoles need this, so an engineer can set a 'default' scene or page in case they lose their way in cue world.

Outside the console, there is a FOH 'local' processing rack with audio and digital in's and out's, and down a fibre optic co-axial cable are the two is the remote stage racks rack. If the control surface stops happening, the racks keep passing audio, leading to the tempting possibility of packing up the FOH desk during the last encore.

It's an intriguing system, and one that I suspect will win a lot of hearts and minds, at a pricepoint about two-thirds that of a PM1D or a D5 DiGiCo.

- Julius Grafton



The hardware setup screen (below) gives you a visual idea what is going on.





Method Acting

Actor Katharine Jones plays a young tearaway chick in Ensemble Theatre's production of David Williamson's Birthrights. So her appearance on stage in tight jeans, grooving away complete with a roll-your-own spliff is wholly in character. Sitting in row M, the suspicion the thing in her lips was stuffed with Acapulco Gold grew as That Distinctive Aroma wafted across the blue rinsed audience.

"It's marry-you -warnna" hissed Dorry to Thelma in the seats next to us. "It was a chemical compound", a show official quickly confirmed the following day. "Not sure what it's called.... and she doesn't inhale, either." Ahh, the magic of theatre! Whatever happened to method acting anyway?

Mr Lycra bares all

<http://artelex.com> is home to a really excellent Entertainment Electrical Safety paper, produced by Paul Matthews to support his lectures at Juliusmedia's Entertainment Production College.

Paul is a Sydney based entertainment electrician and technician, with lots of sound and lighting experience. A smart, interesting and sincere guy, he also assists community radio. As with many net sites, some of the (ahem) personal interests of the individual come through.

So we were browsing the home page, and were not entirely surprised to find sections devoted to things like The Electric Train, amongst the P. M. Matthews Audio, and Artist Electronics areas. But it was the

one at the bottom (Under Mr. Lycra) that caused us to hover over the mouse. Yep, it's called: The Clothing Optional Existence. Naturally we didn't go in there.....

Tube (your wallet) later

CX Web ran an article on Tube-o-lator in February. Just recently, CX correspondent Peter Patrick had a call at home in Toowoomba from a man in Europe who said he was the inventor of Tube-O-Lator varnish. "He was pretty pissed about comments attributed to me (on CX Web) that the product was "rubbish". He asked me to print a retraction and then he would send me a free sample to test".

We're waiting for the lawsuit, and Peter is still waiting for the sample. The Tube-o-lator idea is that you open up your equipment and apply a lacquer using a cotton tip to all the chips inside. Then after a very lengthy 'curing' process, they claim your gear sounds way better. We said in February that there is no way this stuff can work, and that it isn't a good idea to go opening up expensive equipment and splashing expensive lacquer around. The warning stands.

There is endless yada yada bla bla yak yak supporting the thing on their website, go read about it at: www.altmann.haan.de/tubeolator/default.htm

Sure saves Gaff Tape!

When the multicore is run out for shows at Sydney's Darling Harbour, it's floated out. Best if the multipins stay dry, chaps.....

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www.thesmokinggun.com is a site full of ridiculous contract demands. Go see!

Katharine Jones lights up



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So how did it happen for you?

Chris Keeble is from Parramatta Leagues Club in Sydney, where he has been very active trying to lobby the state government there to relax heavy proposed new taxes on the club industry. He also has a project coming up, an art exhibition called "The Cherry Pickers". It's based around how people lost their virginity. He says he's been collecting stuff for ages, and of course it will have a section devoted to the Entertainment industry.

It will have profiles on how people lost their virginity. "Funny harmless stuff about the 'Rite of Passage' we all go through and can celebrate - for most of us, anyway" he says. Send your recollections to: chris.keeble@parraleagues.com.au

Flame free Tommy

TOMMY finally got a run at Riverside Theatres Parramatta, after the amateur production was booted out of Panther's World Of Entertainment in Sydney. Readers may recall last issue that the production was ready for previews when someone managed to ignite not one, but both house curtains.

The call for a debate on the safety issues that arise from this remain answered by the club on CX Web. The club's Evan Theatre was extensively damaged once the sprinkler system kicked in, and a large stink arose when club management rebooked, then cancelled, future Tommy dates. The Riverside fire marshal was seen checking the compliance patch on the house curtains as we went to press.....

All promoters are evil, right?

Stuart Coupe is better as a writer than a promoter. so his book 'The Promoters' (Inside stories from the Australian rock industry) is an easy read. He details his failings and names a dreary succession of loser Z grade artists he was unwise or unlucky enough to tour in Australia.

At one point his wife and kids had no money for food, some blues guitarist from the USA was into drugs and debasement, and the whole thing lurched along in predictable style.

Michael Gudinski gets kudos for enjoying a party, this part of the book is in very close proximity to Coupe also talking about his own use of drugs and love of a party. Gudinski appeared unfazed when we

asked him whether he thought the book was fair. "Yeah, and I'm on the cover too", he laughed.

Sadly the best story has no names, it involves an act from Miami that sounds strangely like KC and the Sunshine Band, whose one time Australian promoter may have been, um, not very professional? Coupe tries too hard to avoid slander! No fun.

For our taste the book really glorifies drug use - despite many promoters (Edgley, Coppell, Dainty) being family oriented and clearly not sitting in the drug and booze addled world that Coupe portrays as the music industry.

This issue's Nice Story

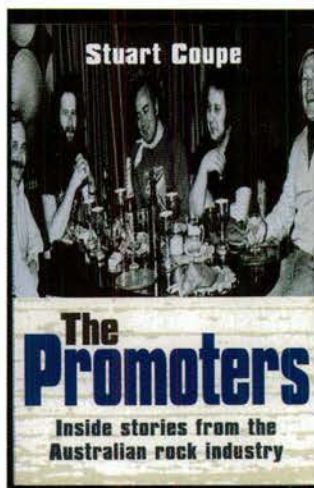
When office junior Megan Johns started at IMMEDIA!, she moved down from Newcastle and could only afford to buy a bike to come to work from her new Sydney gig. Only a few weeks into the job, someone came along with bolt cutters and chopped the chain, swiping the \$500 bike from right in front of the office where it was tethered to a parking sign.

When Immedia owners Phil Tripp and Lisa Treen discovered this, they scoured the neighbourhood to no avail, called the police (good luck!) and then decided that they would buy her a new bike. Since they had their two bikes being repaired and ready for pickup, they fooled Megan into believing that they were going to distribute brochures, stopped at the bike shop and hauled her in to take her choice. She refused. She wouldn't let them do it.

"We convinced her only by showing her the tax advantage of us purchasing a corporate courier vehicle that we would depreciate rapidly and be able to buy as a company expense" Phil told CX.

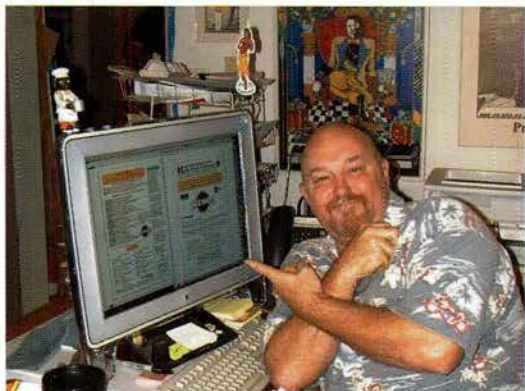
"Because we would be in profit this financial year, there was a tax advantage and by depreciating it in one year to nothing since it's under \$500 (she didn't pick as expensive a model as she had lost), we'd actually make good out of it. She only accepted the bike on the terms that she wouldn't take over the asset until it had been written off."

Now that's a great staffer!



According to this book, copious drug use is just fine.

Phil Tripp with his mondo huge Apple Cinema screen



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Industry Accreditation Simplified

Legal rights and responsibilities of event and production firms and crews is a growing area no one can afford to avoid. There are severe legal hurdles that need to be negotiated at every level of show business.

In West Australia the Events Industry Association has a firm grasp on the issues, and has introduced an Accreditation Programme that is nationally recognised by government and insurance companies. It falls under the National Tourism Accreditation Programme, and the EIA version is specific to companies operating within the events industry.

Eight Perth firms are undertaking the programme, which was launched at a seminar open to all industry players and hosted by EIA.

Within the Accreditation package are eight standards, many of which a business will need anyway. Example: in WA

you need Risk Management Plan for events larger than 3000 people.

The EIA Accreditation package has no mission statements and no vision statements. It is aligned with the general credo of the events and production industry,

which is to get it right the first time, and then to do it better.

EIA President Camille Bradsmith (pictured) says in general terms, the industry business plan is: "to create an entertainment environment that is

safe and profitable for everyone".

EIA has done a lot of development work establishing the accreditation programme, and expect many of their 100+ members to eventually be accredited.

Up to this time, the fee structure is a modest \$350 for the application, and \$125 for the audit. We've seen other programs that cost \$10,000+.

• Info at www.eia.com.au



Simple OH&S kit

The new Entertainment Industry Association has urged all employers, including self employed contractors, to heed new laws requiring an OH&S policy. Previously, this was required of firms employing 20 or more. Now it applies to sole traders and small firms.

The new laws have been a long time coming. In the state of NSW (Australia) the laws were enacted in 2001 - with a two year exemption for small business.

In effect the new law means anyone conducting business without an OH&S policy and plan can face very hefty fines. A Small Business Safety Starter Kit is available as a download - although tailored to NSW, it works for all states. See below.

ETA can report the kit is not hard to use. So get it now, use the link below!



Jump to Article # **329**
at
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Rigging Prices Rise

The new game between rigging firms is to try to second guess when every public liability insurance policy is due. This is because policy costs have risen by astounding amounts - a policy that cost \$8,000 three years ago, can now cost in excess of \$120,000.

The entertainment and film rigging market is feeling the brunt of an insurance shakeout that will not see prices fall. Essentially the entire insurance industry has not made any real profits for the past decade.

The human side of the story is that some rigging company owners, and indeed some insurance brokers, are suffering major stress as policy renewals come due. "It's now a new cost of doing business", an insurance broker told CX.

Rigging costs are set to quickly rise by as much as 25% across the industry.

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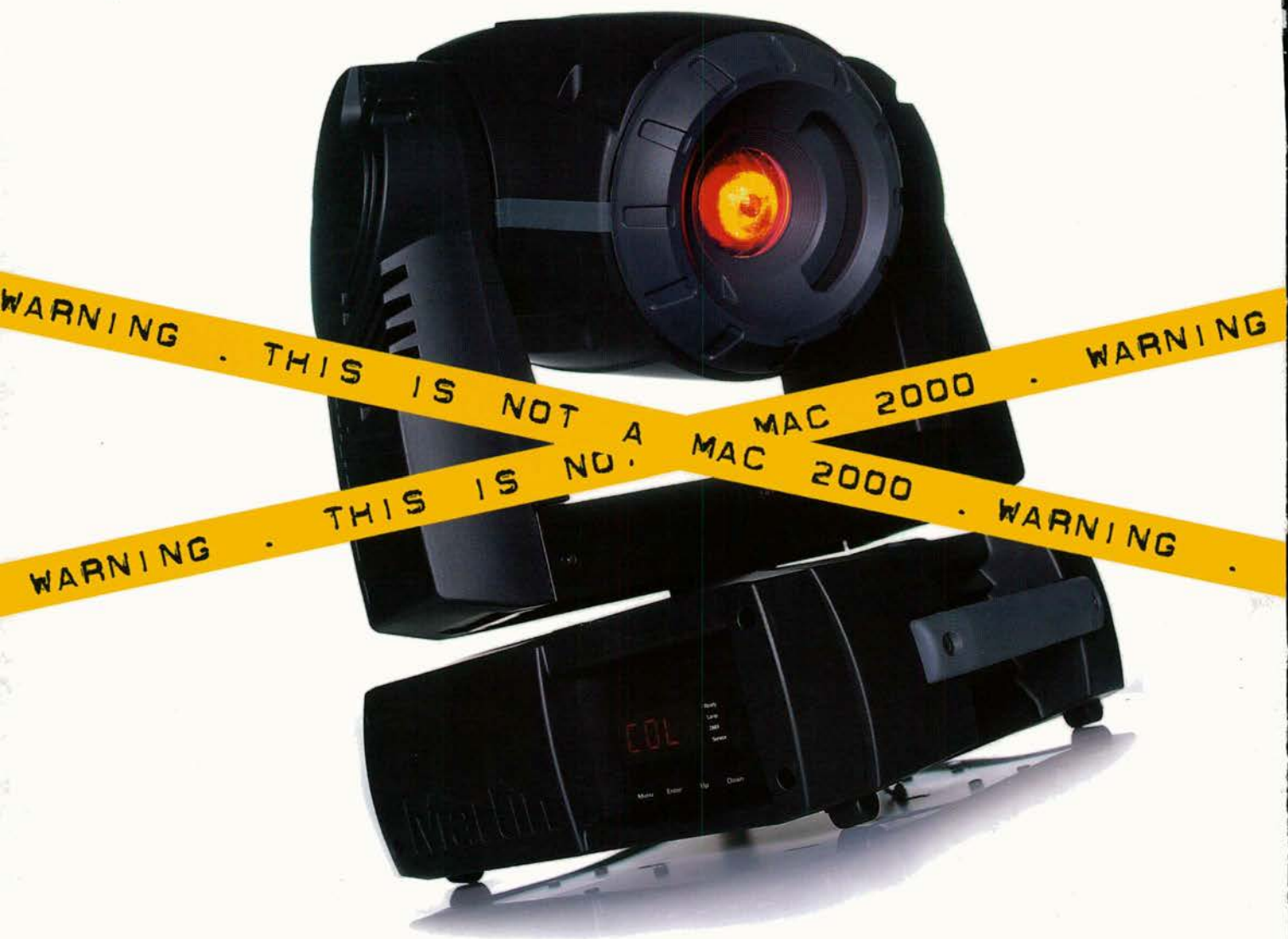


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