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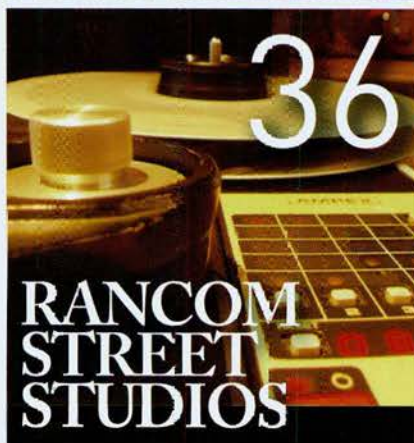
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GROOVIN THE MOO



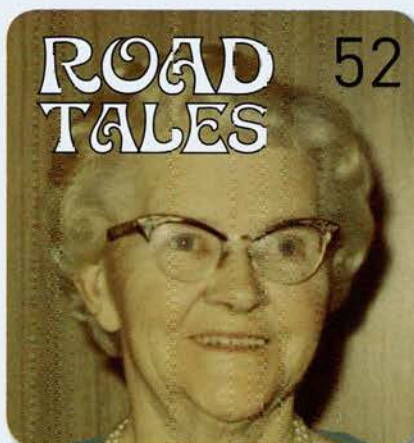
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"THE TM ARRAY™ TAKES THE LOW-END RIGHT OVER THE TOP"

- BIG MICK HUGHES

FRONT OF HOUSE ENGINEER, METALLICA

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- Paul Owen, Monitor Engineer, Metallica and VP & Co-owner, Thunder Audio

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CUE03

Entertainment Training Resource

This magazine contains much information which is a direct resource for anyone studying from the new Entertainment Training Package, named CUE03. From 2006 we will start to map certain articles direct against the relevant Unit of Competency within the package. This makes CX magazine a very cost effective resource for schools, colleges, and universities. Note that we offer a copyright release where articles in CX Magazine may be photocopied and distributed to students within an accredited course.

EDITORIAL

Some readers wonder why there's usually two editorial rants here. It's because there's two editors. I look after News, and Mackenzie does features. Often I don't see the features until you do. This came about because he started proofing the copy some years back, alarmed at my chronic and random abuse of the language. He was the training manager at the time, actually he still also does that job here at the conglomerate we call JuliusMedia.

Our magazine work spreads over the six week publication cycle but goes intense over the last fortnight. Other times we operate the college, do training, review new technology and be family people. A really good aspect of all this is that we are only in the office four days a week. We close the place Fridays. It's a luxury but also necessity given that the mental work we do is the hardest kind.

Steve James works fulltime on CX, pulling together the trade and maintaining the relationships vital to what we do. Monique Wilson and Helen Hunt back us up with admin and finance management. Then James Den-Ouden does the rest, he also trains at the college and also seeks new technology with at least one international trade show trip each year to see it all up close.

Another important delegation is the layout work done by Andrew McKinnon and Caitlin Burden at Bite Communications. Up till a few years ago, I did the layout and it fried my brains. Having creative specialists work on our layout has paid off enormously and the magazine is even more popular today because of it. Final credit to our printer for more than 13 years, Garry O'Brien and his specialists who always deliver the goods by working around the clock. And Tony De Domizio, our mailhouse dude. And the newsagents. And our guard dog Lucy.

Next year is our twentieth magazine anniversary so thinking turns towards the celebrations and also those welded on readers whose subscription number is less than 10,000 – we know who you are – some who've been here the whole time. You'll be invited to whatever we do around about August 15th next year.

A very strange story came to me out of Texas this week, courtesy of Richard Cadena. A bill before the Texas government came perilously close to outlawing lighting designers. The bill was apparently introduced to prevent unqualified persons practicing in certain elements of the construction business, but lighting design got included after the bill's sponsor received a complaint from a constituent about a shonky residential lighting designer.

It almost became (and may yet become) illegal for anyone other than '...licensed architects, interior designers, engineers, and commercial electricians...' to practice lighting design in the state of Texas.

How does this happen?

If you ask me (and for some reason people rarely do), it comes as a result of too many people expecting governments to look after them so they don't have to look after themselves, and it results in some really bad law worldwide.

Too often, we wind up with laws made by people who don't really understand them being enforced by people who don't get it. When a situation is complex, prescriptive law doesn't work because it doesn't allow for the variables. On the other hand, prescriptive law is much easier to enforce because there's no interpretation required – everything's either right or wrong. Regulators love it, but generally those being regulated don't think much of it at all.

Descriptive laws are a better bet, since they're based on results and cater for diversity, but they're a damn sight harder to enforce so lots of regulators just lay prescriptive expectations over the top and enforce those instead. So instead of having to comply with the law as written, you get to comply with the law as some other person interprets it – and you don't get to know what their interpretation is until afterwards.

And once the laws exist, it doesn't matter how stupid or unreasonable they are – law is law, and disagreeing with it doesn't entitle you to an exemption.

So next time you angry up about something and start muttering "there oughtta be a law about...", be careful. You might get what you wish for.

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Andy

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CX NEWS

DEVICES, PEOPLE AND CONCEPTS

AC/DC

BREAKING RECORDS AND SPL



500,000 tickets sold in 24 hours make AC/DC the most successful touring act in Australian history. Along with Pink's current 500,000 ticket national tour, the touring business is defying the downturn and supplying work for lots of crew.

When AC/DC do the largest venues in Australia next summer, they'll go back to the future by rejecting a line array PA, since it isn't loud enough. They will tour with a 1990's designed EV X-Array PA, same as they used for their last outing in Australia back in 2001.

In Europe the shows have been mixed on analogue Midas consoles, continuing the approach from the previous tour. "When something works as well as an AC/DC show, there's resistance to change", says an insider. The FOH console is a vintage Pro 4 Midas console, built in 1986.

According to Live Sound International, AC/DC's Young brothers are valve aficionado's and have developed a dislike for digital audio. Notwithstanding, the X-Array PA is now driven through Lake Contour processors – although one pass through analogue to digital processing is

gentler than a whole mixing console full of converters.

CX remembers an AC/DC tour in the mid 1990's where the band hired Robbie McGraph, who was then the sound engineer for Simply Red. (He went on from AC/DC to the Rolling Stones). "Have you got the right Robbie?" he asked them. At rehearsals he made a big mistake by suggesting some triggered drum samples. "There was a horrible silence", he said, "during which I realized I might be seated on the wing of the plane".

AC/DC are probably the only mega stadium band where all the Marshalls on stage actually work. They are not there for show. The guitar riffs can hit the front of house mixing riser at around 110db – before the PA is turned on.

There's no prohibition on lighting – the usual AC/DC tour approach is massive visuals, and this tour couples a giant inflatable Rosy (she is getting on a little these days) with a locomotive. Best left to the imagination.

Roll on February! CX has family tickets and earplugs arranged. 



QANTAS

QUIETLY CHANGES BAGGAGE RULES

Rude shock as bands charged thousands more at checkin

It was until recently a simple \$10 or \$20 extra charge to check in a guitar or roadcase when flying around Australia on QANTAS. Bands and crew always chose QF ahead of Virgin Blue because of this. Now the two airlines are charging airfreight rates for excess baggage.

Now QANTAS charges \$10 per kilo over the standard 23 kg limit, which amounts to about \$150 for a guitar in a case. A band with 4 guitars, 2 amp heads and a cymbals case could pay more than \$1000 one way. "Additional Collection on QANTAS, we have simplified rates...." says the internal airline memo, which insists that excess rates should be collected in Business Class and international First Class as well.

Events firms are incensed. "To add insult to injury you waited until the deadline for moving frequent flyer points from various credit cards to the Qantas system has expired and then announced the excess baggage changes", wrote Simon Kemp of Bramshaw ICS Conference

Continued page 10 

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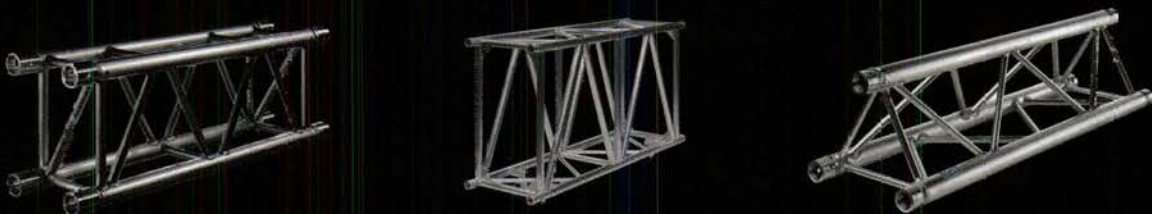
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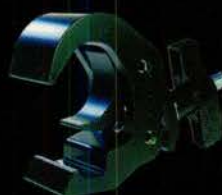
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Continued from page 8 •••••➤



Communications.

"You have removed what we regard was your last and only unique selling point - we always flew Qantas because you did not engage in this excess baggage treachery - now we will fly with anyone because it makes no difference", he concluded in an angry letter to the airline.

A tour manager who works with major bands told CX he had not yet been forced to pay the excess, because he always turns up two hours before departure and sweet talks the checkin staff. "But I will budget for this, because it could cost a lot", he says. His international tours sometimes need a 2 tonne truck for excess bags and backline essentials. At \$10 per kilo, that would be a \$20,000 cost if the airline applied its rules.

"I wrote a letter to the CEO but got no reply", he says.

"We have no package rate for excess baggage, just for air freight", explained Phil Robinson the National Sales & Client Manager for Show Group. Like other specialist travel agents, they arrange group travel and deeply discounted unconditional air travel that suits entertainment and events professionals. But they can't help defray the new excess baggage charges.

Anyone carrying professional equipment should be aware of the new charges, which go as high as \$50 per kilo on long haul international flights. This would add \$750 per guitar on a one way trip to London. With no distinction between a deeply discounted ticket costing under \$1,000 and a full rate First Class ticket costing ten times more, the new charges appear set to cost the airline its preferred carrier status with backstage crew. CX

COEMAR DESISTI AUSTRALIA IN RECEIVERSHIP

After 18 years the Melbourne based lighting importer and special projects firm Coemar DeSisti Australia has become a victim of the recession.

"Early this year major projects and many small projects were just cancelled outright", CEO Peter Kemp told CX. "The project market just died, it caught up with us through totally cancelled projects". He preferred not to elaborate on which projects the firm lost. The firm relied on major projects ahead of its bread and butter business, importing and reselling lighting.

The firm was a three way partnership between Peter Kemp, the Italian manufacturer Coemar, and another Italian manufacturer DeSisti. CX asked Peter what was his partner's reaction. "With today's economic situation I believe they have their own problems right now", Peter Kemp said, "and they've always left Australia alone to do our own thing as such".

Patterson Consulting was appointed as receivers on May 13th, and are seeking a buyer for the business as a going concern. This is not unrealistic - in its time Coemar DeSisti ran significant projects across Asia, the likes of which will return.

While major projects are an enormous challenge and can be highly lucrative, more emphasis on smaller scale work and product distribution could have made a difference in hindsight.

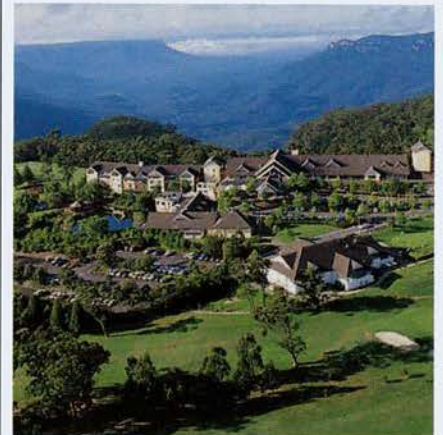
"How do you feel?", CX asked Peter Kemp. "Obviously not great after building this from nothing 18 years ago", he said. CX



Peter Kemp in happier times..

RESORT SELF DESTRUCTS AND GIGS GO

Fairmont Resort is a five star, 250 room property perched in a beautiful location above a scenic gorge in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. For many years it has been a highly desired convention destination where the who's who of Australian big business ran great events. It has a ballroom and conference facilities suitable for medium scaled events.



Until now. It's a strange story: Peppers managed the resort until after it was sold to an organization that rebranded the property as York Fairmont. When Peppers management ended, there was a devastating mass of staff cuts and confusion under the new regime.

CX understands the events industry has shunned the property even before reports of a customer rebellion over Easter, when the Sydney Morning Herald says 200 angry guests petitioned the hotel for refunds. Since then a litany of stories have emerged from the property, relating to lack of staff, cleanliness and even guest safety after it is alleged reception phones were diverted and an ambulance could not be called for a sick guest.

The venue is sorely missed by production suppliers and freelance crew who supplemented one of the few independent in-house audio visual teams, that had a very solid reputation. The exodus of experience from the resort has upset the local community, where local media has been in a frenzy reporting each new disaster.

York is owned by a mysterious firm with confusing multiple associate entities, some containing the name Brighton. It is reported that the organisation is run by Michael Kwok and Helen James who are thought to be a married couple.

They bought the property from Mirvac group for \$47 million in December 2007. No one understands their strategy, which appears to be wealth reduction. CX



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TRADE SHOW SEASON OPENS

(As organisers hit back)

Last issue CX reported on industry reaction to three trade shows in Sydney in July. Given the high stakes, we had some reaction. SMPTE have responded strongly, and Integrate cancelled their visitor advertising campaign in CX.

In July SMPTE and Integrate will stage their Sydney trade shows and before they open, both show organisers have banked their profits. Based on floor plans we have seen, and assuming everyone pays list rates, the shows are likely to make at least a quarter of a million each. CX is unaware of the status of the CEDIA trade show, also scheduled for July.

Whether sufficient trade visitors attend to produce a return on investment for exhibitors remains to be seen. The end of the stimulus tax break for business investment on June 30 means new business will be scarce, and business in general is down this winter.

Some firms will not exhibit at all. At presstime Integrate won't have exhibits from Group Technologies (DiGiCo, Nexio), Jands (Shure, JBL, ETC, Vari*Lite), ATT Audio Controls (Studer, Neve, Smart AV) and Show Technology (Martin, MA). These firms are not in difficulties, they mainly say they can't justify the expense and they can't see sufficient trade will attend.

For its part, Integrate claim several thousand pre-registrations ahead of their show which debuts July 6 and runs until July 8 at the EQ in Sydney's Moore Park.

SMPTE runs July 21 – 24 at Darling Harbour and, like Integrate, entry to the trade show is free after you register.

The heart of a trade show is the exhibitors, whose promotions and events account for most trade attendance. The life blood is visitors who are attracted by exhibitors and side events. Let's see what happens next. CX

SMPTE RESPONDS TO CX

I read with interest the article 'Trade Shows Winter Reckoning Looms' in the June edition of CX Magazine. Given that it was labeled as 'News' and not as an opinion piece, I was confused and concerned by the article's lack of factual credibility. Not to mention its comparison of the SMPTE Conference & Exhibition to Integrate and Entech. The underlying message of the duplication of the Integrate and Entech shows was lost in comments that really served no purpose other than to unsettle the industry and denigrate

SMPTE – an event which has existed as a unique show, much different to these, biennially since the eighties.

With no comment or information sought from SMPTE or Expertise Events as organisers of the SMPTE Conference & Exhibition, it is of little surprise that the article is based on industry generalisations and misconceptions and full of untruths about the event.

I have no recollections of any conversations with your company whereby merging or profitability of the event was discussed; therefore you can imagine my surprise when this statement went to print: 'we had talks with AES and SMPTE

on and off across our decade running ENTECH but all of us were just too addicted to the money to want to give any of it away. AES and SMPTE waffled about not making much money at all which was untrue'.

If a conversation like this had taken place, you would know just how inappropriate it would be to merge SMPTE with an event like Cedia, Integrate or Entech. The cross-over in exhibitors and visitors with Cedia is nil and the other two is minimal – 20% at the very most. There is no comparison between SMPTE and these events – none of them specialise in the motion imaging and broadcast industries, follow the same format or educate as much as they showcase the latest equipment. It is with these points of difference that we continue, year in and out, to attract the major players.

SMPTE is very different to these events. Having said that, this raises the real issue that Integrate and Entech are two very similar shows. Perhaps their consolidation would be effective?

And while we are on the topic of the proliferation of shows – another marketing and sales tool currently over-servicing the area is magazines. So, your argument is two-fold – if two events alike in content should merge to cover all aspects of the industry, shouldn't magazines do the same too?

We have made numerous changes to SMPTE this year to ensure that the event provides a total experience for our exhibitors and visitors. We have strengthened our position with the support of influential industry groups and we will provide a wide range of visitor benefits which range from first-class features right through to free workshops. Yes, we present FAR more than just products and no, we are not a trade show that is all about money!

And while '66% of exhibitors say the cost of exhibiting at a trade show is rising faster than inflation', the cost of an

exhibitor rebooking a stand at SMPTE has not increased in the past six years! Yes it's true, 'it might be cheaper to hold a show at Moore Park than in Darling Harbour', but looking at the exhibitor prices you wouldn't know – it's virtually the same regardless of the inferior venue.

So according to your article, if SMPTE was simply 'addicted to the money' it would:

- a) be held every single year with no regard for overloading the industry and;
- b) would relocate to the most inexpensive venue available in Sydney but leave exhibitor costs as is.

Contrary to your comment that all tradeshow are outrageously overpriced, they are one of the most exciting, powerful, versatile and cost-effective marketing and sales tools available and orchestrated well, are regarded as an 'essential experience' by consumers. Exhibitions are still the only medium to provide organisations with the opportunity to stimulate all five senses.

SMPTE Conference & Exhibition is considered a reputable event which fills space quickly and attracts the support of industry associations and major players. Provided you can assure it will be published in a fair and balanced way, I recommend that you contact us to obtain up-to-date information and relevant comments should the opportunity arise to mention SMPTE in your publication again.

Gary Fitz-Roy

Managing Director, Expertise Events



EAR MONITORS AUSTRALIA GENERIC IEM

Overcome with jealousy of Science Boy's swanky custom moulded EMA monitors, Mackenzie got hold of a pair of the rather less costly generic version, and was apparently quite impressed. "They fit well and give really good isolation. The sound is excellent, and they're supplied with all the various rubbery and foam attachments to tailor them to your ear. I'd say they're at least as good as any other IEM plug I've used." They come in a neat, retail friendly blister pack which includes a little carry case and all the other necessities.

www.earmonitorsaustralia.com CX

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ALIA LIGHTING SEMINARS AT INTEGRATE

ALIA (The Australian Lighting Industry Association) are offering low cost seminars at the Integrate Trade Show in Sydney (July 6 – 8). They offer opportunities for everyone with an interest in lighting to find out more about the art, craft and technologies of lighting, at very little cost.

Presenters include Richard Neville [Mandylights], Richard Grenville [Blow Designs] Fabian Barzaghi [Space Cannon], Nicolas Moreau [Enttec], Trevor Sykes [LSC], Nick Denville [OpenClear], Trevor Sykes [LSC], Alex Mair [Jands], Paul Collison [Eleven Design] and Megan McGahan [Nine Network].

Six sessions are offered, each around an hour and a half duration. They are: Lighting 101, Visual Design Tools, LDs in the Hotseat, PC vs Console, Practical RDM and Video as a Lighting Tool

Session dates and times are listed on the seminars page of the ALIA web site www.alia.com.au/integrate_bookings.htm 

IN HOUSE PA TRENDS UP

Sydney's Hordern Pavilion is set to join Luna Park and Enmore Theatre as venues with professional concert PA systems installed in house. Jands Production Services will install six V-Disc boxes per side, plus subs at the 5,000 seat Hordern which will in turn offer promoters the convenience of a pre-installed system. Consoles and monitors are included in the system deal.

JPS have offered a similar arrangement at the 3,000 seat Luna Park venue for several years, based on a JBL Vertec PA. Sydney's Enmore Theatre has a Nexo Geo-D PA, and has for many years provided both audio and lighting support to venue hirers with great success. Enmore is one of several Century Venues, including Metro and Factory Theatre, all of which boast in-house production.

Some venue production hire deals provide the venue with a commission, where others simply make the production facilities available at no or low cost to the venue for its own produced events. "Every deal is different", an insider told CX, "even to the point where if the venue is hungry for a show they can subsidise rental against production hire."

The next category of venue, clubs seating 500 to 1500 have always had installed production, most significant of which is Revesby Workers Club in Sydney which is capable of hosting most mid level touring acts. 

ROBE LAUNCH PLASMA FIXTURE



Cor Biviano, John Grimshaw and Josef Valchar (Robe) pictured at the ROBIN briefing.



Exciting advances at last for moving lights

Imagine a lighting fixture with a lamp that is rated almost the life of the fixture. This is the tantalizing possibility offered by Robe, the first manufacturer to rush the LIFI lamp to market

LIFI stands for light fidelity lamp, a tiny source with no filament which uses micro waves to create a plasma light source. It is very radical, as it can be dimmed down to 20% which means a standby mode is possible. The lamp was invented by the Luxim Corporation, who sought a long life solution for street lamps. That version of the lamp is claimed to run 20,000 hours, but at street-lamp dreadful colour temperatures. The entertainment version is de-rated for hours, and re-rated for colour temperature. The lamp itself is tiny.

Robe showed their new Robe Innovative Concept fixtures, named ROBIN for short, at a series of roadshows recently. These include Spot, Wash and PLASMA spot variants. The spot and wash utilise Philips new MSD Gold/2 lamps, a 300

watt discharge lamp which Robe have joined with a new reflector for remote hotspot control.

But it's the PLASMA spot that has people talking, not the least due to the possible 'whole of life' lamp and its attributes. While the Philips discharge lamp based ROBIN fixtures are brighter, the PLASMA lamp comes close. Where it wins is better colour rendition, and the ability to dim down to 20%. It loses its colour temperature when it gets down around 60% of power, so ROBE simply combine a mechanical dimmer with an electronic one, and once the beam has been dowsed the lamp is switched down to run at 20% power.

This has the obvious benefit of saving power against a traditional discharge fixture, which cooks along at full power even when the beam is shut off. The secondary advantage is the fixture doesn't bake itself to death.

Because the LIFI lamp is so new, the life is projected rather than known, and a caveat may be whether Luxim Corp use the Philips and Osram lamp rating method that says 50% of all lamps will last XXX hours.

But LIFI is exciting. So too is the general suite of ROBIN features that deliver a TV and theatre friendly fixture due to low noise, fast ris, and very good CMY colour mixing.

As to ROBE's growth in the market, John Grimshaw from Bytcraft says across all the hundreds of fixtures they've sold, he cannot recall a single spare parts order. "When we took other fixtures, there's always a few cases full of spare parts", he says.

ROBIN will have its next industry showing at the Integrate trade show in Sydney, July 6 through 8 on the ULA stand. 

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Sub \$40,000 console challenges Yamaha M7CL

Avid has introduced Digidesign VENUE SC48 selling at \$39,995 for small to mid-sized houses of worship, clubs, and corporate A/V companies, as well as touring customers. It is pitched fair and

square at Yamaha's M7CL which itself has been a game changer.

Building upon the VENUE family of professional live sound systems, the SC48 system has Plug-In support for software plug-ins from Digidesign and a number of third party developers. US\$4000 worth of Plug Ins comes with each console. SC

48 boasts 48 in and 16 out, on the back of the console.

It has direct Connection to Pro Tools LE (supplied) to record shows and perform Virtual Soundcheck: a timesaving process to playback and mix tracks recorded from a previous performance using a computer connected via VENUE SC48's built-in USB port.

Channel Control allows easy access, display and adjustment to any channel parameter with the single click of a button. In addition, any eight parameters can be assigned to the colour-coded framework for immediate access during the mix.

Center Flex Channel provides immediate access to any key input, such as a lead vocalist's microphone, without having to go through fader layers.

VCA and Group Spill provides easy control and quick access to grouped channels within a mix by focusing the control surface layout to match the logical groupings created by VCA and Group style mixing.

All VENUE systems, including the VENUE SC48, Mix Rack, Profile and D-Show console, use the same VENUE D-Show software, allowing customers to easily transition show files between any system in the VENUE product line within a familiar interface. And with VENUE D-Show 2.8.1 software, available in June to registered VENUE system owners, customers can take advantage of several new workflow innovations, popular user-requested features and other enhancements to increase workflow and mixing efficiency across all VENUE systems.

VENUE SC48 is available now. There are new network arrangements in place with AVID (parent co of Digidesign) appointing Angus Davidson as Live Sound Sales Manager, Australia and New Zealand. Contact him on mobile 0448 959 865 or e-mail angus.davidson@avid.com 

UNIVERSITY THEATRES CHOOSE VISTA

University Theatres, who manage the performing arts venues at The University of Western Australia, have upgraded their lighting equipment with the purchase of two Jands Vista S3s and M1 controls.

University Theatres attract a broad cross section of hirers to its seven venues, so it was essential that the new boards were highly flexible in their application. The 758 seat Octagon theatre in particular is a multipurpose venue, presenting theatre, concerts, comedy, conferences and dance school productions.

John Doyle, the Technical Manager

said the Vistas were ideal because they not only had the capability to quickly enter complex theatre plots, but also because they can be used as a manual board for dance productions where lack of rehearsal time often demands spontaneous lighting design. Another advantage of the Vista is that it is used at the WA Academy of Performing Arts so all the graduating technical students are familiar with the board.

University Theatres Head Technician, Clint Balfour was also delighted to take possession of the Vistas because of their impressive programming features.

"Splitmode allows us to control up to 50 clips, and faders and buttons can be programmed to be groups, presets, clips - anything you like!", he said. "The desk also has super playback controls - these buttons and faders are used like the "GO" buttons of other boards and the faders give real-time control of playbacks."

One Vista S3 and M1 will be permanently located in the Octagon theatre, while the second unit will be used either at the Dolphin theatre, New Fortune theatre, Winthrop Hall or Sunken Garden outdoor auditorium, depending on the demands of the various productions.

www.jands.com.au 



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Yamaha's Commercial Audio trainers are visiting Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to conduct intensive training sessions on each console.

Sessions will have a maximum of two participants per console.
Entry is by approved application only.

VENUES, DATES AND SESSION TIMES:

	LS9 SCHOOL	M7CL SCHOOL
BRISBANE Rehearsal Room Roundhouse Theatre 6-8 Musk Avenue Kelvin Grove QLD 4059	Tuesday, 11th August 10:00am, 2:00pm, 6:00pm	Wednesday, 12th August 10:00am, 2:00pm, 6:00pm
SYDNEY Reg Grundy Studio Parade Theatres 215 Anzac Parade Kensington NSW 2033	Tuesday, 25th August 10:00am, 2:00pm, 6:00pm	Wednesday, 26th August 10:00am, 2:00pm, 6:00pm
MELBOURNE Yamaha Music Australia Level 1, 95 Queensbridge Street Southbank VIC 3006	Tuesday, 8th September 10:00am, 2:00pm, 6:00pm	Wednesday, 9th September 10:00am, 2:00pm, 6:00pm



SESSION DETAILS:



DIGITAL MIXING CONSOLE **LS9**

LS9 SCHOOL

This 3-hour course teaches you to operate Yamaha's most compact and accessible live digital mixing console, available in a 16-fader, 32-channel or 32-fader, 64-channel format and featuring real-time MP3 recording and playback.



DIGITAL MIXING CONSOLE **M7CL**

M7CL SCHOOL

This 3-hour course puts you in front of Yamaha's most revolutionary and intuitive live digital mixing solution, available in a 32- or 48-channel version and featuring touch screen and CentraLogic™ interface.

For application details, please go to:

www.yamahamusic.com.au/



John Dunn of JD Sound in Queensland doesn't even have a business card. He's provided sound for large scale events such as car shows, sporting events, concerts, agricultural shows, air shows; almost anything outdoors for around 40 years. He has enough inventory to cover 15 kilometres with full range sound.

John is a customer of Acoustic Technologies and is enthusiastic about the company's new 700 Series. He sees it as a great addition: "It fills the void between the 100 volt and concert stuff." He's recently added 46 AT Speaker Cabinets to his hire inventory, including 750XA's, 200X's 200XA's and SSB12A's.

www.jdsound.net.au



VARI*LITE LED WASH

The VLX Wash luminaire is the next generation of solid-state lighting from Vari*Lite. It has seven 90 watt CBM380 RGBW LED chip sets to provide output that offers three times the efficacy of comparable tungsten sources. The total system provides greater than 10,000 lumens of output, and the 50,000 hour source life of the chip ensures that lamp replacement costs are a thing of the past.

70% lumen intensity maintenance over that time guarantees that the VLX will remain powerful and bright well into the future. Because of the internal beam homogenization system, (patents pending) colour mixing is smooth, natural, and free of "colour shadowing" effects associated with other LED fixtures.

Additionally, the VLX offers a CRI of 93, a continuously adjustable colour



DX121 DIGITAL WIRELESS COMMS SYSTEM

HME's new DX121 System features the BS121 base station with built-in charger for a single BAT41. The BS121 allows users to connect directly to any headset position on any hardwired intercom station or belt pac. It also has four-wire connectivity and a programmable relay for actuating a two-way radio or adding functionality when connected to a digital matrix intercom.

The DX121 supports a single hands-free user and up to four users in push to transmit (PTT) mode. It can be packaged with any of the existing DX100 and DX200 Series remotes. The DX121 is ideal for the applications requiring a simple and affordable wireless system, yet can be packaged for multi-channel applications with up to eight systems operating in the same location. The DX121 can also assist in requirements for extended coverage in a large venue, using the existing hardwire intercom as a backbone to connect DX121 and DX200 systems positioned throughout a facility.

See it at the Murray Tregonning Sales stands at SMPTE and at Integrate Trade Show, both in Sydney in July.

www.mtasales.com.au



temperature white range between 3000 and 6500 degrees Kelvin, and seamless colour mixing that all combine

to create a source that behaves like familiar and effective tungsten luminaires without the associated costs and inefficiencies inherent in those systems.

Zoom control is achieved by the use of a patented lens system that offers 3:1 range from 22 to 60 degrees. Should a tighter beam be desired, the entire zoom system can be easily removed from the luminaire.

www.jands.com.au



NEW ARX AUSTRALIAN WEBSITE LAUNCHED

ARX Systems, in conjunction with Australian Distributor The Resource Corp P/L have launched a new Australian specific website featuring the full range of ARX Signal Processing, Power Amplifier and Loudspeaker products.

ARX Managing Director Colin Park commented,

"The new ARX Australia Website will support The Resource Corporation's large Dealer network in Australia with market specific product and sales information, as well as full application notes, user manuals and other technical information for all current and just about all products we've produced in our 25 years of manufacturing in Australia."

"TRC Managing Director Tony Hosking and I both felt that both ARX dealers and users would appreciate and benefit from a localised website. We've got a very large user base in Australia, our products have proved to have admirable longevity. Demanding users such as the Victorian Arts Centre are still using ARX products like the EQ60s 1/3rd Octave Graphic Equaliser which we manufactured 10 -15 years ago every day, some testimony to the original design, and the build quality".

The new ARX Australian website is at:

www.arx.com.au/Australia/index2.html



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If you've been delaying a move to digital because of interface or operational issues, the wait is over. The Yamaha M7CL Digital Mixing Console offers professional digital console performance and features for live sound in a 32- or 48-channel system that can actually be easier to use than a conventional analogue console. It sounds great, too.



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Yamaha's Centralogic interface takes the most direct approach to giving you maximum operational ease and efficiency in a digital console. Rather than trying to simulate the feel and workflow of an analogue mixer, Centralogic goes straight to the heart of the matter, simplifying digital operation to the point where it is actually as intuitive as analogue.



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YAMAHA HOSTS FREE LS9 & M7CL TRAINING

Yamaha Commercial Audio announces LS9 School and M7CL School, a series of hands-on training sessions focusing on the features and operation of Yamaha's most popular live digital mixing consoles, the LS9 and M7CL.

In August and September 2009, Yamaha's trainers will be visiting Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to conduct 3 hour sessions. These will be repeated at 10am, 2pm and 6pm on the day of training. With two participants per console, attendees will mix on a multitrack and become familiar with the operation of the LS9 or M7CL (depending on their choice of session).

LS9 School will teach participants to operate Yamaha's most compact and accessible live digital mixing console, the LS9, which is available in a 16-fader, 32-channel or 32-fader, 64-channel format and features real-time MP3 recording and playback.

M7CL School will place participants in front of Yamaha's mid range console the M7CL, available in a 32- or 48-channel version.

Entry into each session is by approved application only. Users can apply to

participate in their session of choice by going to www.yamahamusic.com.au and following the links to the course application page. 

QSC MOVES FURTHER INTO PA MARKET

After achieving their goal of becoming the world's largest professional amp manufacturer QSC embarked on a mission to become a leading full line professional audio manufacturer and began to roll out speaker and digital control products.

Six years later QSC are up against the biggest names in the pro audio industry in the white heat of the powered portable speaker sector. QSC believe they have taken a quantum leap with the K product range.

The complete range K8 (8" 2-way), K10, K12 and KSUB (double 12" subwoofer) are all powered by the same 1000w Class D amplifier module. The concept of the fullrange models is a choice between size, weight and bass extension not between duty cycle capabilities.

K8, K10 and K12 are housed in professional looking yet rugged and extensively braced ABS enclosures. The

fullrange models feature a unique Tilt-Direct pole cup mounting system - a turn of the dial engages a 7.5 degree downward tilt of the speaker. Integrated M10

suspension points allow for suspended applications.

The KSub is a dual-12" bandpass design, constructed of premium birch.

K-Series also features some of QSC's DSP technologies include DMT (Directivity Matched Transition) which delivers matched LF and HF coverage across the listening area eliminating unnatural 'dead' or 'hot' frequency zones and DEEP which limits speaker driver excursion by actively managing low-frequency transients without degrading underlying signal or adjacent frequencies.

Pricing is right in the zone with RRP listed at K8: \$1,499, K10: \$1,699, K12: \$1,899 and KSUB: \$2,499. 



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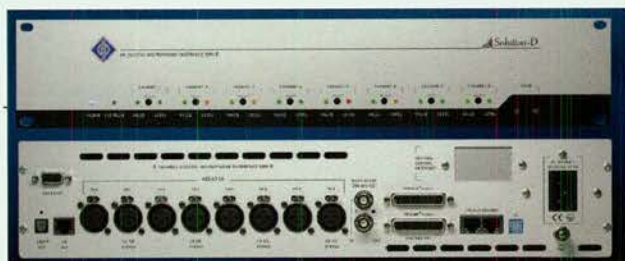
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- Camco Vortex 6
- Crown Macrotech VZ5002

- Yamaha PM1D, PM5d
- Yamaha M7CL, DM2000
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- Midas Verona, Venice



MULTI-CHANNEL DIGITAL MICROPHONE INTERFACE

Digital microphones offer decisive advantages in complex setups, where a large number of microphone channels are operated in parallel, for example setups for orchestral recordings in the studio or live.

Neumann's DMI-8 is an eight-channel digital microphone interface, is now available for microphones from any manufacturer that comply with the jointly established AES 42 standard.

It allows synchronization of the microphones without a sample rate converter, along with complete control and storage of the settings via Mac or PC.

Level meter and gain setting can be done on the front panel, operable even without a computer. Aside from XLR connectors, it also has D-sub 25 outputs with Tascam and Yamaha pin assignments plus an optical ADAT interface.

www.syntec.com.au



JVC PLAN BIG FOR SMPTE

At SMPTE 2009 JVC Professional will be highlighting its complete line of HD cameras, monitors, switchers and equipment specific to the broadcast and professional industry.



There will also be high resolution, super contrast D-ILA projectors - showcasing the industry leading DLA-SH4K projector - for use in advanced visualization, the latest 3D technology LCD panels, 2D to 3D image converters and new 42" LCD panels with Adobe RGB gamma settings also capable of being used for motion colour correction applications.

High on the interest list for visitors will be the new professional solid-state camcorder additions to JVC's ProHD lineup. Both the compact shoulder GY-HM700E and compact hand-held GY-HM100E 3-CCD camcorders will be on display and demonstrating their ability to record 35Mbps high definition video and uncompressed audio directly to inexpensive SDHC media cards in the native Quicktime format used by Apple Final Cut Pro.

Also on display will be the new KA-MR100U SxS media recorder suited to the new GY-HM700E cameras and existing 200 series cameras. Alongside the GY-HM700E and GY-HM100E cameras will be the rest of the ProHD range including the highly acclaimed GY-HD251E dual role studio & ENG / EFP camcorder with optional studio adapter, offering HD SDI / SDI and 26 pin multi-core connectivity. The GY-HD251E also boasts live uncompressed 1080i and live uncompressed 720p outputs which are menu selectable and output over the HD SDI terminal which also carries embedded audio and timecode. Also demonstrated will be the firmware for the ProHD 200 series cameras which allows 1080i recording for hard drives.



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PUSSYCAT DOLLS – SHOW WRAP

By JAMES DEN-ouden

Doll domination has proven itself this month, as The Pussycat Dolls tour steamrolls its way about Australia, supported by the dauntless Lady Gaga in a series of arena shows. CX went along to see how they light the big meow.

Scott Warner hails from Latrobe, Pennsylvania and spends approximately 6 months of the year on tour. He has been working with the Pussycat Dolls for around 3 years now, and it's the first pop music act he's worked with. Prior to this, he's worked everything from theatre to club and arena shows, though mostly with rock bands.

The Pussycat Dolls show is all about visual impact – and lighting plays an important part in maintaining the engagement between the show and the audience. Scott's gone for the "clean high tech" look. Certainly the rig itself is very conducive to this – it's a very clean hang from the grid above, with no visible chain motors to detract from the illusion that it's "floating" in d-air. Scott uses a lot of really strong saturated colour throughout the show in pursuit of his intended lighting looks

THE RIG

The rig is primarily flown above the stage with a large rear truss occupying a hefty chunk of the air real estate. Forward of this are several circular truss arrangements, each populated heavily with Robe ColorSpot 2500E AT and REDwash fixtures. Ordinarily the ColorSpots run with a lens on the front to give a beam angle of 10-30°, but on this tour they run without to get a wider range of 15-45°. The narrower beam gives higher output, but having seen the show we can safely say that output is not in any way lacking with the wide beams. Further downstage, a front truss of ColorWash 2500E AT fixtures provides front fill, along with a groundrow of REDwash units. Other fixtures in the rig include a pile of Atomic 3000 strobes, 8 way blinders, and some various other LED fixtures plus followspots.

There's a lot of Robe fixtures in the rig – around 88 in fact. Bytcraft hired these in at Scott's behest – he likes the colour matching, output, and general reliability of the gear. The rig is driven by a MA Lighting grandMA console from a small riser at FOH. According to Scott, one

of the biggest challenges of the tour has been trying to save the show when the PA is running hard – there's a lot of low end, and disk drives don't generally take kindly to excessive vibration!

The in time for the rig is pretty fast. In the UK the rig moves using kinesis control, however by leaving this part out for the Australian tour the crew saves a lot of time – plus there's no mother-grid required. The lighting crew comprises 5 people, and during bump-in there are 44-48 hands on-site to cover all production. Once the rig's in, Scott usually needs only 1.5-2.5 hours to re-tweak the show to suit each venue. Since he doesn't particularly like leaving the rest of the crew working in the dark, he'll sometimes wind up re-tweaking with house lights on.

OTHER PRODUCTION

Okay, so we were there on a lighting tour but there are some things you can't help noticing. JPS looked after audio production, using Vertec FOH and some Meyer in-fill boxes, along with a truly impressive number of subs. Consoles in use were Digidesign Profile, and Yamaha



PM-5D.

The set is big enough to allow heaps of space for movement, which the act uses to the full. Since there's no band it's really important for the audience to be able to see the performers to connect with the show. This highlights the need for decent IMAG, which was faithfully there either side of the stage. Especially noteworthy was that even with the whole stage submerged in varying colours, the skin tones on the IMAG pictures still looked relatively natural and there was still enough light to see the performers. It's a really important point that so many people miss – it's nice to see it done right for once! Hats off to the CCU operators, as well as of course Scott and the followspot ops.

Photos by Andrew Hobbs

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SCHOOL PRODUCTION NOMINATED FOR LONDON AWARD



*Lighting designer
Mitchell Fenton.*

All Saints Anglican School on the Gold Coast in Queensland has had its lighting design for *Beauty and the Beast* nominated for an award presented at PLASA in London.

"We are currently in one of our biggest musicals for the year, *Beauty and the Beast*, and I am designing the lighting for it. I have over 100 lights in my rig," Lighting Designer Mitchell Fenton (aged 17) told CX.

The design is entered in the Michael Northern Bursary Award. "Our Theatre Seats 535 people. Our set is very big and was designed and made by an old set designer from the United States who designed the set for movies such as *E.T* and *Star Trek*."

Mitchell talks us through some of the highlights of his design.

Belle- This song is the opening number, this is the basic state in the scene and moves through areas where dialogue takes place throughout the village. In this picture the cast are being lit by L158 back light, L103 Straw face light and a little bit of L201 face light as well as side light L103 and a leaf Gobo floor breakup. I chose L158 as back light because it goes well as a colour during the night time as well as day time.

Once side light and face light (L103) are added to the set, floor and actors it creates a much more Daylight state, and plus because the side lights (L103) are



closer to stage they are brighter therefore looking more like daylight in a village. L201 back light was also added in some cases to make sure the L158 does not give too much of a night feel.

Be our Guest- This number is one of the longest and biggest songs in the whole piece. It was difficult to light it due to the amount of people on stage, but in the end it worked out well. The pictures "Be our guest" is only one of the lighting states during the song, this part in the song is a good old Broadway kick line as the choreography and music suggests. What was really great about this state was the floor lights along the front edge of the stage. On the first kick the foot lights would snap on and face lights would go off. Then the side lights and back light magenta would snap on with all the leaf gobo floor break ups. Normally Floor lights facing up give a scary feel because of the shadow it creates. But because of the purple and the fact that the floor lights lit the teaser and the proscenium as well

as a change of angle from their face light that the audience had never seen before it made the audience feel like they were in a Broadway show, which is what the director's and my intentions were.

Dungeon in the castle- this state is set in a dungeon in the castle it is dark gloomy scary and has very little light. Also keeping in mind that a dungeon's light in the late 1800's was from cracks in the dungeon and bar windows and doors that let light into the dungeon, so with some haze and a leaf gobo it gave the effect of light coming through. By adding L079 blue it gave a scary and gloomy feel to the dungeon. Also there are lights in the dungeon cell that were gelled as L201 because this is a colour that is cool and cold. There were also 2 birdies in the cell - one was lighting the side of Maurice's face in the dungeon; and the other light coming from the same direction was spilling a shadow of the cell bars out onto the floor.

Well done, Mitchell!



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GROOVIN THE MOO

Rural festival tour takes off after partners back their own vision

By JULIUS GRAFTON

Since Big Day Out started it all, the festival calendar has lit up everywhere across Australia. Now one promoter has established a regional touring festival brand, Groovin the Moo. It ran three locations in May, and may venture into Western Australia next year.

Five years ago Rod Little was a school teacher in Gloucester who decided to run a festival. Teaming with Stephen Halpin who was a musician, they were

suckers in the eyes of some agents. They signed Killing Heidi, Screaming Jets and Evermore for their gig, made a lot of up front payments and then got less than 2,000 punters.

"The council was wary of us", Stephen says, "and we didn't really know what we were doing. Gloucester was too far from Newcastle where most of the area population are". Down a lot of money, they went again the following year but this time in Maitland – not far from Newcastle. It was better – Silverchair

played, more kids came. But they were now down a couple of hundred thousand dollars.

"It took us a few years to pay off our debts and get ahead", Stephen says. There were some forays into other places that didn't really work. Albury was one of them – it was OK, but just OK. Darwin was a bad idea. Townsville worked well, Maitland got awesome, and this year the third location was Bendigo in central Victoria. It was the best festival of the three.

Now Groovin has arrived big time, with more than ten thousand people per day at \$85 each, and a formula that people like. It always worked well for the punters – there's a circus tent with a mix of dance acts and bands, and a pair of main stages with a mix of dance acts and bands. They have side shows, food and beer.

"We live inside, with air conditioners – I think kids enjoy a day out – it's never rained, but at Maitland last year we had 200mm of rain the day before and it was all mud. They just put on gumboots". Weather ranged from beautiful in Townsville to almost cold (but fine) in Bendigo this May.

So why do it in May? "To get clear of Big Day Out. When they finish, we start marketing a May festival in February".

The councils are supportive. In Bendigo all accommodation was booked out, as many as 3,000 people came into town. The festival brought a lot into the town. The lineup included The Living End, Hilltop Hoods, The Grates, De La Soul (US), Architecture in Helsinki, Muscles, Little Birdy, Infusion, Okkervil River (US), Ratatat (US), The Drones, Mammal and Children Collide. Plus more, including local bands.

So what are the other success elements for Groovin' the Moo? CX went backstage and spoke with the crew who always know why things work and why they don't.

ON THE ROAD

At the Townsville festival a Melbourne semi from Johnstone Audio Services met up with infrastructure that included a Lennon Brothers circus tent and a stage partially from Townsville. Local supplier Talkin Audio provided toilet trucks, generators, ground support for the main stage, decking, and all production in the tent.

"They engage the crowd", Matthew Regan from Talkin Audio said of the promoters. "Engage is a word they use a lot. They are very considerate of the connection with the bands".

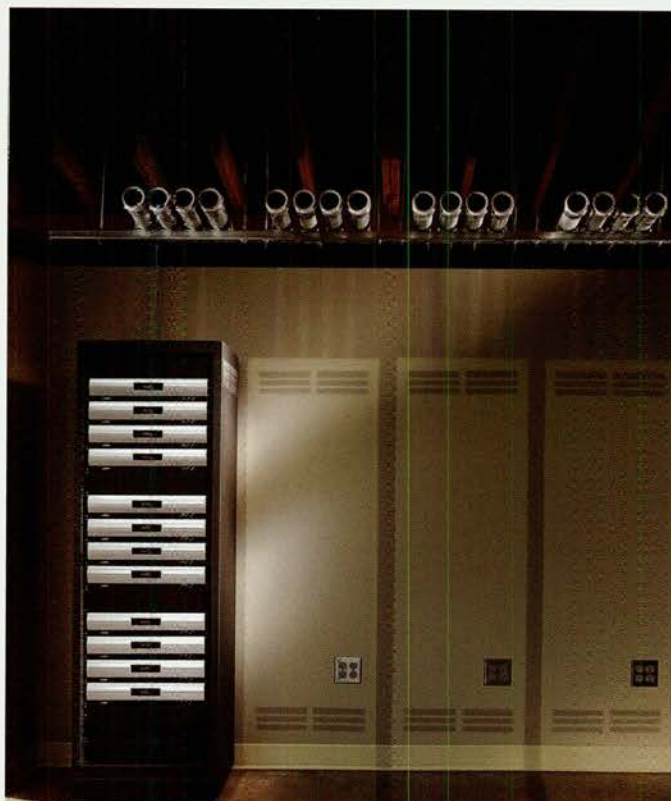
To get the right lineup, Groovin works off the JJJ playlist. The national broadcaster is a prime supporter of the festivals, something Stephen Halpin admits is pivotal to their success. "Their stamp of approval adds a lot of cred."

"What really shines out for me, is the attitude – they are not about how much money, but about building the right environment, so they keep coming", says Matthew Regan.

"For example Rod (Little, festival partner) will ask the forklift driver to take care not to chew up the grass, so it doesn't get too dusty. They don't seem like normal promoters".



The Talkin Audio road train got a workout.



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Talkin Audio crew: from left to right, Matthew Regan (Director, other truck driver), Michael Alkan, Trent Barclay, David Best, Tom Leeman, James Martin (Ground Support Rigging), Darren Collier (logistics and Ground support). Remaining five crew were resting: Anthony Lee (Lighting design), Peter Mills (Video / FX), Geoff Compton (Systems Audio/ FOH), Ralph Collins (Monitors/ Stage), Bob Hurle (Truck Driver).

That's an endorsement echoed by Bruce Johnstone. "We first went there with Silverchair", he says, "and it was a budget based solution at first. We gave them Qantas service at a Jetstar price. But they have their pulse on the lineup. It's hip, a lot of promoters put rock on the stage and dance in the tent but they get six thousand people in the tent going off. The branding works for them."

Johnstone Audio supplied lights for the

tour. "Yes we can walk and chew gum at the same time", says Larry Ponting from Johnstone. "Not many people know we have lights, it comes from the old days of Brucey in the truck with the state of the art 32 can rig and the JBL modular (PA)".

They fielded a lighting rig of 60 Pars and 18 movers for each of the two main stages. "People won't come to us for specialist stuff, we don't compete at the

pointy end of the biz. But we've always had lights", Larry concludes.

On the two 12m wide main stages, JAS had a Nexo Geo T line array with identical Way Loud monitor systems on each. A 6m deck between the stages was home to dual PM5D monitor consoles, racks and dimmers.

Out front were two Digidesign profile consoles, making a very modern audio spec that would satisfy all riders.

Down in the four pole Lennon's tent, Talkin Audio supplied a line array, lights and video, to go with their stage and ground support system. The tent was expanded to six poles for the Maitland show which had sold out in one day.

Crew vibe on the Groovin tour is very good, they clearly appreciate working alongside promoters who get amongst the crew and provide support (and catering) without reluctance. "In my opinion they're fantastic", said Matt Regan, "always asking us if we got enough sandwiches, Red Bull, water. They put on a BBQ for us."

Around 150 people work on the festival tour, with a core crew of 8 returning to plan each festival each year.

The promoters are based in Newcastle, and their company is called Cattleyard Promotions.

Townsville is a long way from Bendigo, but Talkin Audio did the tour alongside JAS and the other contractors.

Talkin are now able to supply a wide range of event support services, from ground support through generators and of course technical production. "We got frustrated with not being able to get things, being in far north Queensland", Matthew Regan told CX.

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As the weather turned cold, the Cattleyard guys spent several weeks after the last show paying bills and tidying up paperwork. They have an enviable lifestyle now, and spend the year working on their festivals. "The bigger acts book a year out, so you need time", says Stephen Halpin.

There's always pressure to spend more, and as the festival grows they do add extra production and facilities. "These days we know what it all should cost, and what a band is worth to us", Stephen says "and now we're in the enviable position of having bands approach us."

His worst nightmare is always weather, and having to cancel. The insurance they carry will pay if a local council delegate calls off the show due to lightning, wind or rain. Otherwise, the show goes on.

For a look at how a good festival is run, check out their website and particularly the frequently asked questions. What about these: "Can I bring my own homebrew? Mmmmm, homebrew. Unfortunately no alcohol can be brought into the venue".

And this one: "Will it be OK to smoke a joint with my mates? Definitely not. Police sniffer dogs are becoming a regular at festivals around the country. So if you don't want to get busted, DON'T BRING ANYTHING SNIFFABLE".

More power to them!

CX



Promoter Stephen Halpin



The stage in the tent.



The Talkin Audio PA in the tent.

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Lots of Watts



BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

Moving into one fairly massive complex suddenly makes Lots of Watts look like a major player. CX discovers that what has always been there hidden from view will soon be larger.

By JULIUS GRAFTON



Rodney Gretch, Phil Lake, Mathew Sharwood, David Borg, Richard Kershaw.

Back in 1992 the production industry and the rest of Australia was buried in a recession and it was very hard to get finance to buy anything. Greg Kean, his wife Allison and partner Philby Lewis decided it was time to move their lighting hire business out of a shipping container and the back of a truck. They rented a small warehouse in Sydney's Rydalmere and filled a corner with lights.

Reasoning that their existing business was solid, a move into audio made sense. As seasoned lighting guys, they had enough smarts to learn audio from the ground up so they started with some small JBL 2 way boxes and then added an Etone EHT PA. Small jobs got larger; they invested in moving lights and looked to get out of touring with bands and into more diverse work.

The corporate audiovisual boom started, with a lot of subcontract work flowing down to Lots of Watts. They grew and grew, and ended around the corner buying what was a huge building in Mary Parade. Then the building out the back came up for sale and they added on.

In the meantime an opportunity arose in 1996 to buy the majority of the concert production equipment from PA People. That propelled the firm into smaller arena concerts and added some experienced sound crew – including Phil Lake and Richard Kershaw who are senior audio engineers at the firm today.

By 2000 Lots of Watts was enmeshed in a lot of production work, had fitted out a lot of the Showroom venue at Star City,



CEO Greg Kean



Sarah Anderson and Kas Moore

and were undertaking hire, sales and installation work across a wide area of the industry.

A turning point arrived with the purchase of another building down the road, which became the workshop and service department. The installation and production business needs access to timber, steel and aluminium fabrication because every job has unique requirements. Plus the guys wanted to keep doing their own electronic service work to keep their hire equipment and their customer's equipment working.

Then came a decision that in hindsight wasn't right. Lots of Watts withdrew from a lot of their production work and decided to focus on sales, installation and dry hire of equipment. Many production clients wandered off and started to feed other firms.

In 2005 Lots Of Watts re-entered the broader production market, where one firm supplies sound, lights, crew, trucking and expertise. They added some video, and promoted Daniel Munroe as production manager. Co-founder Philby Lewis left to pursue large-scale production management work, initially the Commonwealth Games ceremonies. He went on to work on the Athens Olympics and many other international events, and retains his share of Lots Of Watts.

FIVE BUILDINGS

From the 90s until now the firm acquired five buildings in Rydalmere which is close to the geographic centre of the Sydney basin, most of which were not interconnected. A sixth building was also acquired for use as a training college and is currently leased by the publisher of CX.

"Our customers didn't really see everything we do", says Greg Kean. A recent move into one large complex has laid bare the scale of Lots Of Watts, which now employs 28 people. The building has 2,700 square metres of warehouse, and 600 square metres of offices. Best of all there are more than 40 parking spaces.

Operating in different buildings is not efficient. "We had five lunch rooms and facilities. We had two toolshed workshops plus service in another building. There were compressors everywhere. Staff tended to work in small groups and not together", Greg commented.

"If we had stuff in another building we needed to send a van to get it. If we got installation equipment in, we would unpack it in one building, and transport it to another one". Not to mention different insurance policies, rates, power bills and phone connections to each place.

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The big driver to move was safety. Lots Of Watts has always had a very strong focus on safety, "every time we met and talked about it, our biggest problems were caused by the buildings", Greg says. "A big example is when we first bought Mary Parade, our main building, forty and forty-four foot pans were standard. Now they are forty-eight feet long, and can't be reversed into Mary Parade. So we unloaded in the street and if it rained, there was risk of injury."

Problem sorted at the new place, where you could drive several B-Doubles inside, then drive them out the other end with no reversing.

Last year they started looking to move and very nearly purchased a facility in Silverwater, close to Acer Arena. It was on the market for more than \$3 million and to buy Lots needed to sell five of their Rydalmere buildings. They started the sales process, sold two and then the purchase fell through at the last minute because a developer offered more money.

NEW PLACE

Committed to move, a leased facility in South Street Rydalmere came up and is now the future home of the firm for the foreseeable future. "I think it was meant to be", Greg says, "if we had bought then we would be fixing that building up for a long time to come and there was not much customer parking".

Part of the current success of Lots Of Watts is actually due to Lots Of Trailers; the cheeky name people hang on another business the firm started five years ago. At the time, Carey Leghorn had joined the partners and the four of them tend to enjoy a little outdoor recreation. They regularly go camping with their families.

Philby decided they should each buy a camper trailer and in the off time rent them out. That makes a legitimate tax deduction, and they liked tooling around with four-wheel



Ben du Plooy in workshop



inside Lots of Watts



Felicity Egan, Melanie Eileen, Vanessa Mack, Jessica Crow.



Wayne D'Chong, Mark McKenzie

crives and all the funf that goes with that. Some people enjoy the great outdoors.

Challenge Trailers was born, initially they each purchased a trailer and had a franchise to resell trailers, which became steady business. Before long they had a fleet of rental trailers, and took on two more trailer brands, becoming the

importers of Trak Shak and Campomatic.

The trailer business is not wildly different to what Lots Of Watts do with audio and lighting production, Greg argues. They hire, sell, service and modify trailers.

Now the trailer business shares one substantial workshop in the new facility, and has a separate showroom and

entrance alongside the Lots Of Watts showroom. Customers don't need to reverse in and out.

MOVING FORWARD

This year Lots will invest in more hire and production equipment, something they couldn't do once they ran out of space previously. They recently invested in a fleet of new Mac III fixtures.

So why is Lots Of Watts growing when some firms are sacking staff and getting grim? "It slowed down the trailer business", Greg says, "but that has plateaued now. And at Lots, we're learning extra skills all the time."

A degree of the success factor at Lots is its customer focus and also the way the company hires. Many of the current upper echelon of the freelance Sydney production community started at Lots – guys like Ian Anderson and Nick Eltis.

Lots do hire young people out of college, but they also hire people who they think will fit. An example is sales and installation manager Mark McKenzie who answered an advert for an electrician. Lots have a knack for seeing the potential in people and tend to retain staff.

In the cavernous South Street warehouse will soon be a demonstration theatre, suitable for properly showing off new techniques and equipment. Some distributors have already put hands up to do product launches in there, once it is completed.

This winter the firm will work on finishing all the spaces in the new building, including a staff training room and expanding the retail showroom. At the previous address the showroom was a magnet for a lot of people, as there aren't many pro audio and lighting showrooms in Australia.

A second Lots Of Watts is located in Gosford, to the north of Sydney and it has also recently moved into better premises.

"Now we can do what we want to do – deliver the service we want to, without being hampered."

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By DUNCAN FRY

My Bad Liver Gets Wurst

A foodies view of the Frankfurt MusikMesse



are medium, some are short and fat, bursting with porky fatty goodness, but all of them are uniformly delicious. How do I know? Because over the years that I've been going to the show, I think I've tried them all.

It's very pleasant basking in the spring sunshine in the square, and this year we met up with the boys from National Audio Systems, who became willing participants in our pork 'n' beer-a-thon. Sort of like a triathlon, but without the biking, running and swimming!

Since the MusikMesse was just before Easter, in the town square there were a couple of religious things going on. A whole gaggle of schoolchildren came marching across the square, carrying a cross into the church, covered with Post-It notes to Jesus. I can't imagine what they might have written on them, and in the interests of keeping the editorial peace I'm not even going to speculate! By the time my beerfuddled brain thought of taking a picture, they had disappeared into the church, so you'll have to put up with a thousand words instead.

But I did get a picture of a very strange sight. In the middle of the square was a young woman wearing a dress made from feathers, sitting on a swivelling chair shooting flowers with a bow-and-arrow at passers-by. If this was another religious scene, then it was totally unknown to me or anyone else. There was no point in asking her what was going on, as many tourists did, because she would just put her finger to her lips and give them a flower. Nor did it seem to be money driven, as I didn't see any money change hands. But we managed to pass the time away watching her, until the sun started to go down and we became a bit cold.

So we moved to sunny side of the square and started all over again.

By the time we ended up at our hotel we were all a bit pickled – well I was, anyway – and slept the sleep of the



The NAS boys get their share of sausage.



The flower archer.



Unidentified man adjusts the EQ curve

Here in Australia, most people seem to be aware that the phrase 'you are what you eat' is, by and large, an accurate mantra for a healthy way of life. Or, as computer people say, 'garbage in, garbage out'. If you eat good food, minimal fat, minimal sugar, then you can't go too far wrong.

That's fine when you're at home. When you travel, though, it can be a hard road to follow.

Last month I was at the Frankfurt MusikMesse/Pro Light and Sound, quite possibly the world's largest music exhibition. Every year when we arrive there, to ward off jet lag as much as possible we all try to stay awake as long as we can before falling exhausted into bed at night. Not such an easy thing to do when the Flying Kangaroo lands at Frankfurt Airport at around 6 am, leaving you with a minimum of 12 to 14 hours of forced wakefulness.

Traditionally, our cure for the incipient narcolepsy induced by long haul flights was to wander down to Frankfurt's Old Town, and sit in the square all day drinking long glasses of delicious beer, while simultaneously filling our faces with a wide choice of perfectly cooked sausage.

And this year was no exception!

Not too hard to take, you might say, and you'd be right. Because if there is one thing that the Frankfurters know well, it's their pork. The choice of sausage available ready to eat is staggering. Some are long (300mm at least) and thin, some



Wish I'd thought of that as a business name.



Schnell! Get th's to the ARX stand!

righteous until next morning.

This year, with our usual exhibition Hall 4.1 due to be shut down before being rebuilt bigger and better, we thought we would get the jump on the exodus of exhibitors and move to Hall 8, on our new German distributor's stand.

Hall 8 was quite different. Big, high, and seemingly full of people who appeared to be obsessed with making boobs out of our EQ260. Every time I turned around someone had reconfigured my house curve into a curve of a very different kind. Surely everyone at the show couldn't be bottle-fed guys?

Big Kev's Global Financial Crisis did at least give people something else to complain about apart from the exchange rate, which makes a change. But as I always say to people, "If I could control the exchange rate, do you think I'd be doing this for a living?" On the whole, though, everyone seemed quite optimistic about the immediate future, which was a good sign.

In the corner of our stand our distributors had put a little lockable room. It was the sort of place you'd normally keep coats, paperwork, briefcases, CD ROMs etc in - but not this one. As soon as I opened the door I was faced with a mountain of floor to ceiling beer crates! Hmmm. Looked like 'Happy hour' was going to end up being 'Extremely happy hour'.

A refrigerator took up what little space there was left in the room that wasn't full of beer.

Cautiously I opened its door, and it was chock full of vacuum sealed packets of sausage. A lot of sausage.

"Are we having a barbeque?" I asked our man Helmut.

"A barbeque," he replied, "No, why?"

"Well, I've just seen all that sausage in the fridge, and I was wondering how we're going to cook them. Will we be sticking a bunch of PAR 64s underneath the glass table?"

"Oh no," he laughed. "It doesn't need cooking; it has been air cured. You eat it raw."

I must have gone a little pale at the thought of this, as he quickly said "It is fresh from a local farm near us in Westphalen. Look, I will show you."

So he grabbed a packet from the fridge and ripped it open, saying, "See, you just take a sausage and spread some of this hot mustard on it, and then you put it in your mouth." And so saying he slid the whole sausage into his mouth. "Ach, delicious. Here, you try one." He gave me a sausage, slopped on some mustard, and handed it to me.

I copied his action and slid the whole thing into my mouth, which promptly exploded in a ball of mustard flavoured heat. My eyes bulged from their sockets as I struggled to contain the boiling mass.

"Crikey, Helmut," I gasped, "These things'll rip the crutch right out of your undies!"

Here it was, only 9.30 in the morning and already I was shoving whole chunks of raw sausage down my throat. But boy was it delicious! I think I stopped at the end of the second packet. The haunting after-taste of salt and pork fat made me quite thirsty, but given the early time of day I restrained myself from necking a bottle of beer to wash it all down, and settled for an espresso coffee. I don't think I had any more sausage for, let's see, at least half an hour.

What with the delicious boxes of Swiss biscuits that were brought out around lunchtime every day, I didn't have to wonder where the extra 10 kilos that miraculously appeared around my waist came from. But it was all so tasty to eat, I felt like Mr Creosote from Monty Python's Meaning of Life.

"Just anuzzer sausage, m'seur? Eet iz waffer theen."

It would take a stronger man than me to say no.

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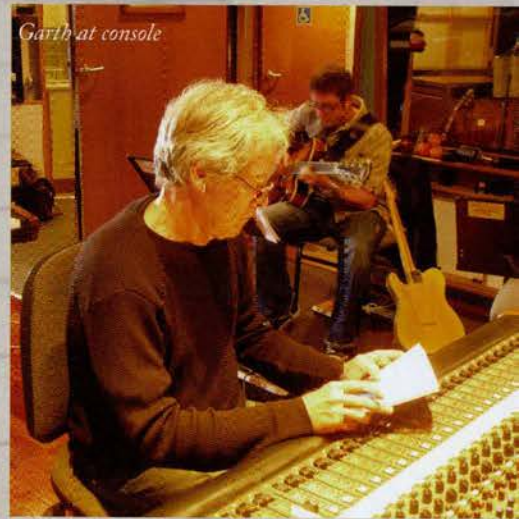
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When 70s supergroup Sherbet wound up, Garth Porter had time on his hands. What's he been doing with it? He's brought the cream of Australian Country into the city to record at his



RANCOM STREET STUDIO



By STEPHEN BRUEL

When I think of country music in Australia, I conjure up images of the outback, cattle stations, country pubs, blokes and sheilas strumming guitars, dusty utees, large weather-beaten Akubra hats, western shirts, blue jeans and Tamworth. I think of artists such as Lee Kernaghan, Troy Cassar-Daley, James Blundell and Gina Jeffreys. I certainly don't think of inner-city Sydney, a vintage analogue audio gear collection to knock your socks off, and the iconic 1970s Australian band Sherbet. However there is a connection and that is Rancom Street Studios in Botany.

Situated in Sydney's inner-city, the studio is owned by former Sherbet songwriter and keyboard-player Garth Porter. No stranger to picking up numerous gold and platinum albums and awards in Australia and overseas as part of the supergroup, Porter has continued his previous pop success in the country music genre.

THE MAN

"After Sherbet I concentrated on writing and producing and began to work in country music with James Blundell," Porter said. "I met and encouraged Lee Kernaghan to record, wrote with him and produced all of his 12 albums which have

won numerous Country Music Association of Australia (CMAA) awards including Album of The Year, Single of The Year and Artist Of The Year. I also personally won nine Producer Of The Year Awards, along with several songwriting awards."

After working in most Sydney studios over the years, Porter began to consider the possibility of setting up his own facility. Several key factors were critical in selecting the Rancom Street site and layout including plenty of off street parking, a large control room, good line of sight for all-group recording, no external noise issues from air and road traffic, and natural daylight. The first recording session took place in 1998 with building

still being carried out in the main room.

"I wanted to combine good acoustic spaces and equipment to create a comfortable high quality-recording environment," Porter said. "Plus, my big collection of outboard gear was becoming too big to cart from studio to studio."

THE MACHINERY

And what a jaw-dropping and salivating vintage and modern equipment and microphone list this is. At the centrepiece is the MCI JH-600 analogue console with KRK monitors, with the option of an MCI JH-16 24-track two-inch tape recorder for analogue recording or Pro Tools HD rig running off an Apple Mac Pro for digital recording.

A nice selection of Neumann studio microphones including the M49, U47fet, CMV563, U87, KM56 and KM 84s are also available for use along with AKG, EV, Shure, Royer and Sennheiser models. EQ units from Pultec and API, compressor/limiter boxes including an original black face UA1176LN, RCA BA6A and Manley Variable-Mu, and microphone pre-amplifiers include Telefunken V72, Neve 1064, Focusrite, API and Buzz Audio barely scratch the surface of top line gear available.

There is a great selection of original vintage amplifiers including a 1958 Fender Bassman, 1963 Vox AC30, 1964 Fender Princeton, 1960s Ampeg Convertible and a 1971 50 watt Marshall. The impressive guitar selection includes a Gibson 1967 ES330, Gibson 1962 Melody Maker and a 1965 Framus Television semi acoustic. The studio also houses a 1964 Hofner President semi acoustic bass and a Fender 1971 re-issue Jazz bass, amongst others.

As Sherbet's ex-keyboard player, Porter has a comprehensive collection including two vintage Clavilines from the 1950s and 1960s, the first synthesizer by Selmer and Jennings, (valve of course) a Vox Super Continental, Mini Moog, Hammond M100 and Wurlitzer Electric Piano. A great in-house Pearl kit with vintage Ludwig and Premier snare drums completes the studio instrument range nicely.

THE METHODS

Porter's role as producer/writer incorporates being involved and hands-on with all aspects of the studio and recording process including pre-production and songwriting, band recording or 'tracking' sessions, overdubs, mixing and mastering. Porter also often gets involved with the post recording elements including finding and negotiating a label or distribution deal for the artist, securing a publishing deal, advising on promotion needs, and

introducing the artist to his strong industry connections including managers, agents, CD designers, photographers etc.

"I doubt I would take on a project that I couldn't visualise the complete life of the album we're making and care a lot what happens after the recording, mixing and mastering is completed," Porter said. "After such a long time in music, I know how critical the post recording period is to the album reaching its potential. Having a great album is really only the beginning of the life of the album."

After meeting, liking and being inspired by a 'new' solo artist or band, Porter likes to encourage a lot of discussion to help understand what the artist wants to be, their style, turn offs, turn ons, influences and ambitions. He'll then look at the strengths and weaknesses of the material brought to the table. Often he'll bring in other experienced writers to further broaden the song-writing strength, a process that can take from three months to two years.

"As a producer, I guess my primary role is to prop up the areas that need assistance, whatever that may be," Porter said. "About this time I work out a process that fits the artist's budget."

Once the material is finalised, usually consisting of 14 songs, Porter books a band (to accompany a solo artist) that he believes has the right instinct to interpret the songs into a style that will suit the artist. If working with a band, they usually have the songs written, and maybe Porter will provide a bit of help in improving them, helping to make sure that all songs reach their potential.

The next stage involves the recording or 'tracking'. Band tracking usually has to be done in two days for solo artists due to the expense of hiring session players, and Ramcom Street aims to cut six to seven tracks a day. Bands however can take longer as there are no session player costs.

"Often I have a very strong vision for the musical parts to make the song work, and sometimes I throw it open to the band," Porter said. "I couldn't do what I do without the amazing musicians I work with. Hearing the songs burst into life is a huge buzz."

MAKING IT HAPPEN

For Porter this is the best and most critical and intensive part of the process. To ensure a great outcome, Porter relies heavily on in-house engineer Ted Howard. Starting as an assistant engineer at EMI 301 studios in 1985 and having worked at Battery Studios in London, Howard assisted on recordings by Black Sabbath and Jeff Beck, and engineered albums by Leo Sayer, Paul Kelly, Lee Kernaghan and

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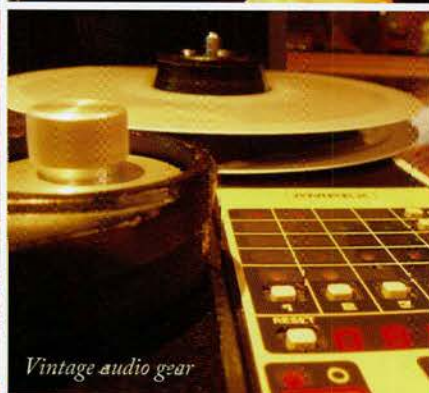
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The Church. Howard is also a three-time winner of the CMAA engineer of the year award. Having first worked together in 1988, Porter and Howard are still making records today – 21 years later.

"I've worked with the best in Australia and overseas, and Ted is a step ahead," Porter said. "Ted's musical and golden ears allow him to create and capture great sounds whether tracking, overdubbing, mixing or mastering. He is the very best."

A recent project from Rancom Street is Australian country music star Jayne Denham's new album *Shake This Town*, due out on in early June 2009. Howard opted to record the album direct to digital using the Pro Tools HD system via a combination of Prism, Apogee and Digidesign analogue to digital converters, to capture the current Nashville trend for country rock sounding very digital. During recording, Howard rarely if ever uses plug-ins on the way in, preferring to use analogue microphone pre-amplifiers, compression and EQ.

"When recording live bands direct to Pro Tools, I approach it like a tape machine – storage only," Howard said. "I don't like to open any plug-ins (especially EQ or compression) until the band has left the building. That way you really know what you've got from the microphones and the room – plenty of time to mess with the sounds later."

For Howard, one of the concepts was to create enough recorded ambience on the drums to avoid digital reverbs in the mix where possible. To achieve this,

Howard positioned EV 667 cardioid dynamic microphones back from the kit and went inwards from there. He set a pair of AKG 414 large-diaphragm condenser microphones as stereo overheads, and a heavily compressed AKG C19c dynamic microphone as a mono overhead.

For the kick drum Howard placed a Neumann U47fet microphone to capture the 'front' and also used an old Yamaha NS10 monitor (modified to use as a microphone) and placed it 2 feet off the ground to capture the really low frequencies. Howard positioned a Shure SM 57 on the snare, Sennheiser 421s on the tom toms and Neumann KM 84 small capsule cardioid condenser microphones on the hi-hats to finish off this pretty straightforward setup.

"The D19 has a bright percussive character and squashing it a bit helps to bring the room forward – less reverb needed later on," Howard said.

Howard used a vast array of microphone pre-amplifiers on the drums including a Focusrite ISA 110 on the U47fet kick drum feed and hi-hats, Neve1054 on the snare, Buzz Audio SSA1.1 dual on the overheads, and the MCI JH600 console pre-amplifiers on the NS10 kick, toms and room microphones.

"By the time Rancom Street was built, Garth had already collected quite a few nice microphone pre-amplifiers," Howard said. "So that we were not dependent upon the console as being the main

source of microphone pre-amplifiers, this collection was expanded and incorporated into the workflow through an XLR patch bay, situated next to the bantam patch bay."

For compression, Howard used an EL Distressor on the snare, an Amek 9098 on the overheads with a medium/slow release for cymbal decay, and a DBX 160A compressor on the mono overhead.

"If I was recording to analogue tape, I probably wouldn't compress the snare on the way in," Howard said. "But for a country music recording direct to Pro Tools I like to hit a Distressor lightly to simulate a bit of tape compression."

For the bass guitar Howard was after a very tight direct input (DI) sound. To achieve this Howard bypassed Porter's beautiful vintage Ampeg rig and plugged the bass guitar straight into an Avalon U5 DI unit and then on to a Neve 1064 channel strip. This was then passed through an original black face UA1176LN peak limiter set at 4:1 with a slow attack/fast release.

Howard set up a stereo microphone pair on the acoustic guitar with a view to only using one of the two microphones for most of the mix, particularly for anything double-tracked. For his main microphone, Howard used a Neumann CMV 563 tube condenser bottle, the other being an Audio Technica 4033 cardioid condenser. Both microphone feeds were sent through an API 512c microphone pre-amplifier and onto a Manley Variable Mu compressor.

"I mainly used the two microphone sound for any finger-picked or solo parts where the acoustic guitar needed to have a bigger image in the track," Howard said. "I find that stereo microphone pairs on acoustic guitars, if used too much, can really swamp a track with its sheer size and almost grand piano overtones."

For electric guitar the set up was pretty simple. Howard positioned two microphones (an SM57 and a Sennheiser 421) in front of the amplifier and ran these feeds through a Telefunken V72 tube microphone pre-amplifier and a Pultec EQP-1A EQ. Howard said that the range of pedals used by the guitarist in combination with the many amplifiers used (Fender Deluxe, Fender Bassman, Vox AC30, Vox AC15 – depending on the song) provided plenty of compression and tonal variety.

For Denham's vocals, Howard used a Neumann M49 condenser microphone into a Telefunken V72a microphone pre-amplifier and into an original Teletronics LA2A compressor. According to Howard, apart from sounding better than their plug-in cousins, sometimes it's just

easier to grab a knob and turn.

"Where possible I like to record the band tracks of an album with the vocalist singing guides through their final vocal chain," Howard said. "You can build the tones of the band around the lead singer's voice, the singer often gets parts of or even the whole final vocal take done in the band track and there's less chance of red light fever stiffening the delivery. This worked really well with Jayne."

Although not used during the recording process, for Howard, plug-ins really come into their own in a mix situation - not necessarily to replace there analogue counterparts but to augment them.

"For me the most useful plugs are the ones that do things the stand alone gear can't do well," Howard said. "These include multiband compression, (Waves C4, McDSP MC 4000) mastering limiters, (Waves L3 Multimaximizer) and spatial tools (Waves Enigma and Mondo Mod)."

DIVISION OF LABOUR

Before mixing begins, Porter likes to discuss the project with Howard and the artist to ensure they are all on the same page regarding the audio image they are striving for, as well as take into consideration the time allowable as per the budget.

"From this point, Ted takes over setting up the mixes as I like to leave a space between recording and mixing, to help clear my head," Porter said. "That way I can come in near the end with hopefully a fresh set of ears to fine tune the mix."

With such an array of both digital and analogue equipment on the studio list, maintenance can be a big job. Porter likes to undertake most of the analogue valve gear maintenance himself.

"Col Abrahams and Greg Cameron take care of solid state maintenance, both very experienced techs," Porter said. "Piers Crocker is our guitar tech, and Gunter Wagner looks after the vintage microphones."

For the digital side of things, Howard is more than happy with the service he receives from Amber Technology, in particular their Product Manager Audio-Video and Audio Post Division, Julius Chan.

"Chan sold us our Pro Tools HD rig, a major portion of our plug-in list and our Apple Mac," Howard said. "He's just an amazing bloke - I call him at any time of the day or night with questions and he gets back to me with an answer every time, usually within five minutes."

Future projects for Rancom Street Studio include recordings for Rebecca Hancock and Stephanie Brownlee, mastering Liam Brew's debut album and working on Lee Kernaghan's next release.

"We've been writing this album for about two years, and now we have perhaps the best collection of songs ever for a Lee Kernaghan album," Porter said. "This will be about a six week project with some overdubs and mixing planned for Nashville."

BACK TO BASICS

After Kernaghan's album Porter will continue his recent return to pop songwriting. After being absent from pop writing for more than 20 years, Porter got a blast from going back to where it all began.

"I am having a lot of fun with it," Porter said. "We recently added Logic to the studio with songwriting in mind. I'm

also keen to embrace Logic into the more organic style of country that I usually write and produce."

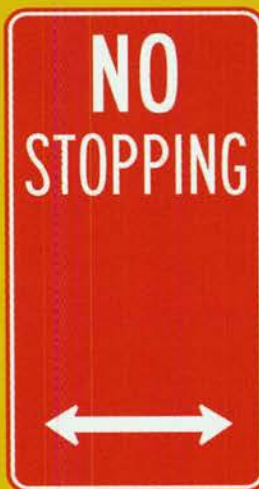
According to Porter, the popularity of Rancom Street Studio has spread by word of mouth over the years, as they've never advertised the facility. Although a lot of country music has been recorded at Rancom Street, Porter has seen an increase in the number of rock acts that have recorded here.

"It was designed as a live band studio, in a comfortable atmosphere, and bands feel good here," Porter said. "There's also an outside tree-shaded area that is great for lunch or chilling out, which we call the Beer Garden of Eden".

It sounds like an ideal place to make records, and looking at the incredible array of vintage analogue and modern digital equipment on-site, I think the Gear Garden of Eden would also be a suitable title.

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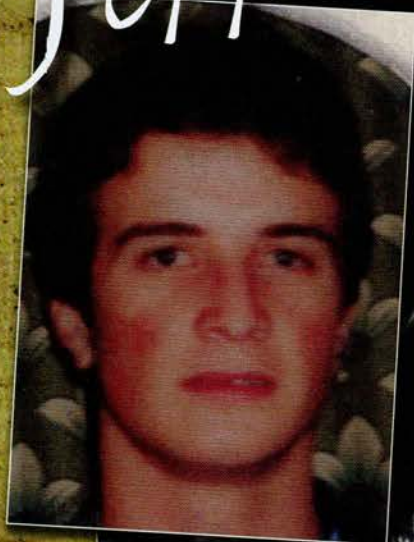
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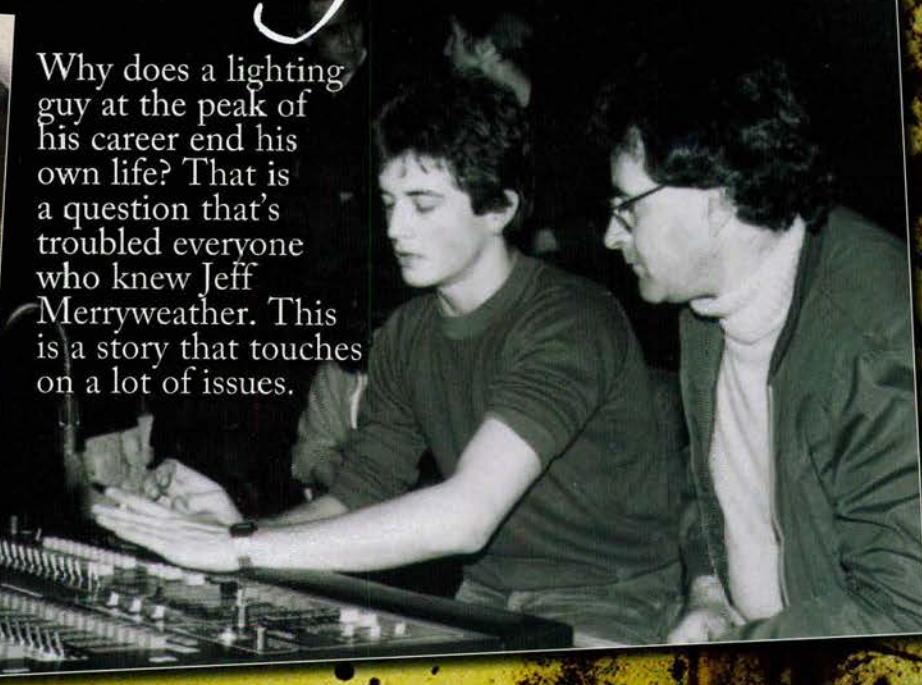
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REMEMBERING

Jeff Merryweather



Why does a lighting guy at the peak of his career end his own life? That is a question that's troubled everyone who knew Jeff Merryweather. This is a story that touches on a lot of issues.



SIMON HARMAN was the FOH sound operator for Mi-sex. These are his recollections of Jeff and the tumultuous era that was the golden days of the Australian rock industry

I probably spent more time with Jeff Merryweather than just about anyone for a brief but incredibly hectic 4 months in 1979. At the time I didn't realise that Jeff was the most complete roadie that I would ever witness.

Jeff was one of those fortunate people who appeared to have found their calling in life. Jeff had a passion and a flair for lighting design and operation. Watching Jeff operate a lighting desk for the first time was a jaw dropper. I'd never seen anything like it. Jeff had great hand skills. He used his fingers, hands, elbows and forearms to manipulate the sliders and buttons on his lighting desk. Jeff wasn't just a lighting trog. He was an artist - the desk his palette, the stage area a canvas of kaleidoscopic colour.

However, in the entertainment industry that's not enough. Out on the endless road and in the trench warfare that was Australian Rock and Roll in the late '70's people needed the ability to work hard and fuss free to get the job done in sometimes extremely arduous

situations - night after night. Jeff had all that. When it came time for the show Jeff would be there. I can't say that about every crewmember I ever worked with. Looking back 30 years, it's hard to believe that in that pressure cooker working environment, Jeff and I never had one disagreement, argument or fight. Not one.

For a guy with so much talent I found Jeff very unaffected. Even modest. Sure he knew he was good but I never heard him boast. In an industry chock full of overblown ego's that's exceptional. Jeff was straightforward. When the sound was good he'd let me know. When it wasn't he'd just say, "I can't hear my cues" or "The keyboards aren't loud enough." Jeff was demanding but fair. He worked to very high standards. He never let anything or anyone prevent him from delivering a great show. Jeff didn't ride rough shod over people. He worked with good grace and was always polite. On the road I found it easy to live and work with Jeff. On a personal level, Jeff wore his heart on his sleeve. If things weren't going well with his girl he'd let you know he was upset. On the other hand if you confided with Jeff he could be really discreet.

HARD LONG DAYS AND NIGHTS

For a crew of only 3 people we ran a fairly large rig for the time - a double 4 way PA system plus Jeff's lighting rig. That consisted of 24 par cans, 6 patt 23's a Jands lighting desk plus trusses, lighting bars, dimmers etc. There was a lot of stage gear including Murray Burns' big 4 keyboard / synth set-up. That was our extra long Orana Isuzu you used to see around town.

In a 4 month stint with just a 3 man crew we worked at least 6 days a week, covered the length and breadth of the eastern Australian seaboard, toured overseas to New Zealand for 3 weeks, worked as the support act for Talking Heads on their first Australian tour, recorded an album at EMI 301 in 10 days and finally launched that album, Graffiti Crimes in July. That's a lot of work for 3 guys. Graham Hicks engineered a new separate foldback system that substantially increased the size of the rig and the workload. I moved to foldback, Panther came in to do FOH.

There didn't seem to be any money for extra loaders. At this time Misex weren't making the big money like Chisel and

the Angels. Generally in Sydney we worked an 18-hour day 6 days a week. When touring, sometimes more. After one long stint of gigs we finished off with a double and an overnigher from Melbourne to Sydney. Pretty stupid really. Real burn out material. I don't know if manager Bob Yates had ever been a roadie but his tour itineraries left a lot to be desired.

DANGLING ON WIRES

I remember one particular gig that epitomises Jeff Merryweather. It was at the Manly Silver Screen in Sydney, an old theatre / cinema that was a rock venue. It had a stage about 3 metres high and a sloping floor area in front of the stage. The ceiling about 15 metres above the dance floor was one of those incredible plaster domed affairs typical of an art deco theatre. Jeff had a problem. The sloping floor meant that he couldn't set up his trees and trusses in the usual manner. The second problem was that even if the floor was ok then the trees just weren't tall enough to get the trusses above the band.

We thought the only work around was to ditch the trusses and set the trees on the stage with 8 par cans a side. Jerry rig the Patt 23's and run the back pair of par cans as per normal. Not really a Mi-sex light show but what else could we do? "Yeah but Peter Dawkins from CBS is coming to see the show," said Jeff. Jeff went for a look around and disappeared for a while. We got on with setting up the PA system and the stage gear. Jeff reappeared with a plan. He'd managed to find an access way to get in above the domed ceiling. He said that there were huge beams above the domed ceiling and that he could suspend his trusses from those beams on cable turfers.

We thought he was crazy. "How will you know where to poke the cables through the ceiling? The gig manager is just going to love you punching holes in his heritage plaster dome." "Besides," said Jeff "by the time the gig manager gets here it will be dark and he won't be able to see up to the ceiling." Er yeah right Jeff. Jeff was undeterred. "The holes won't be that big- just enough to get the cable through." said Jeff. He set his trusses on the floor in front of the stage. From above the ceiling he poked some tiny holes so he could see down to the floor and stage area to work out the best place to suspend the cables. That done he secured the cables to the beams and let the cables down to the floor. He then winched the trusses about a metre so that he could rig the lights. All that was left to do was to winch the trusses to a good working level -say 6 to 7metres. This is where it went pear shaped.

As Jeff started to winch the trusses the whole assembly began to sway. As the cables took the load they started carving huge gashes in the plaster- it looked a bit like one of those crazy scenes in a Hollywood B grade movie. You know the crazy guy who's cutting through a wooden door with a



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chainsaw. There were bits of plaster and 50 years of accumulated shit all over the dance floor. Someone went off to find a broom. Jeff seemed completely unfazed. The next challenge was to work out a way to focus the lights - pretty important in the way the Pattern 23's were used in the show.

If you saw a late '70's early 80's Mi-sex performance you would know what I'm describing. Steve Gilpin positioned himself so that the Pattern 23's either lit his left side or his right side or his whole body. Jeff somehow finagled a really long ladder that allowed Jeff or Steve to get up onto the truss to focus the lights. The problem was that as he crawled along the truss to adjust the lights the whole assembly just swayed around like a boom on a yacht in a breeze. It was pretty funny when I think about it. We tried tethering the truss with ropes to try and stabilise the whole affair but it wasn't entirely successful. Actually it wasn't successful at all. I don't think Jeff was entirely satisfied with the result. All

night long I could see that Jeff would love another chance to get the lights "just right." The only other little issue was the three-phase power.

NO POWER? NO PROBLEM!

Whenever I saw lighting guys fiddling with fuse boxes I'd get nervous. Let's just say he got it figured. (Rather than play with iffy fuse boxes I would rather spend the time chasing up a number of clean single phases elsewhere - if possible.) One of the guitar amps was really noisy. I think there were some issues with that theatre's power. Anyway, the show went off as usual. I never did hear if there were any repercussions about that ceiling. I seem to remember the gig manager freaking out when he saw this huge lighting rig hanging out of his ceiling. We used our usual excuse and said it was too late to do anything about it now. I suspect that the Misex management did what ever it took

to smooth ruffled feathers. It wasn't spoken about. I remember this gig at the Lifesaver when Jeff and a smoke machine had a disagreementbut that's another story. Let's just say that the Lifesaver could have been renamed The London Fog.

One unusual issue that cropped up in my time with Mi-sex was that people were saying, "oh yeah, Mi-sex they're not that good - just a great lightshow." That was a regular comment we used to hear. Of course in my mind it wasn't true. As good as Jeff's productions were I never felt they overwhelmed the music. Mi-sex were a fine act - as good as any of their contemporaries. This was the only band I ever worked with where a crewmember's abilities were considered to be the acts main attraction. I don't think it bothered Misex too much. There was no shortage of confidence in the band. I did wonder what Jeff thought about it all.

ON THE WAY UP OR THE WAY DOWN?

In my time with Mi-sex I can honestly say that as a crew we never sledged support acts or their roadies. We took the attitude that it was pretty stupid and ultimately counter productive and a timewaster. There's a Little Feat song called "On your way down" which sums it up. The line goes "the same people you misused on your way up - you might meet up on your way down." Jeff would give the support act a basic set up - usually 16 cans. If they complained he just stayed firm. In the past I'd done

THE MISEX CURSE

Misex were an 80's band who were big but who didn't make it, and some years later lead singer Steve Gilpin died after a road accident on the way home from a gig. Then last year former manager Bob Yates, co-founder of the Bob and Pete's 100% Yum pastry empire, was convicted of under age sex and jailed in Melbourne.

The court heard he had been stranded in Cairns for six months while a yacht he was sailing needed repairs. He was staying in a small hotel room, and took to drinking two bottles of wine a day and surfing a web site.

He contacted a 15-year-old girl from Melbourne and arranged to fly down and meet her. The charges followed that meeting. The judge said 62 years of clean living had led to a disaster, and sentenced him to four years jail.



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hundreds of gigs as a support act and had been treated pretty badly by some crews. I knew how it felt. Besides one brief exception our crew was pretty clean living. No real drinking, no substance problems - just plenty of puff. We weren't choirboys. We were just so darn busy that there didn't seem to be a lot of time to party. It wasn't a plan - it's just how things played out. Our tight knit crew had plenty of fun in our own way. Sometimes in Sydney Phil Cullen would turn up after the show and we'd have a few laughs. With a 3 man crew you can't cover or carry someone for even one day. Besides, Jeff had a steady girlfriend waiting at home in Hillsdale. He seemed very devoted.

Jeff took on the role as the main point of contact between the band and the crew. Jeff made the time to go back stage and sit with the band while we were tending to the support act. That was fine by me. Most of the band's requirements came to us through Jeff. His relationship with the band was much closer than the rest of us and I was happy to stay out of the politics.

I left Mi-sex the week before the launch of Graffiti Crimes. I was burnt out. I felt that technically I was out of my depth even though Steve Gilpin said I'd given him his best Foldback mixes. I struggled in acoustically bad environments. I didn't have enough experience to draw on. Mentally I knew I wasn't tough enough for the business. With Misex on the precipice of major success I could see that things were going to get much tougher. More shows and more equipment. At the time the aim of most bands was to try to crack the

U.S. market. Because of my past I knew that I would never be able to get a visa for the U.S. All that was left for me was the Australian merry go round. It didn't seem that appealing. I just walked away. I think Rocket filled my place. I never got to see Jeff's later work. That's a story someone else could tell.

By chance one day in 1985 I bumped into someone from Jands. I asked about Jeff. He said "don't you know?" He explained what had happened.

I was shocked but for a long time I didn't give it a lot of thought. I usually take a fair amount of time to be able to process that kind of news. But lately for some reason I've been thinking about Jeff. What I most remember about Jeff is not the dazzling lightshow. It's the friendship and his compassion. And the thought that jumps into my mind is this. (For those who never knew Jeff then this will be meaningless.) If you were with Jeff and somebody was talking bullshit or whatever, Jeff would just roll his eyes back and then to one side and give you a little grin as if to say "this guy's out to lunch."

I don't get to see many concerts these days. To be honest I think the best days for contemporary music are long gone. What I do get to see are concert DVD's. I have to say that considering all the great lighting technology that's available - sometimes the light shows aren't all that great. I think Jeff would have flourished in the new technological environment. When I see a performance by giant talents like Steve Vai or ZPZ I wonder how much better it might look if the light show had been designed and operated by Jeff Merryweather.

WHAT HAPPENED TO JEFF

Jeff's little sister Lise takes up the story:

It was very tragic about Jeffrey, he was my world, I absolutely adored him and what he did as a job.

I was 14 when he died. I think it all started when he was about 19 when he met this horrid woman, she really f---ed him up mentally, he was totally besotted with her, Phil Cullen (we are friends still) was the one who introduced Jeff into the lighting industry, always tried to warn Jeff about her and that she was a no good tart, Jeff just wouldn't listen to him or my parents.

Phil still feels responsible for his death, which of course he is not.

Jeff was not my mum's biological child but she raised him with my dad as her own from the age of about 10 months. She considered him her son. Just as all this sh-t was happening with (the woman), Jeffrey's biological mother came on the scene and really sent him into a downward spiral, she was ill and was putting all these scenarios in Jeff's head and really putting pressure on him to get us out of his life. It's all pretty long winded, but in the end his woman went into Penthouse magazine and basically Jeff lost it and hung himself in their backyard.

I clearly remember answering the phone. It was terrible. I have never got over it and that's basically why I still Google Jeff's name, just to see if anyone still remembers him, which obviously they do. I just think that's wonderful that he was so well respected and that people haven't forgotten him.



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By **RICHARD CADENA**

If everything goes according to plan, the revolution will start at 9:00a.m. tomorrow. The plan is for you to realize that you want Remote Device Management (RDM).

American National Standard E1.20-2006: Entertainment Technology – RDM – Remote Device Management Over DMX512 Networks, better known as RDM, has been approved for almost three years but you would hardly know it by working in the field. There might be more Elvis sightings around here than there are working RDM devices out there. It's not that there are no RDM devices on the market; there are. But there are precious few consoles that can take advantage of them.

Some of the automated lighting manufacturers and manufacturers of networking devices who are cranking out RDM products include Martin, High End Systems, Robe, and PR Lighting. Goddard Design Company, Doug Fleenor Design, Enttec, Pathway Connectivity, LSC, Artistic Licence, and Wybron all offer a variety of RDM devices except for consoles. And there are a number of RDM controller implementations such as Infogate, DMXter4, and JumpStart, but I can count on one hand...no, make that one finger, the number of manufacturers who I know make consoles with RDM capabilities – Compulite. When I have asked manufacturers about their plans to

update their software to include RDM I always seem to get the same answer – there's no demand for it.

There have been a number of champions of the protocol, including the volunteers who spent hours and hours in ESTA Technical Standards Committee meetings hammering it out. Wybron has been a devotee since the early days, giving out their code and InfoTrace Infochips for free and offering help with the deployment and implementation in other manufacturer's products. And now that the protocol is published, Wybron, Martin Professional, and Enttec have formed an organization called Institute for Feedback Excellence (IFE) with the aim of putting various RDM devices together. They are offering a service to test the compatibility between manufacturers and their products with regards to RDM.

RDM is a protocol that uses DMX512-A to send and receive messages between a controller and an RDM-enabled device like a lighting instrument, a fog machine, dimmer, or whatever Doug Fleenor decides needs to be remotely controlled – last year it was a glockenspiel. The protocol allows you to “discover” RDM devices on the network, configure them from the console, and monitor them remotely. The ANSI standard spells out how it is supposed to work. What could possibly go wrong?

Ken Whitright, the president of Wybron, found out what could go wrong. Last year when he was working the

PLASA trade show in London, he took the opportunity to test the RDM capabilities of Wybron's Infogate with those of another manufacturer. What he found was that one man's RDM is another man's, er, something other than RDM. The gear they tested worked in some fashion but not completely as expected. He got with Nic Moreau of Enttec and Peter Willis of Howard Eaton Lighting, and together they devised a list of procedures to test the RDM interoperability of competing manufacturer's products. Somewhere along the way they enlisted Martin Professional and started the IFE.

The idea behind the IFE is to “verify and evaluate” whether an RDM-capable product meets the RDM spec. Ultimately the goal is to find out if it is compatible with other products and whether or not it is really “interoperable.” Any manufacturer who ponies up US\$250 will get a Final Test Report telling them what worked and what didn't work along with recommendations for improving the RDM functions of the product.

The test covers the hardware for responders and the software for both responders and controllers. More specifically, it tests the discovery, remote configuration, reporting and monitoring, and compatibility with the Wybron Infogate controller.

And therein lies the rub. Some people in the industry are critical of the IFE's inclusion of this test for compatibility of proprietary products. In addition, since

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they are using their own products to test for compliance, in essence, they are using them as the “gold standard.” If these products have any RDM issues themselves, then the testing may not bear accurate results.

Whitright commented about the IFE: “It makes sense to test against Infogate because it’s the only RDM controller out there, in addition to Enttec’s controller, which is also used in the IFE tests. And we completely understand the need to protect proprietary information, so that’s why the IFE has a mobile lab that can be shipped to a manufacturer’s headquarters. They can conduct the tests themselves, following the step-by-step directions in the test procedure document.”

Whitright and the others involved in IFE started the organization because ESTA, the standards making organization in the U.S., declined to take on the task of testing manufacturer’s compliance with the standard. After all, it takes precious resources – time and money – that are already stretched as it is. To burden the program with a venture that falls outside of the scope of the organization simply made little sense. The standards that ESTA creates are guidelines for the industry and compliance is the “sole and exclusive responsibility of the manufacturer,” according to verbiage that appears in every standard they produce. It also says that ESTA and ANSI “do not approve, inspect, or certify any installations, procedures, equipment or materials for compliance with codes, recommended practices or standards.”

So the IFE was born out of a desire to promote the standard and its interoperability among manufacturers. To get more information about IFE, visit www.fbexcellence.org.

Better still, there’s an upcoming opportunity for any manufacturer to test their RDM-capable products with several other manufacturers free of charge. The second ESTA Plugfest will take place in Dallas, Texas during the July ESTA meetings. The first one was last January and several manufacturers, including Doug Flenor Designs, Goddard Designs, Enttec, and Howard Eaton, spent a couple of days shooting code between their wares looking for compatibility issues. As a result, several issues were resolved and some of the people involved said that they accomplished more in a weekend at Plugfest than they had in several weeks working on their own.

If the second session is anything like the first then it will be an excellent opportunity to test your gear with a wide variety of products in various configurations. Any issues that are discovered can instantly be sorted out with the debugger, and the code can be changed, compiled, and tested again. In addition, you gain the benefit live interaction with experienced people in the room, many of whom helped write the standard and know the ins and outs of the protocol. As one person put it, for the price of a weekend in Dallas you can “stand on the shoulders of giants” and take advantage of the vast knowledge and experience of the other people in the room. Anyone and everyone is welcome to participate and there’s no charge. For more information, visit: <http://www.esta.org/tsp/meetings/index.php>.

And that leads me back to the revolution. Imagine a world where control is centralized at the controller and not necessarily distributed among the many devices in a lighting rig. Imagine pressing a sequence of buttons on a console and getting back a list of each device on the network along with a complete description of what it is and what it does. Think of how it will feel to be able to configure every device from the FOH, including the DMX512 starting address, the mode, the personality, and more. The technology is there. Join the revolution and ask the manufacturer of your favorite console to do the same. The revolution starts at 9:00a.m. tomorrow. **CX**

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INSTALL AUDIO – HOW TO DESIGN AND SELL IT.

By JIMMY DEN-ouden

With the increasing availability of affordable home audio systems, consumer expectations of commercial audio systems have increased. JBL have a very good white paper on their website (<http://jblpro.com>) discussing what they term “business music”. There are some important considerations when planning out a system which is to be permanently installed, and these include purpose, coverage, and operators.

The first step to designing a system is to go to the venue, take some photos, take some measurements, and if possible get a set of architectural plans.

PURPOSE

Install audio systems can have several purposes, and these each have different requirements. The first step in designing a system is to define its purpose in life – this will help you decide which elements to focus on. Systems can be broadly categorised as follows – with the cost incrementing the further you go down the list.

1. Paging systems – these systems typically run 24/7 and are used solely for voice. With such a system, important factors are vocal clarity, coverage, and reliability. In a function centre for example, it may be important to have the system “zoned” so certain areas can be switched off for events. When the system is to be used for EWIS (emergency warning & intercommunication system) purposes

as well, there must be a bypass system in place so evacuation messages are heard regardless of volume controls and such. This is typically done with a “bypass on power failure” system, so volume controls require a voltage to be present to operate normally. If the power fails, the controller switches into bypass mode. Paging systems operate effectively in 100V Line mode, as the limited frequency response of this system encompasses the range required for vocal reproduction. Also these systems are easy to expand on and cable.

2. Common area background music and paging systems – typically what you’d find in a sports clubs, supermarkets, or similar situations. These systems can either be impedance or line driven, and the focus is usually on ease of operation. Typically the system would run background music, with the ability to “talkover” the music. “Duckers” are often used to facilitate speech intelligibility over music. Multiple microphones may be included, and these will usually function in “push to talk” mode.
3. Zoned background music and paging systems operate in much the same way as common area systems, however individual areas are amplified separately and there is usually a local microphone input. Zoned systems are a good choice for function centres, especially those in which the space can be configured as a large room or smaller individual rooms. Being individually amplified allows some scope for an impedance driven



Keep it simple – party on, party off

system rather than a line driven system (as you’re dealing with fewer speakers per amp), so audio quality is usually better.

4. Purpose built music systems. These can be oriented either toward DJ or live music playback, with many service both purposes. The sky is truly the limit with these systems – the major defining factor is usually budget, and the focus is most commonly on sheer SPL. Shamefully, quality sometimes seems to take second place.

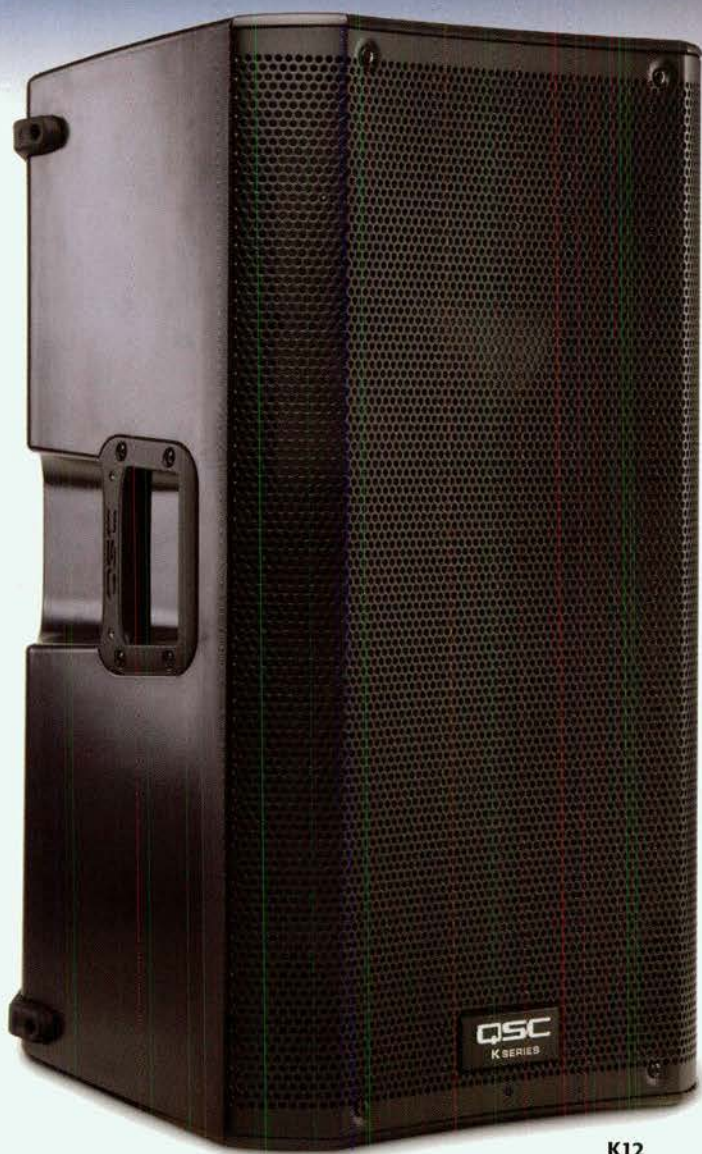
COVERAGE

Next thing to look at is what area you’re trying to cover with the sound system. For paging and background music systems, you should be aiming for even coverage across all areas which need it. This is best achieved by using a high concentration of smaller speakers, rather than a few big ones spaced at huge intervals. It’s the underlying principle of sound distribution, which is probably a



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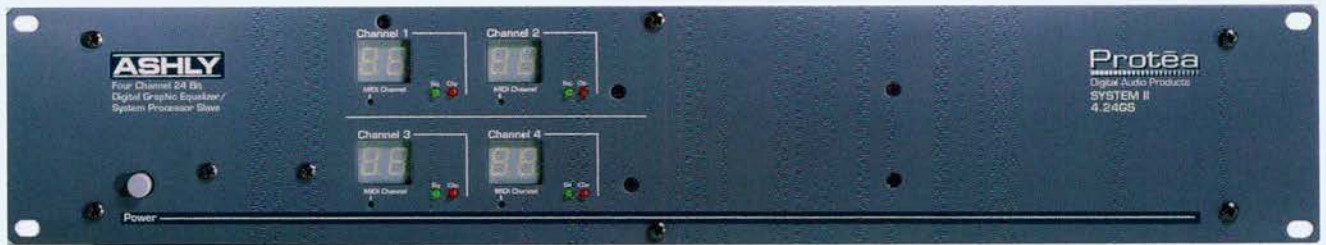
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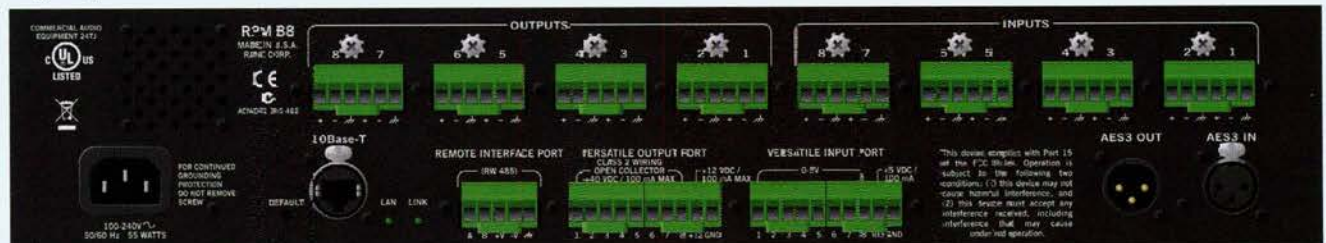
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good one to follow when you're designing a distributed sound system. Dedicated music systems can follow different rules since there's often a need to bring the focus of the sound toward a stage, but anything in the first 3 categories listed above should follow the distribution principle.

Tannoy and JBL both make software programs which can be used with their in-ceiling speaker ranges to calculate SPL

across a venue. You input the dimensions of the room, choose a speaker, tell it what you want your maximum SPL deviation to be across the area, and it will calculate how many speakers you need and at what intervals. For bigger systems software like EASE Focus will do the same, and many speaker manufacturers (d&b, Nexø, J&A, etc...) make their own software for the cabinets we're already used to seeing.

All in all, the tools for achieving smooth even coverage already exist – people just aren't aware of them all.

OPERATORS

Having a great system is no use if it's so complicated to use that nobody bothers, or they try but get it wrong. Installed systems should bear in mind the people who will be operating the system when designing the user interface. Does the



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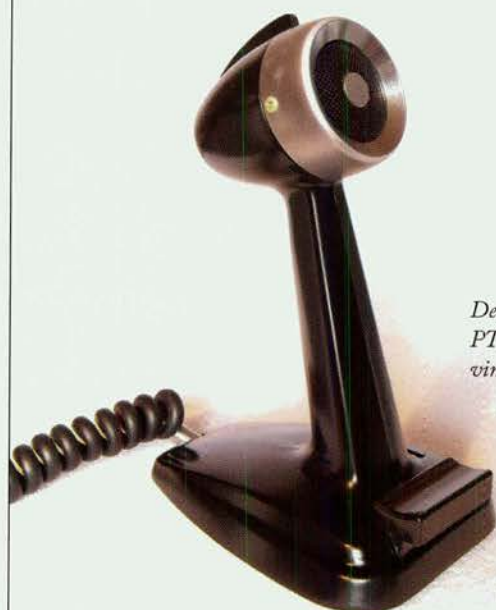
average pokie lounge attendant know how to drive a 40:8:2 mixing console, or would a microphone with a PTT switch be a more appropriate choice?

The secret here is that half the time when people don't know what to press, they press everything they can get their fingers on. The best way to avoid this is to make things less accessible, or take them away completely. ARX and others make cover plates to prevent people fiddling with settings on rack-mount equipment. ASHLY, Rane, Peavey, and a load of other manufacturers make equipment with no front panel controls. Since you can't press a button which doesn't exist, these devices remove a lot of points of failure from the system. Human failure.

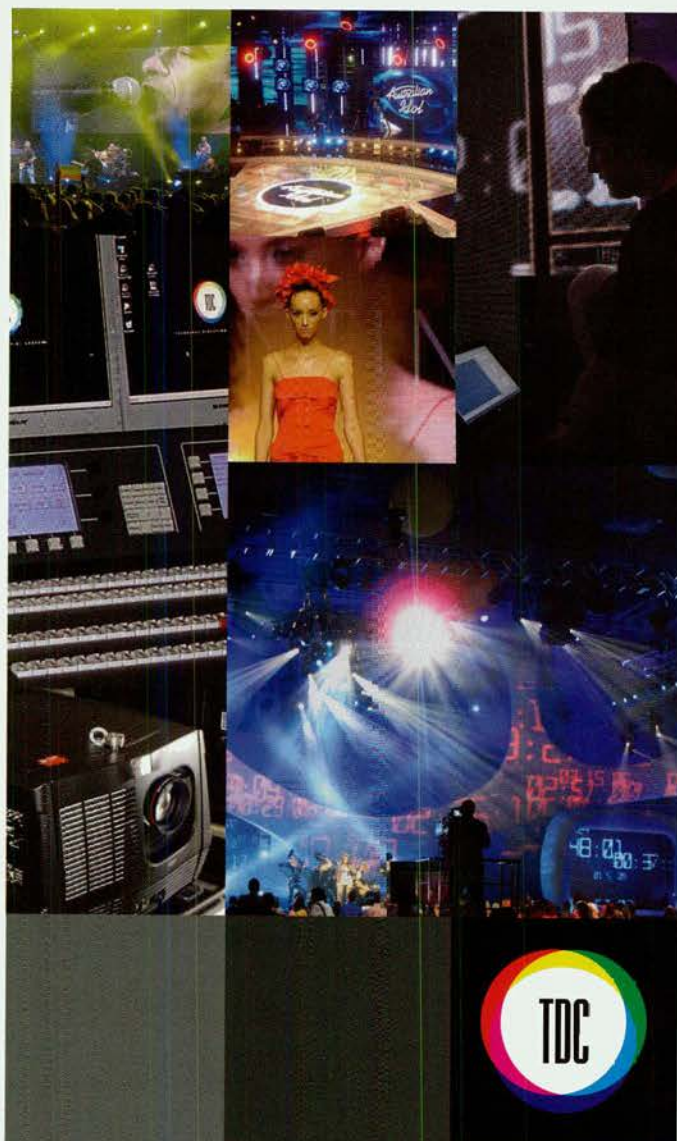
The other point to note that helps here is that training and documentation should formulate part of any custom system. Don't feel like surrendering the time to write a user manual or teach people how to use the system? Nor should you. Bill for it. Include documentation and training in the system price as a non-optional item. Explain to your client that understanding the system will help them get the best from it. Pitched the right way, this is actually a selling point – it communicates to your clients how much you care about their individual needs.

In situations where staff turnover is rapid, there's little point to training people who may not be around for more than a few months. In these situations, consider implementing some kind of automation system that simplifies the whole system to a point where you don't need to provide training. As much as I personally despise touchscreens (the only really accurate one I've ever used is on the iPhone), they can make it possible for a completely untrained operator to use a complex system. Nightlife music got it right – they make a remote for their video jukebox system with four buttons: Volume up, volume down, next song, and add credit to jukebox. Bar staff can understand it.

There's some really good install equipment out which integrates easily with automation systems. It is totally possible to have a "nightclub on" and "nightclub off" button arrangement. Volume levels, music selection, zoning, and even lighting can be pre-programmed as the venue operator requires. It completely removes the human "fiddle factor" and gives your clients an ironclad guarantee of consistency. If you're worried about an automation failure, build in a bypass switch of some kind and educate only those who need to know about



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TIPS AND TRICKS

There's a bunch of little things you can do which make systems work better and more reliably. Things as simple as using an in-line graphic EQ to remove excess low frequencies from systems which aren't capable of reproducing them – these are inaudible anyway and by removing them you gain a lot of headroom. The system has to work less hard – so it works for longer. If you've got equipment which is accessible to end users, mark all the relevant settings using a chinagraph pencil – that way if someone botches it you just go in and line up all the dials with all the pencil marks (it took one of my mates 6 consecutive service calls to one club work this trick out, then shortly after this they bulldozed the club).

Where DJs are involved, so too should be limiters. Setup the DJ gear, play a track out of it at +3db, then set the limiter so it's just kicking in at this level. Do the same for the booth monitor output – foldback rigs can blow up too. If you've got some kind of digital system control in place, use the lockout facility. Make sure the code to get in is on-file somewhere in your office in case you get hit by a bus, or just clean forget it. The less scope you give end users to alter the system, the less likely they are to do it. Less fiddling = less failure = happier client.

it (supervisors and managers etc... even then be selective about who you choose to show). In effect you almost need to complicate the system to simplify it.

I heard a great story from a colleague last week about a venue complaining that 3 out of 4 compression drivers in their sound system had failed. They were surprised that this happened given they'd allowed the visiting DJs full access to the system with no limiters in place. Clearly they believe all DJs have a complete and comprehensive understanding of gain structure, clipping, and square waves, and would never do anything that might damage their system. The horns surely must have failed for totally unrelated reasons.

Think about the operators. Design your interfaces and controls accordingly. Put limiters in place where it's appropriate, and don't make anything accessible which doesn't need to be. Lock it all in a rack if you have to, do whatever. The more reliable the system the less likely you are to find yourself called in to fix it mid-grand final.

CONTENT & REDUNDANCY

Venues have obligations regarding licensing for music playback. APRA, PCAA, it all gets a bit confusing. Make sure your quote stipulates that the venue owner is responsible for discharging all their content licensing obligations, and you get a signature to reflect that they understand this.

Redundancy is a nice option if the budget caters for it. I was called on to design a system for a 24 hour venue – I split the audio for each zone across two multi-channel amplifiers so if one failed the worst that punters would notice would be a 3db change in level. Who wants to do 3am service calls?

BUDGET

Too many inadequate or inappropriate sound systems exist in too many venues. We've all seen and heard them. I know a venue where half the PA habitually shuts down several times a night, presumably because the amps driving it are too small and running too hard. There's certainly enough distortion for this to be believable. This situation hardly does anything good for the rep of this venue much less the installer.

If the new gear to do the install right is too expensive, try to persuade your client to look at second hand options. Don't compromise on design just to satisfy a budget since ultimately the client will have to junk the system and re-do it properly.



Definitely purpose built for voice!

— probably through a different install company too. Explain that it's totally a false economy. If system designers and installers in Australia would stop making design compromises just to satisfy budgets, we'd see the quality of installed sound lift markedly.

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance comes in two flavours. Proactive and reactive. Educate your clients about proactive maintenance —

how to clean a mixing console surface (using a soft paintbrush), how to shut down the system correctly, all the little things which will help prolong the useful life of the system. If users are unlikely to carry out gear maintenance themselves, consider setting up a maintenance contract. The client pays a fee per month, you go in and clean all the amp vents, manipulate all the potentiometers to prevent oxidation, and test functionality of the whole system. This is also a good way to identify little problems before they become big problems, as well as keeping your own staff in touch with individual client's installations.

Reactive maintenance comes into play when something stops working, blows up, or catches fire. I know a venue which keeps spare drivers for every speaker on-site, as well as spare amplifiers. They also keep the tools needed to change any of this stuff over. This is a great idea — whoever gets called in to do the component replacement doesn't need to remember to take anything. This won't be the case (or even an option) for every installation, and some components are easier to replace and more available than others. Availability of system components is something that should be considered when specifying them in the first place.

INSTALLATION & DOCUMENTATION

Lastly, set a date for handover. Make sure your client has the opportunity to have all their questions answered on this day. Show them everything they need to know about their new system. Once this is done, start the warranty period on the gear, and if you're called in to attend to something then you'll feel okay about sending a bill for it.

As part of the design process, you'll need to come up with paperwork including gear lists and signal flow diagrams. This gives you a convenient list of the stuff you need to order for the installation as well as a guideline on how it goes together. Follow it. If the build runs differently to the plan, update the drawings. When the job is completed, hand the schematic over to your client. Ensure the labels on the diagram match the labels on all the cables. Worried this will make it too easy for someone else to come in and work on the system you've built? If you've done the job right then your client has no reason to call anyone else. **CX**



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ROAD TALES THE TOOLS OF OUR DAY

A clash with new technology sends Julius Grafton spiralling into the past. Strange days indeed...

By JULIUS GRAFTON

With a growing swag bag of new stuff to deal with at every gig, I pondered the disappearance of my scene on the digital sound desk at a recent gig. Where I had become used to dialling up Scene 21 "Julius" but now there is nothing there. All my settings, EQ, dynamic processors like compressor limiters and noise gates, and input gains were nixed. "Upgraded firmware" the venue production guy said, as I madly reset all 28 channels and tried to remember which reverb I used on auxiliary 1 and what delay feedbacks.

"Back in the day", I told my trainee before he glazed over, "we reset every console every show".

"Why don't you load your scene back off your USB stick?", he asked me.

"Because I'm only a Power User, not an Administrator", I replied.

New technology, new ways for things to go wrong.

Which led me to reminisce some more. As you do when you're the wrong side of 50. I took this up with Mick Quinn at a random meeting at the cappuccino machine here at JMedia. "We are adapting all the time to new stuff", he said. The strain of remembering recent tech challenges quickly led us to the past. So we fondly compared car wrecks of the early 1980's. Back then one of the rental firms wanted rock band business (can't think why) so we collectively showed them our loyalty by destroying as much of their fleet as possible. Because they replaced any wreck no questions asked. Jon Pope and I did in a Falcon Wagon, Clint and Quinn destroyed a Commodore or two.

Sometime, it may have been the infamous Ray Maguire, rang to complain the car wouldn't start because the electrics were wet. He didn't mention it was in the motel swimming pool at Coolangatta at the time. They sent another car over straight away, followed by a crane.

But when we weren't wrecking cars we were on the road struggling without mobile phone or emails. The public phone was our lifeline, pockets full of 20c and 50c pieces. Back when I started in 1973, there was no STD. To be specific, there WERE sexually transmitted diseases, but there was NO subscriber

trunk dialling which in phone company talk is STD. So you needed to ring the operator for a long distance call, then roll the money in on command. The operator would hear a beep for each coin that you paid!

Our trucks had no air conditioners and no CD players. The seats were vinyl. One trip to Melbourne with Cyril B Bunter Boogie Band, we stopped at the Murray and threw ourselves in to cool off. The slab of Tooheys we bought at Mittagong hadn't cooled us enough. Or maybe it was because the last few cans I had were warm.

The truck was the most important tool of trade, and I discovered if you invested in preventative maintenance, the thing would be less likely to break down. We ran them fully loaded as our equipment was really heavy. If you find an old amplifier somewhere you'll get the idea. I put Michelin tyres on all axles, instead of just the front – and didn't have to stop to charge blown out retreads in summer like everyone else. I would drop off the truck to the service joint at 4 in the morning and walk or taxi home – it took a lot of organising but it paid off.

Towards the end of my road days (1983) I had 3 rigs in trucks and one of them smashed into the side of a bridge on the Hume at dawn because the crew disobeyed my standing order and decided to overnight from Canberra to Melbourne. I got the call at 7am, a very rude awakening as the Bakelite phone at home went 'ring-ring' and the dopey driver explained the situation.



To my enormous credit I was more worried about the welfare of the crew than the massive hassle and cost. They were all fine, the truck could be patched up if I could get 3 replacement wheels and tires out there with a compressor. Remember – we had no internet or email, no mobiles. I got an instant return on my investment with all the truck service joints and tyre shops I was funding, they gave me a number of a depot in Albury where the guy dropped everything and saved us.

This awesome guy took 3 wheels and tools out there, and also took 3 bacon and egg rolls for the crew. Can you believe that? He did it all on credit, on the say so of one of my contacts. He also got some two by fours and a sheet of plastic and bolted the ripped pan back together so the thing could drive. The crew got to the gig in Melbourne late but the show went on.

I thought about some truck crashes I've been at since where the owner flips out about the cost and blames or sacks the driver – sure I was mighty pissed off the crew broke their orders but saw their twisted point of view (bad accommodation in Canberra; pressure from tour manager) and put the thing behind us.



The author demonstrates excellent ignorance of safety principles: 1: footwear. 2: truck ramp not secured. 3: wrong posture. 4: Amp stack ready to topple onto head. 5: Colleague smoking. (Pic by Box Brownie)



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The ubiquitous Orana truck scene of many full loads in the early 80's. This one outside Sound on Stage (Pic by Phil Duneszi)



Driving a truck home after a gig in the dead of night was my favourite time. The crew asleep, cassette deck pumping out Little River Band or Supertramp, the cab softly lit and the road rolling under the headlights. Cool air and stale sweat from the loadout. I never dozed off at night, only in the afternoons.

Wally chain smoked, but I banned him doing it in the sleeper after he set fire to the blanket, forcing an emergency stop and a lot of blanket stomping to a chorus of curses.

'Bump' as I see it another rabbit to heaven, 'crash' as a small roo smeared my roc bar but unwavering we motored on. 'Drive straight ahead' I tell myself after several near misses caused by trying to save a native animal at the possible cost of lives and equipment. Smashed driving lights were routine, massive bug smears when we drove through the Riverina or Lockyer Valley.

The bottom fell off the air intake on a mate's truck and the next puddle went straight in, destroying the diesel engine. You had to be careful.

One night the lights flickered while I was on the Newcastle slow road home. I shook my head and stopped at the Kangi roadhouse for some hundred mile coffee. There was another crew there, from a band called Jail Bait. You got to recognise the trucks after a couple of years. There were so many bands on the road you'd always see someone. After comparing

notes with Saucy I bid farewell and resumed the run through cold patches of fog that usually smelled of chook manure or stinking like the West Gosford abattoir. Things once smelled bad, much worse than these days.

Flicker. Flicker. What the? It wasn't my brain, the headlights were doing a lightshow now. The switch was breaking down, so I finished the run with lights randomly flashing.

Another late night vignette relating to trucks was dropping off the crew. One collaborator who I worked with for a year or so had a penchant for hookers, so he would have me do some laps of Darlinghurst at 4am to select a suitable acquisition. I drew the line at inviting her into the truck, I would turf the randy trog out once he saw what he wanted. It wasn't a good look for the Julius road company to have the pride of its fleet trawling the streets, but that's what you do for your crew. huh?

One night we were doing the laps and this guy pulled a gun on us at the corner of Bourke and Liverpool streets! It was ridiculous - we were idling at the lights, and he just walked up and pointed the 45 at me while mouthing something I couldn't hear since I had the window shut. I just floored it, and 8 tonnes of Isuzu took off in a blinding grind of black smoke.

Weird things happen late at night, one time we were loading out at Balmain and were positioning the FOH console in

the pack when the truck started up and took off! Some passer by decided to steal it while we had the back doors open and the ramp down! Can you imagine what it was like in the back, with a Soundcraft console on wheels and two loaders, all frantically trying to stop the console from killing us and/or falling out the back, as the ramp drags along the road in a cloud of sparks? The thief had second thoughts and bailed out after a hundred metres or so, and we couldn't catch him. We were ready to give him a flogging.

But afterwards it was really funny.

And one night I was asleep in the truck sleeper outside the War And Peace at Parramatta during the support band when some guy tried to break into the cab by breaking the quarter window above my head. A rude awakening - he got away.

Long miles, log books, bad food and gigs that stink. Gronks and sumpheads off their minds, biffs and dud bands. Drug dealers getting paid before I did. Bouncers who picked on crew. Lack of sleep, sore backs and the roadies curse: haemorrhoids. Ask any weightlifter about these before you laugh. Worst of all was the difficulty maintaining long distance relationships - God bless the rock and roll widows.

But every now and then, there was the magic of a great night, a great show, kindness and generosity. After 36 years I still love the roar of the greasepaint and the smell of the crowd.

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This month we go to two interesting times in our rearward journey to see how things were. The common theme with today is the Trade Show coverage. What strikes us as we go to press is how nothing is new in the trade show basket. SMPTE 15 years ago was the same size, at the same venue as today. And the debut ENTECH, promoted in the June 1994 magazine, was more innovative than any of today's show. We have the brochure, to prove it.

15 YEARS AGO: CONNECTIONS JUNE 1994

Open the mag and bang: there's a double page spread for the first ENTECH with the tag line 'Systems Integration'. Seems like our industry was grappling with connecting audio, video and lighting elements. Just like now. The first ENTECH was loaded with 36 workshops and seminars, covering Business, Careers, Safety, Integration, Lighting, Audio and Music Production.

Also retro but the same is the news that SMPTE would run their show in July 1994, across two halls at Sydney's Darling Harbour exhibition centre. Exactly the same.

This mag was loaded with travel tales revolving around regular trips we took to overseas trade shows. 15 years ago you had to go and see it for yourself, there was no viable internet as we know it. Our email was Compuserve – with a six digit number as an address.

We reported on the collapse of Brashers, the retail chain. It was big news in 1994. They started in 1852, and the banks ended the firm recalling \$62 million in loans.

Our letters pages had four complaining letters and one from a jazz trumpeter.



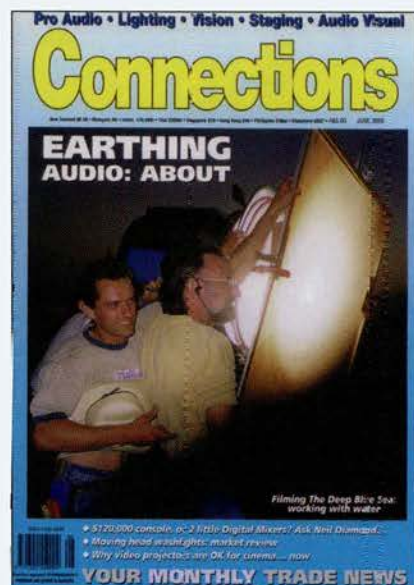
Crown launched extra hardware into the IQ system, still in use today where overall remote control of amplifiers is required.

Barry Manilow toured and we covered it. They used Sony headphones for six of the band, making this the first real use of 'in ear' monitoring we had seen outside of musical theatre where musicians have worn headphones in the pit for what seems like centuries.

LSC launched the AXIOM lighting control desk. BASF hosted a junket to the wine area, flying people in. The rape era was already under threat from digital.

Martin was pushing the Roboscan 305S hard against the Trackspot, and Abstract advertised a range of waggly effects. With Super Scan Zoom on the back cover, this was the era when disco effects started to appear on concert stages. Cemar NAT was a moving head/lens on a waggly mirror body, a good idea that cost too much. People were being asked to pay almost ten thousand dollars for one of these or the Super Scan Zoom.

E602 Recording Studio on a Whitsunday island offered SSL and Neve consoles, and an impossible list of cutboard. Sadly our story in a previous issue was a hoax, so this issue carried



an apology. It was surprising how many people called us about it, having figured it was real.

WHAT WE PAID:

- Allen & heath GL2 rack mount mixer: \$4,243.
- Par 56 cans: \$56.
- Yamaha PM 4000 M console: \$175,000.

10 YEARS AGO: CONNECTIONS JUNE 1999

More déjà vu: open the cover of this magazine and ten years ago Trade Shows were a prominent theme. Fast forward to now and this issue deals with trade shows in a different climate, where the trade is grappling with old format shows in a new format of economy. But back to 1999: the first AMAC music convention had just run on the Gold Coast, and the trade were very happy.

JBL launched the EON 1500 loudspeaker. Pro Stage Australia launched its staging modules. And Gearhouse unveiled the Optiscreen, a high output LED screen. By now every man and his dog were selling moving lights, it was the

middle of a decade of massive investment in things controlled by DMX.

Remember the Yamaha 02R digital mixing console? It was stunningly successful in the market, initially selling into post production houses and then migrating out to the broader audio biz. Niel Diamond toured Australia mixed through two consoles slaved together. Sound engineer Stanley Miller was (and is) a pioneer, and he had a lot of people re-evaluating what they do and how they do it.

Martin Professional was acquired by a large listed company, Schouw and Co. By 1999, Martin had market leadership in sight, as High End Systems lost some momentum and Clay Paky started to get more expensive. The Mac 250 and the Mac 300 were top sellers.

Did you know a multicore cable can randomly crackle when phantom power is fed into one of the lines? We didn't, but a really good page from Michael Orland detailed this and a whole lot of other phantom power issues. Now we know if you disable the phantom power bus on your monitor console, and then apply phantom power from the front of house console, the phantom light will still come on at the monitor console.

Chicago was running in Sydney –

and at presstime, a new production of Chicago is running. In Sydney.

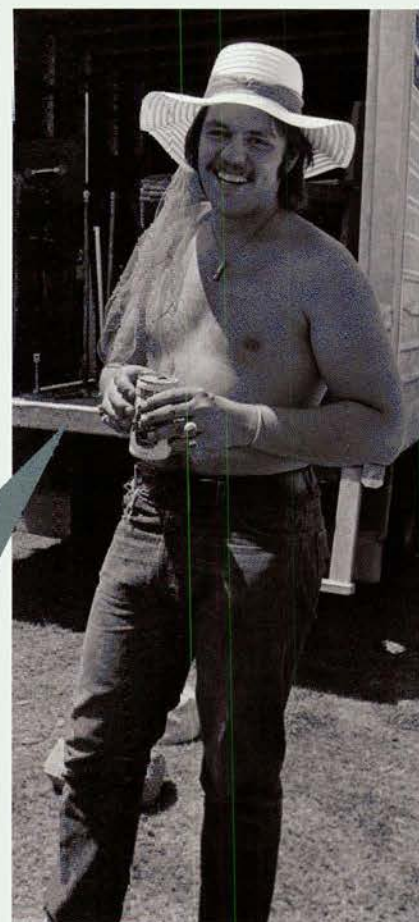
Boy from Oz, the stage show, opened in Melbourne with \$3m in presales. And Sound of Music was booked to open later in 1999 in Sydney for a 14 week run. So: ten years ago musical theatre was on fire and concert tours were thin on the ground. Ten years later it is the opposite situation.

WHAT YOU PAID:

- Coemar CF 1200 moving head spot: \$13,816 plus tax. Wow!
- 8 ex-install Golden Scan HPE HMI 1200 + controller. Just \$62,999. Wow!
- Allen & Heath Mixwizard 12:2 mixer: \$2,895. **CX**

MYSTERY ROADIE CONTEST:

This Bob King picture from circa 1976 shows a healthy and hairy crew person (nice hat) hard at work with a Ford F350 luton peak truck in the background. You get a free subscription to CX if you can identify the guy. You get a two year free sub if you can both identify AND send a current (after) photo. And you get a THREE year sub if you do all that plus correctly identify the beverage he is holding.



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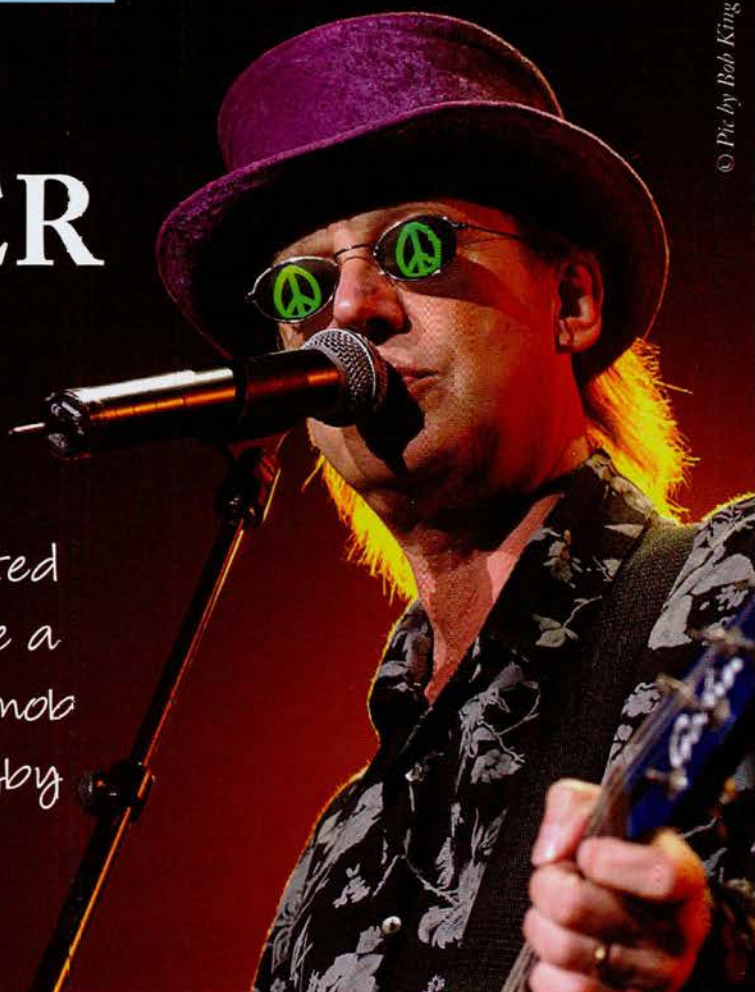


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SECRET LISTENER

The best gigs are often those you don't plan. A recent Saturday Balmain pub-crawl with Karen started at the Welcome Hotel where a guy playing fiddle and a mob of overweight amateur rugby players doing sing-along fast lost our interest.



© Pic by Bob King

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Then to Balmain Leagues Club, scene of many a gig yesteryear and tonight home to a decaying collection of trappings wearing team colours and watching another team play on the big screen. Boring as can be. If we joined, the price of a beer would fall from \$4.30 to \$3.90, the barman told me as if reading from a script.

Finally we spotted hope; Russell Morris and band at the Bridge Hotel, scene of many more gigs. \$25 each got us in, and we whiled away some time as two guys on acoustics did the support thing.

I've mixed on the PA at The Bridge, it has a Midas Venice desk and a stack of Nexo Alpha E each side. The room is harsh since it's a hose-out job with concrete and tiles. The place filled up, so the acoustic got gentler, and then The Russell launched under a static rig of 8 Par 56's.

What th.....? The mix sounds like a CD. There's a gentle delay on the distinctive tenor of the star. A great drummer: Australia's foremost Irish Indian, Kevin Murphy! I last saw him playing with the official Little River Band in the USA – the money making one owned by Steve Housden and staffed by others, not the superior and original Birtles Shorrocks Gobles version. Drums played with enormous feel, and not hit too hard, so the stage volume is low(er).

Peter Robinson on lead guitar, Russell on Telecaster, Mitch Cairns on bass with backup vocals from guitar and drums. This is good!

I'd forgotten most of the hits that Russell Morris had, they came along amongst a couple of covers and some new stuff.

But the mix: the engineer was a young guy who it transpires is a drummer who doesn't consider himself an engineer. He kept the lid on the volume, all the elements were placed properly, and the delay / reverb use was appropriate to the song era.

After too many beers, I'm still sure it was one of the better pub mixes I've heard. I told him at the end that he'd just done a better job than I could have, and given it was a half drunk old bald gronk saying it, he probably didn't pay too much heed. So here's the written proof, son.

Then it was out into the cold night, fall into a cab, and try to direct the thing the 20k north to our home in the trees. **CX**

Julius



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DIGICO SD8

DiGiCo has had a strong foothold in the upper end digital console market for some time now with the D1, D5, and SD7. The SD8 shoots for a different sector, and from what we saw it looks to be well on target.

By JIMMY D

The SD8 is designed to hit hard in the sub \$70K market, which is currently populated by consoles like the M7-CL and iLive. Just above this figure you get into the territory of the Digidesign Profile and Yamaha PM-5D. The SD8 has a similar feature set at a very competitive price.

Drew Menard and Paul Polito from Group Tech visited the CX bunker one rainy Thursday afternoon and brought the console in for us to have a look at.

OVERVIEW

The SD8 has 2 stereo busses and 24 mix busses, each of which can be mono or stereo. 12x12 matrix busses round out the package. In standard form, the SD8 comes equipped with a 48 in / 8 out stage rack which connects to the console via MADI. There's a second MADI IO so you can connect a laptop for recording / playback, or another stage rack. You don't even need an SD8 stage rack; any of the DiGiCo racks will work.

The SD8 is based on SuperFPGA technology, as developed for the SD7, and while not everything has flowed down from this console it's clear where the SD8's heritage lies. The stuff that made it in was what you'd expect on a console in this price bracket, and then some more.

Physically, the console is simpler in appearance than we're used to seeing from DiGiCo. Three banks of 12 faders, each with 3 rows of rotary encoders above form the work surface. Above the centre bank is a 15" TFT touch screen. Each bank can be "assigned to centre", so you can access all the channel parameters on-screen. Banks are divided in to four pages, spread across 2 layers. You can assign channels, bus masters, or control groups to each bank.

Other features include 6x on-board stereo effects and 12 graphic EQs (which can be driven from the faders and have the all important "flatten" function). Add to this 4 band parametric EQ, high and low pass filters, compressor, gate, and up



Jimmy discovers something worth getting excited over.



Paul Polito and Drew Menard from Group Tech.

to 1.3 seconds of delay on every channel, buss, and matrix output and the capacity of the Stealth Digital Processing starts to become apparent.

The SD8 was clearly designed to be used with a laptop computer – there's a dedicated spot to put yours above the left fader bank, complete with steel pegs to stop it sliding off. The headphone socket is sensibly positioned under the right hand side at the front of the console. All

other connectivity is on the back panel, and includes MADI, AES wordclock sync, screen, mouse, keyboard, and network ports. A new addition to the SD8 is local audio IO on the console itself – 8 analogue inputs, 8 analogue outputs, and 4 stereo AES inputs and outputs negate the need for a FOH IO rack. There's also a removable panel for a soon to be released Optocore upgrade.

Visually I approached this whole review



Patching 48 channels in one fell swoop.



Hands on with the SD8.

with some trepidation - from seeing the pictures I thought the champagne gold colour looked really cheesy and cheap, but when you see it face to face it actually looks really good. Photos just don't do it justice.

USING IT

Probably the most difficult thing about using the SD8 is shifting it around - it's a 4 person lift when fully cased, but take off the lids and 2 people can satisfactorily wrangle it. Having spent some time on a D1, much of the operation of the SD8 was second nature. Some little things have changed or moved to different places (i.e.: how you assign fader functions to banks), but none of it is overly hard to find. I spent an hour playing with the thing, and I'd take it to a gig confident I could make it do everything I needed it to.

It doesn't matter if you want to use the console for FOH or monitors, it will handle either. Euss structure set up now has the option for dynamic re-structuring - you lose audio for a second but you no longer have to build a whole new session to add in a mix buss. Some would argue that adequate planning would negate the need for this, but it's nice to know it's there for when things "change" unexpectedly. Anyhow, I started a new session and chose my bussing structure. From there, you go to audio IO set up and choose how you want your MADI routing to work. It's hard to explain the exact process, but much easier to say that it's fairly self-explanatory once you get there.

Next up: patch some inputs, a process which has become faster on this generation of console. Start at the first channel; tell it how many channels you want to patch sequentially and choose which input you want to start at. It cascades the rest for you, and it happens instantly. If you choose stereo inputs it will assign 2 inputs sockets. Type your input names in, or use the new preset name feature to save some time. Next up, assign your outputs to a physical connector and you're good to go. All up the process only takes a few minutes. Add in some EQ

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Multiple MADI Connectors, Optocore soon to come.



Dual redundant hot-swappable power supplies.

inserts and effects sends and returns, and it's still a pretty quick set up. If you do it in the offline editor then it's basically instant – just load the USB key and go.

THE COOL STUFF

Hot-swappable redundant power supplies. Multiple inserts on each channel – both pre and post dynamics and EQ processing. Insertable processing channels are gone, and the whole insert process is much simpler now. New plastic fader caps work better with less “finger contact”. I didn't find the faders fighting me even when I pushed them from the ends instead of on top. DiGiCo make their own faders.

Alternate inputs can be assigned for each channel. Switching these is really easy and since you're staying on the same channel nothing else changes – good for a broadcast environment where you'd have redundant lines for mics and other sources. Snapshot automation is fast and selectable in its recall scope, both globally and on a scene-by-scene basis. I don't particularly like the scene recall keys directly above the master fader, they sit unprotected too close to the mute and screen assign keys. Granted they're different colours and shapes, but a preference option to disable them would be a great addition.

You can assign nearly any of the channel parameters to the three rotary encoder rows above the channel strips, yet they still remain available as auxiliary sends with the press of a hot key.

The floating point processing means (as I interpreted from Drew's explanation) that unity is basically re-defined at every step along the signal chain – what this means in the real world is heaps of headroom. So long as you don't clip the analogue input stage, it's extraordinarily difficult to drive a channel into digital distortion. We tried. We routed a channel out to a group then back into an adjacent channel, and gained up

every EQ, digital trim, and dynamics processor along the way. 177db of gain, VU meters ping their dials off (see the pic!), and none of the expected digital distortion. In that respect it's probably the most forgiving digital console I've ever run into.

TRYING TO BREAK IT

After about three quarters of an hour I turned to Drew and announced the commencement of the part of the day to “try to break it”. He seemed remarkably unfazed, apparently with good reason. Going straight for the jugular I pulled the MADI cables from the console. Not unexpectedly, the audio stopped. I plugged them back in and the audio came back – instantly. I re-booted the control surface CPU – it did its thing while the audio chugged along merrily unaffected.

Not yet satisfied, I pulled both the power leads on the console (remember, we try to simulate real world eventualities). Plugging them back in, the console sprang back to life, and within about 4 seconds was passing audio again. Soon as the computer re-booted I had control over it all – this doesn't take long either.

THE VERDICT?

I could go on about sample rates, and Tiger SHARC FX engines but at the end of the day how the thing works and sounds is really more important than the method by which this happens.

I really like the SD8. It feels good and it sounds great. An hour on the console left me feeling comfortable operating it, and a few gigs would make it second nature. Consider the bar raised.

The DiGiCo (www.digico.biz) SD8 is distributed in Australia by Group Technologies (www.gtaust.com), and in standard configuration goes for around \$62,000 including a stage rack and MADI cable.

Pics by Aiyden Lang.



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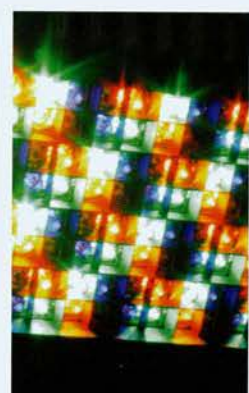
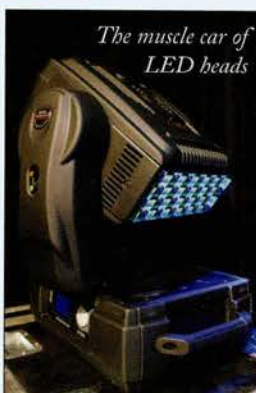
Typical monitor setup

M-48 Live Personal Mixer

www.rolandsystemsgroup.net

ROBE REDWASH 3•192

Seems like there's a lot of LED fixtures out on the market nowadays. It's become the flavour of the month. Robe has come to the party with their offering, the REDwash 3•192.



By JIMMY D

Like all things Robe, the REDwash is extremely well constructed. It arrived on the back of a TNT courier truck, and so I enlisted the help of Matt (CX office guy) to bring it into the office. The case is a serious bit of engineering, weighing more than the fixture itself. The unit hangs inverted within, and as well as the side being removable the top flips open for easy access to the base of the fixture. Useful when you need to rig a pile of the things – open the cases, attach the clamps, lower the truss on top and fasten then slide the cases out. Pan and tilt locks on the fixture make it easier to slide back into the case if you're wrangling it solo.

HANDS ON

The fixture itself weighs very little. There's no reason for it not to – LED sources are not only smaller than conventional ones, but there's no heavy ballast, gobo wheels, irises and such. Basically the only motors inside are for pan, tilt, and cooling. This makes it very quiet.

Setup via the large backlit LCD screen and rotary encoder based menu system is simple enough that even the unusually hard of thinking could probably figure it out. First option in the menu is DMX address – as it should be. Following this there are personality settings, test modes, and special functions including reset. Not that I expect you'd have much call for it – the only thing to reset is the pan and

tilt functions. So far as I can tell there are no other indexed moving parts. This is a good point for reliability too.

Other accessories inside the case are a selection of "egg crate" modules which can be attached to the face of the fixture to change the beam angle. The standard beam angle is 12°, and egg crates are available to change this to 25°, 45°, and 15°x45°. But you can find all that out on the website (www.robe.cz). There was also a user manual, though we didn't find a need to refer to it.

IMPRESSIONS

I guess the biggest point to make about the REDwash is how bright it is. Robe claim double the luminous flux levels of other wash lights using a 700W discharge



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lamp source, and firing it up it's certainly not a stretch to believe it. We set the unit up at one end of the barn, installed the 25° egg crate module, pointed it at the other end, and hit go. Even with the house lights on, it lit up the opposite end of the room (some 12 metres away). Also worth noting is that it was a really smooth flat wash. The egg crate system works really well, and has a nifty quick release feature.

On to the next ridiculous test – I took the REDwash out of the office and put it in the carpark. Challenging circumstances to be certain, especially given it was the first sunny day we've seen in weeks. Optimistic as ever I decided this would still be too simple a challenge, so I only turned on the blue LEDs. I didn't expect to see anything, and was understandably surprised when it actually worked. See the photo, and look at the shadow of the fixture itself to get some idea of the ambient light level it was up against. I reckon you'd pretty easily wash a large stage in saturated colour with about 8 of these fixtures.

So far as connectivity goes, there's DMX512, Artnet, and Robe's proprietary protocol which allows remote configuration of the fixture. Pan/Tilt invert add to the appeal, as do a variety of fixture personality presets. Once you get the personality set the way you like it, you can save it for subsequent recall – good for touring shows when you may not always rig the fixtures in the same orientation.

DMX operation is available in 4 different modes, offering different degrees of control using between 8 and 28 channels. There are a bunch of in-built macros so it's possible to use the unit as a standalone effect, though it's capable of a lot more.

The LED panel is arranged into four arrays, each with red, green, blue, and cold white LEDs. In some DMX modes you can control each array independently, though I don't know that you'd go so far as to use it for pixel mapping. Maybe if the pixels were very big it would work – but ultimately that's not what the REDwash is about. It's about lots of very bright saturated colour which matches Robe's other fixtures, and it certainly delivers.

Movement of the REDwash is fast, smooth and quiet. Not much more to say on that. Strobe works well, and when combined with the saturated colours makes for some disturbingly striking effects. Eye candy for certain, but bold enough to stand up and get noticed even on a big stage.

Really the only criticism I have of the

thing is that the case is way too heavy – it's really built solidly enough to carry two fixtures rather than one. On the other hand, this of course may just be a reflection of Robe taking a very serious approach to making the REDwash tough enough to withstand the rigours of

touring shows. If the case was wheeled in and out of a truck and through a venue it wouldn't even be an issue.

The REDwash 3•192 lists at approximately \$11,700 plus GST, and it's available in Australia through ULA Group (www.ula.com.au). 



Robe REDwash



Outside, a sunny day, blue LEDs on/y



Magnetic air filter grilles



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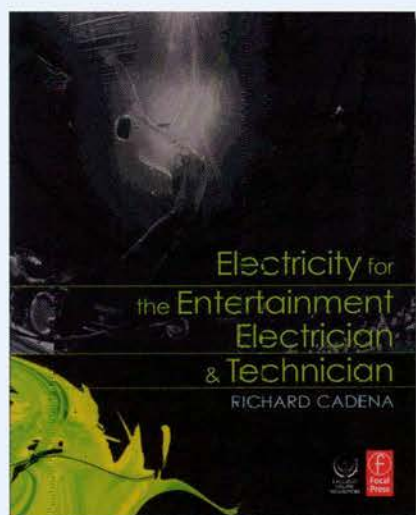
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By **DON JONES**
& **ANDY MACKENZIE**

ELECTRICITY FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT ELECTRICIAN & TECHNICIAN

Book reviews aren't by any means a regular in CX – ours is an industry that begets a lot more gear than it does words. Occasionally, however, something crops up that's worth a mention. Richard Cadena's latest foray into the literary is one of those occasions.

THE BACKGROUND

For those not already aware of the fact, Richard's published a couple of books previously dealing with various aspects of the lighting world. The new book will appeal to the same readers, but also to a broader audience since it moves out of the lighting sphere to deal with electricity generally.

Both of us have seen plenty of texts on electricity, electronics, and associated stuff over the years but neither of us have ever seen such a comprehensive coverage of all things entertainment electrical in one place. This book offers something for everyone from trainee technician to the experienced old hand.

From the beginning it is clear that Richard has a good grasp of his subject and the industry. Reading further you get an insight into the author and see that his approach considers his experience in both white and blue collar industry sectors – as well as in depth engineering knowledge he's seen the hands on side of electrical issues in the industry. Anecdotes show him as fair minded, able to get on with people, and respectful of workers at any level.

So what has his background to do with a technical book on electricity? Everything!

CONCEPTS AND CONTENT

He explains concepts using terms and examples understandable by trainee technicians, backing these up with hard fact explanations for the old hands. Each

chapter is a self contained topic, and most are directly applicable to technicians in Australia. Each has a set of review questions – there's no law that says you have to complete them, but for those studying (or just wanting to make sure they understand)...

Early topics cover electrical theory and concepts – like what is electricity, and how does it do what it does. Richard uses the familiar water analogies for current, flow, pressure etc, and keeps them going into resistance, inductance and capacitance. So if you can follow complicated fluid dynamics like pouring a beer you can apply that understanding to the electrical concepts (although the electrical safety chapter advises against mixing beer and electricity).

The book ranges widely through the world of things electric, dealing with a huge variety of content. Everything from the most basic electrical concepts through the mysteries of power generation and distribution gets a look in, as does the principle and operation of poly-phase supply in its various permutations.

There's also a comprehensive coverage of the electronics behind dimming systems – something conspicuously absent from most electrical/electronic texts.

INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

The international flavour of the book is another interesting and pleasing feature. Despite being a Texan living in Texas, Richard has gone to the effort of researching the way other countries deal

with electricity. Examples of differences in procedures and methods abound – and not just about 50 vs 60Hz issues. Australia rates specific mention on a number of occasions, and there are good background concepts for any technician planning to travel. Pop quiz – which country uses green as an active?

While some of the later chapters – those primarily concerned with standards and regulation – target an American audience, looking at them makes one realise how well set up we are in Australia. It does no harm to see how the other half live anyway, and given the content of the rest of the book, who cares if there's a few bits that aren't directly relevant?

CONCLUSIONS

This is a very handy little book – in only 245 pages it distils a whole lot of knowledge that would otherwise need to be pulled from a pile of different places. Would we endorse it as a ready reference? Absolutely. Would we endorse it as a textbook? Absolutely – we're already referring students to it. Will you be able to dash out to your local bookshop and buy one? Perhaps not. Given the size of the market for this book in Australia, you're unlikely to see windows full of it as you go down the street. The good news – it's easily available online at a very reasonable \$44.95 US from PLSN (www.plsnbookshelf.com).

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ROSCO DMX IRIS

Rosco are well established in the lighting business, and while they may be best known for their range of colour media they provide plenty of other useful solutions for lighting designers. The DMX iris is but one of a group of products working towards a single goal...

By ANDY MACKENZIE

That goal, strange as it may seem, is to make many of the functions and features of moving lights available to those using conventional profile spots. Rosco's product range includes a fistful of different gobo rotators, animators and image projectors, all designed to fit most commonly used theatrical profile spots – Selecon Pacific, ETC Source Four, Strand SL, Altman Shakespeare and a variety of others. There's also the T-Cue, a motorized mirror device that fits into the gel frame slot on the lamp. The DMX Iris rounds

out the range. All these devices are DMX controllable.

So I can make my Leko do moving light stuff. Fair enough, but why?

That's a good question, so let's have a look at some of the answers. Lots of designers want to incorporate some of the features of moving lights in their shows, but not necessarily all. At the same time, they may not want to lose the consistency of the look of their show. Everybody knows about the colour differences between incandescent and discharge sources, but even if you use all tungsten lamps the optics of your movers aren't going to be the same as the optics of your



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standard profile. So even though the colour's the same, the beam may not be.

FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

CX have had a DMX Iris in the bunker for the last couple of weeks, and we've had some fun playing with it. It's a pretty basic device – an iris that fits into the same slot a normal iris goes into with a squarish growth off the top that houses the motor and control circuitry. It's worth noting that the mechanics of the device are forwards of the iris, so you can still get at the conventional shutters and gobo slot. Good thinking there.

There's a clever friction lock system that stops it from falling out of the slot, and a place for the safety cable just to be sure. DMX connectivity is simple and satisfactory, using 5-pin XLR for both in and out, and electricity gets in via a standard IEC. The power supply is compatible with any supply voltage from 100-240V so you can even take it on overseas trips if you wish.

The iris is controllable by DMX using a single channel, addressable on three rotary switches. The adjustment range is quite substantial – at its widest the aperture is 72mm, at its narrowest only 9mm. What this translates to in terms of beam area is dependant on all the usual variables like beam angle, throw and so on. Even at its narrowest setting the iris presents a nice circular beam thanks to its 24 leaf mechanism. The more leaves an iris has, the smoother and rounder it can be when closed tightly – most of you will have seen at least one clunky iris in your life, and you'll know they don't look good.

Additional features include a test button on the front panel which causes the iris to go through its full range of movement – handy for bench testing if you think you have an issue with a sticky iris or similar, and also just for checking function before it goes into the rig. There's also a little switch which allows you to select normally open or normally closed mode – normally open means a DMX value of 0 has the iris fully open, while a value of 100% has it fully closed. Startlingly enough, normally closed does the opposite. Movement is swift, smooth and quiet enough to use in theatre.

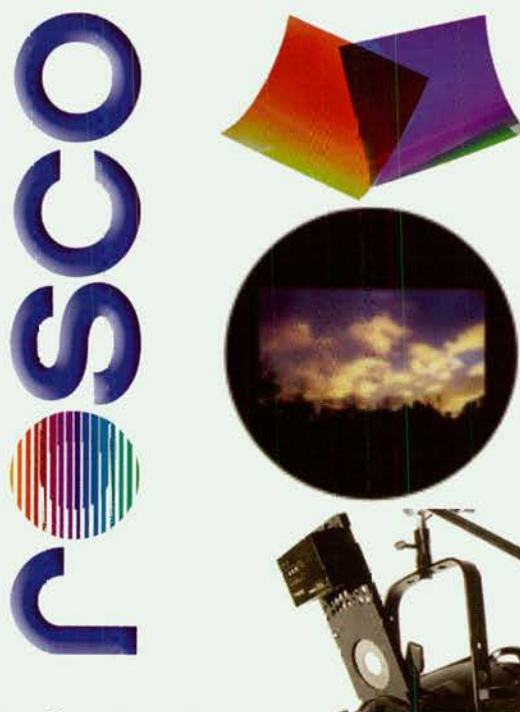
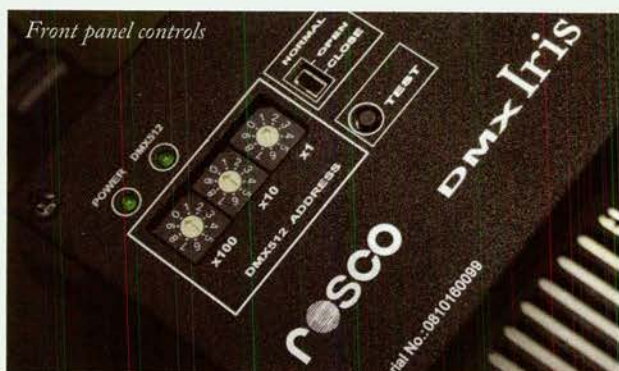
And just in case you come up with the idea that you want to use your swanky motorized iris as a non-swanky, non-motorised one, there's a manual knob on the back.

CONCLUSIONS

It could reasonably be argued that there's only a fairly limited range of applications for this device, but the same could be said of plenty of other lighting accessories. For those who do have the application, however, the DMX Iris does its job extremely well, and appears to have been built well enough to cop a fair bit of punishment.

Retail price on the DMX Iris is \$825 including GST, and it's available through Rosco Australia – www.rosco.com/australia

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RSS M-48 LIVE PERSONAL MIXER

By JIMMY D

Given the success of the Digital Snake and V-Mixer systems and the obvious potential of the REAC protocol, it was never going to be long before RSS cooked up some other cool REAC based toy. Bring on the M-48.

Small and unassuming in appearance,

the M-48 has two layers of eight rotary encoders with illuminated dials. The function of these encoders is controlled by illuminated buttons at the right hand side of the unit, while layer keys live to the left. The unit is based on 16 "encoder" channels – they're not just mic channels. Using the M-48 manager in the M-400 mixer, you can assign whatever you want to each encoder channel. It

could be a single channel, it could be a sub-mix of multiple channels. You can do this separately for each M-48 in the system.

How the system connects together is nice and easy too: Power over Ethernet is supplied by the RSS S-4000D network hub, which will run up to 8 M-48 units. Need more units? Add another hub. Connection to the M-48 is via

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Ethercon, which also accommodates normal RJ45 connectors. A mic stand mount is available too, so in terms of cabling and visual appearance RSS are definitely going for the minimalist appearance. Tidy. Marc Allen and David Lackey from Roland came to CX HQ to show us the system, and to get from opening the cases to being up and running took us literally no more than 5 minutes. The toughest bit was carrying it all upstairs.

Once you've got your encoder assignments done in the console, you're ready to go. Don your favourite choice of headphones – 3.5 and 6.5mm jacks cater to most choices. There's also a stereo line output on 6.5mm TRS jack in case you'd prefer to go with some active wedges or something. Setting up a basic mix takes next to no time at all – turn up the encoders you want to hear in your headphones. You can solo each encoder to find out what's there if you need to.

At a basic level it's very easy to use, but there's a lot more scope to tinker with your mix once you've got things started. Each encoder can be panned, sent to reverb, and modified with a 3 band eq (with sweepable mid). There's a reverb master on/off switch, as well as an ambient microphone built into the back of the unit. Both the reverb and the ambient mic actually sound pretty good too. A 3.5mm auxiliary input on the back lets you connect an iPod or whatever you want – so it's an easy setup for drummers with click tracks and the like. Independent level controls for all these features are grouped at the top edge of the unit, along with a master EQ, headphone volume level, and output limiter. There's even a dimmer switch on the back panel to reduce the intensity of the control surface LEDs.

For situations when you have multiple users using the setup regularly, there's a scene store / recall function. Multiple setups can be stored and recalled quickly – the recall is close enough to instant that you could also use it as a generic "safe" recall for musos – in case they mess up their mix beyond recognition this would get them back to something workable.

All in all, there's a lot to like about the M-48. It's quick and easy, yet very well featured. It sounds good too. Most of all it's something musicians could understand, and given the target audience that's perhaps the most appealing feature of all.

Final pricing is still to be confirmed, but it looks to be around \$12,995 inc GST for a pack of four M-48 mixers, and S-4000D splitter. Add in a Digital Snake and/or V-Mixer and you're good to go.

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