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- / Brian Coleman: The Gaffa Tapes

Road Test

- / ACME AECO 5
- / Claypaky Arolla Profile MP
- / Ayrton Zonda 3 FX

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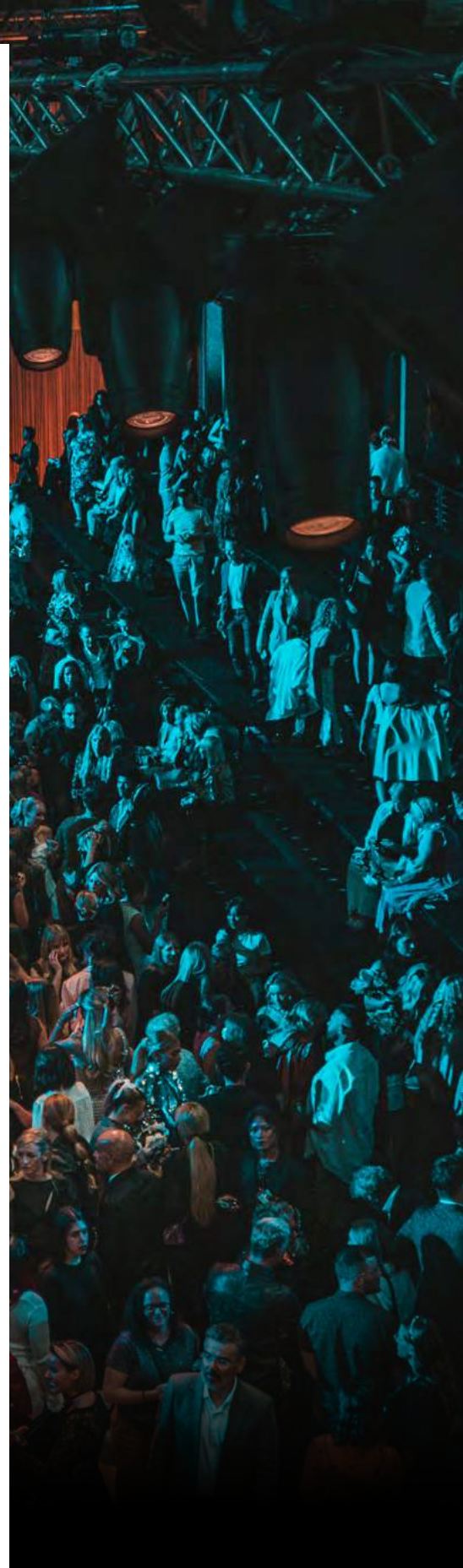
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Inside the Production:



Fred Again's Pop-Up Gig at The Timber Yard

In the fast-paced world of event management, anything can happen, and it was on Friday 1st of March when a typical day turned into an extraordinary feat of last-minute production prowess for Shadow AV.

It all began innocently enough with a routine corporate event setup at The Timber Yard. Little did we know, we were about to embark on a whirlwind adventure that would challenge the boundaries of possibility in live event production.

In the world of audio production and DJ culture, no-one is bigger than Fred Again. Named after a character from a Scooby Doo movie, Fred Again has worked with countless monster acts as a producer and songwriter, including Brian Eno (who used to be his next-door neighbour), Ed Sheeran and Eminem. These days Fred's almost as big as any of them, winning two Grammy Awards in 2024 in the electronic/dance category, while also being nominated for Best New Artist. Fred Again pulls monster crowds of adoring fans at the flick of a social media switch, but by mid-afternoon on this fateful day, I still had no idea our paths were about to collide in a big way.

As the day progressed, I found myself navigating multiple sites, from the corporate setup to a casual pop-in on the team at Elite Image Events at the Music Bowl for Reminisce. But it was the game-changing call to the Director of Elite and The Timber Yard from Fred Again's management team, asking to host a Fred Again pop-up gig at The Timber Yard in 24 hours that quickly catapulted us into uncharted territory! With just 24 hours to turn a concept into reality, tensions ran high as we awaited confirmation for a site visit at The Timber Yard.

At 7pm, the pivotal call came, summoning the teams from Elite and Shadow AV to The Timber Yard for a crucial site visit, with Fred Again's Team scheduled for 8pm.

Over the next couple of hours, meticulous checks were conducted on site layout and security to ensure the venue met the event's requirements. It was during this time that Shadow AV was enlisted to manage the production of the event.

As the Shadow AV team arrived at The Timber Yard to commence the corporate event pack down already scheduled for that evening, they remained blissfully unaware of the monumental challenge we had only moments earlier secretly undertaken. With a ticking timer counting down just 19 hours, the stakes were extremely high, yet our determination remained unwavering.

Sitting down with Fred's team, we delved into their tech rider, deciphering the equipment needed. With the help of Will from FOHP, we assessed available gear for the event. By 1am, after several group conference calls, a comprehensive plan began to take shape.

With the framework established, a decision was made around 2am to break for the night, recharging before the final push.

Meanwhile, the FOHP team worked tirelessly, assembling pick lists for lighting and audio equipment. They prepped and loaded the trucks to ensure they were ready to depart for the site in the morning.

At 8am, I stepped onto the site to find the boys from Elite already hard at work, transforming the space from a corporate setting to pure rave. Over the next few hours, the phone was going non-stop as I scrambled to coordinate crew, arrange a custom stage, and procure all necessary resources to bring the event to life. Urgent calls were made, each demanding immediate action with inquiries ranging from "What do you have?" to "I need it NOW!" Despite the mounting pressure and curiosity surrounding the last-minute gig, confidentiality remained a priority as I rallied my network of suppliers to meet the challenge head-on.

By 11am, our crew had arrived on site to begin construction. However, negotiations regarding the stage size were still ongoing, and we were determining what we could source and construct within the given timeframe.

Ultimately, we decided to proceed with the client's exact specifications: a custom stage with three tiers, starting at 850mm high and stretching 20 metres wide, stepping down to a 600mm tier of the same dimensions, and finally tapering to a 400mm tier.

At the centre of it all, Fred would be positioned in a three-by-three DJ booth. (This added the complexity of catering to the audience at both the front and back of the DJ booth, requiring twice the PA). Fortunately, our strong partnership with Pro Stage Victoria proved invaluable as they went above and beyond to accommodate our needs and provide the custom stage to fulfill Fred's vision.



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By 3pm, we found ourselves in a comfortable position, and the atmosphere shifted from organised chaos to confident anticipation. We were positioned to nail it.

By 5pm, both sound and lighting were fully set up, and we seamlessly transitioned to Fred's Front of House (FOH) team. They took over to program and EQ the mammoth PA system.

At 6pm, Fred Again and Skin on Skin arrived to test the system. Fred's reaction spoke volumes – he was over the moon with the sound and beyond grateful for what we had achieved in such a short time.

At 6:30pm, the soft doors opened to the outside area, welcoming a 600-metre line of eager punters into the outdoor space of The Timber Yard. By 7:30pm, the main doors swung open to reveal Fred Again already in action. As the show commenced, Fred Again captivated the crowd with a non-stop performance, showcasing why he's regarded as one of the best entertainers out there. The electric and insane vibe persisted for the next few hours as Fred Again and Skin on Skin kept the crowd mesmerised.

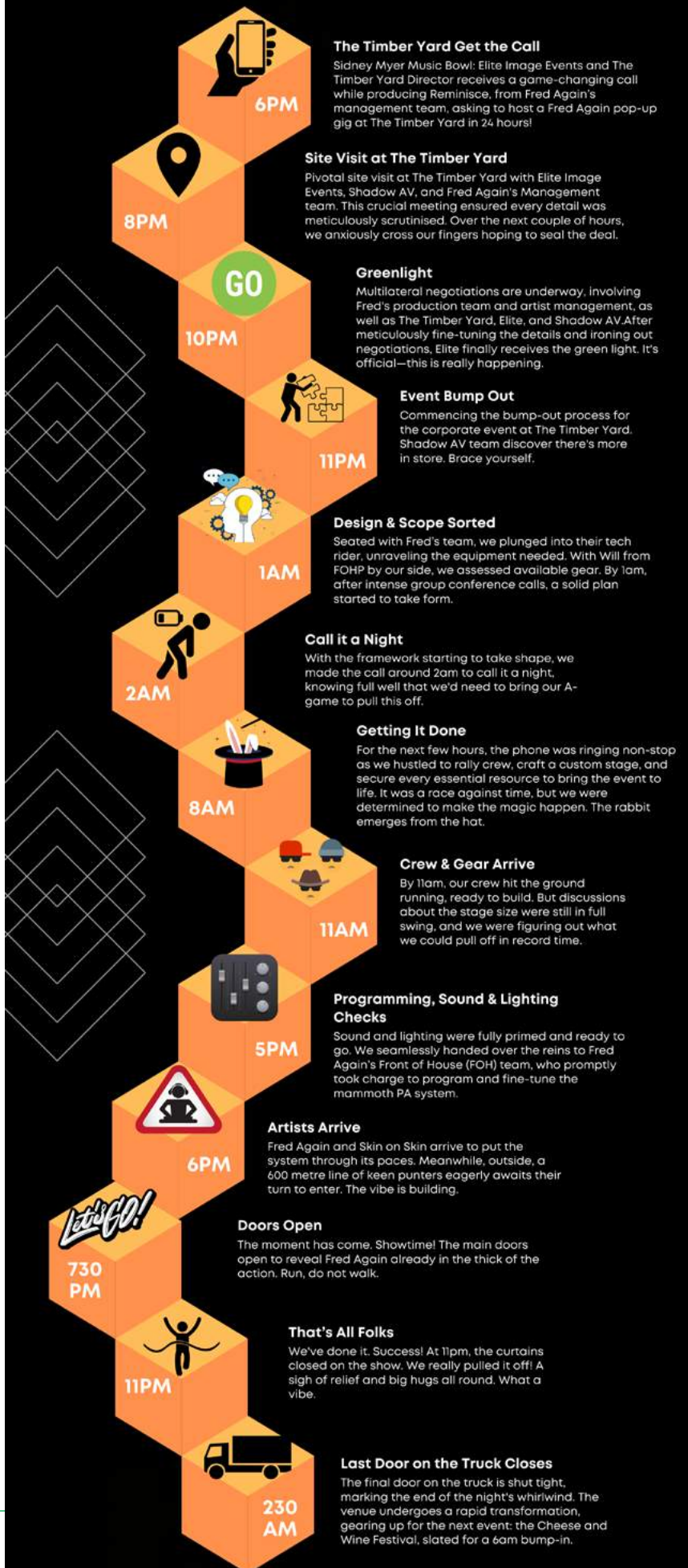
At 11pm, the show came to a close and by 2:30am, the last door on the truck was locked shut. The venue then underwent yet another swift turnaround in preparation for the Cheese and Wine Festival, scheduled for a 6am bump-in!

A huge shout out to Elite for placing their trust in me to spearhead this monumental production mission. And what an incredible venue to be able to create this event in; The Timber Yard truly provided the perfect space for the vision to come to life. A massive thank you to our trusted suppliers who moved mountains to make this event happen.



Cory Hoyling at Fred Again

BEHIND THE SCENES: 24-HOUR SPRINT TO PRODUCTION MANAGE FRED AGAIN'S SECRET GIG





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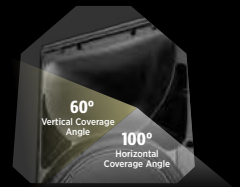
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FOXTEL UPFRONT 2024

Innovative & 4K ONE deliver a Showcase of Entertainment Excellence for Foxtel Group's Upfront 2024

Foxtel Group, one of Australia's largest media companies, hosted an electrifying event at Cockatoo Island recently – Foxtel Upfront 2024 – transforming the historic Sydney shipyard into a hub of technological innovation.

Upfront 2024 showcased the best of what's to come for Foxtel in the new year, including innovations in audience measurement, ratings data, and carbon impact measurement for ad campaigns, as well as the introduction of the Hubbl platform.

Behind The Scenes

Innovative Production Services' founder, Jeremy Koch, orchestrated the entire show at

Foxtel Upfront 2024, masterfully orchestrating video and audio cues, live crosses, and even a live band with help from the company's new hybrid OB Truck, dubbed 4K ONE. "We couldn't be happier with the functionality and versatility of our new broadcast truck," says Jeremy Koch. "It really is the innovative solution for a new world of hybrid and live events with increasingly complex video and broadcast requirements."

The tech team was the backbone of the show, operating an impressive array of cutting-edge equipment that enabled Innovative's commitment to excellence shine through in every frame.

A total of nine cameras were deployed in total: Two Panasonic UC4000 4K cameras captured the main stage, equipped with Fujinon 4K 107x Box lenses, while a third was used for live crosses on the island, providing dynamic coverage. Additional Panasonic UE160 4K PTZ Robotic Cameras were positioned high in heritage trusses, providing stunning angles and shots, a Panasonic 4K Box Camera was positioned at the front of the stage for additional perspectives, and Marshall FullHD Micro Cameras were discreetly placed among the band members to capture more intimate moments.

The show was pre-programmed in the



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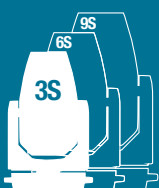
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Frontal Lens
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Weight
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warehouse for five days prior to arriving onsite, which made for a far less stressful content management experience once the team was on the island. An immense amount of 4K content was fed through Pandoras Box Servers during the event, running v8, with control and interfaces from Widget Designer. The media server system and the control system were running fully redundant backups, with two separate systems in mirror tracking mode.

Bringing all the technology together and being the heart of the show was 4K ONE, Innovative Production Services' hybrid broadcast and event control truck. The cutting-edge OB van was in its element on this show with the media servers feeding into it along with all nine cameras. The Ross Ultrix router's 'clean switch' ability meant the switch between main and backup media servers was completely invisible and the new Carbonite UltraScene feature delivered an impressive live multi-camera montage. The final output to the enormous LED screen in the venue was via a single 12G-SDI cable delivering crystal clear, vivid dynamic signal!

Last but not least, the audio and show comms were also handled, routed and controlled from 4K ONE. Riedel comms with Panels and Bolero wireless packs were deployed across the event site, further integrated with the audio system for IFBs, media server audio playback and camera mics via Danté, and then all sent back to the onsite live audio production company.

Bringing 4K ONE and all the support gear to Cockatoo Island for Upfront 2024 was a huge undertaking by Innovative Production Services, and by all accounts it was a fantastic show!



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NOVATECH DEPLOYS ROE VISUAL TO MAKE WAVES AT AO24 FINALS FESTIVAL

The Finals Festival hits AO24 bigger and better than ever

Presented by Tennis Australia with production design and management by Gig Control, the AO24 Finals Festival, held over the final weekend of the Australian Open, saw Novatech deploy the ROE Visual transparent V8T in a creative way.

“The AO Finals Festival was such a sold-out success last year; it was a very easy decision for us to move it to a bigger venue with bigger crowds, and that’s exactly what we’ve done by hosting it in John Cain Arena,” said Tennis Australia’s Chief Commercial Officer, Cedric Cornelis.

To suit the larger venue, Novatech adopted 360 V8T panels to create a vast and immersive curved LED wall measuring 60m in width and 6m in height. The wall’s grand size and stunning curves provided the ideal backdrop

for internationally acclaimed acts such as Rudimental and Groove Armada.

“The stage location was in a tennis stadium that also features a velodrome that’s covered by retractable seating banks. The seating retracts to the ceiling right where the stage was located for the festival. Considering the limited rigging capacity, light weight was the first important factor we had to consider. The ROE Vanish V8T was the perfect product in this regard, being only 18kg/sqm. In combination with the limited load capacity of the venue’s

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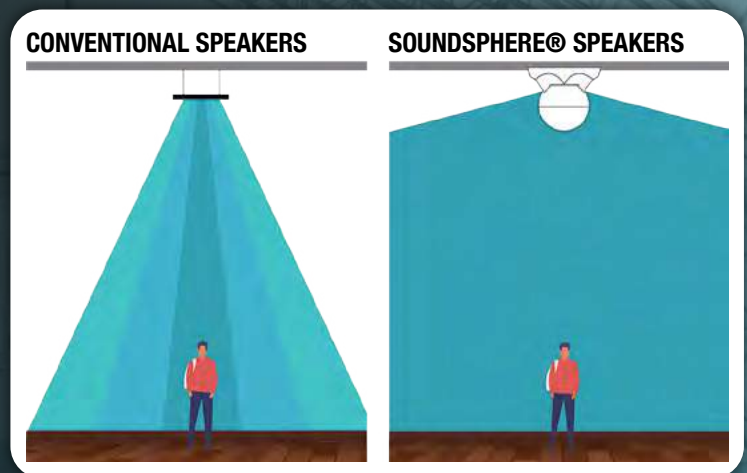
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seating bank, other touring frame or air frame options were too heavy when combined with all other production elements. With each tile being 1m x 1m, this meant the build time was shortened, which was a major consideration given the quick turnaround between tennis matches being played and the first day of the Finals Fest. If an AirFrame system was deployed for this design, it would have resulted in 500 0.6m x 1.2m tiles versus the Vanish product being only 360 1m x 1m tiles,” explained Ashley Gabriel, Sales and Marketing Director at Novatech.

“Additionally, the V8T panels offered exceptional performance in daylight along with curving capability, allowing us to easily accommodate various artists’ riders. We therefore used V8T as curved and straight solid LED panels in daylight.”



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“The Vanish outdoor panels offer superior brightness and contrast, contributing to the overall visual experience.”



“The Vanish outdoor panels offer superior brightness and contrast, contributing to the overall visual experience. It was great to see how the event production teams expertly crafted the stage design, optimally using the curving options of the LED panel,” said Grace Kuo, Sales Director of ROE Visual.

“We stock a variety of ROE Visual panels that allow us to choose the right display depending on the event and requirements. There are many applications and future events that are using our ROE products in creative and innovative ways. We look forward to continuing our relationship with ROE Visual for many years.” commented Leko Novakovic, Managing Director of Novatech.





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TDC Unveils new Training Initiatives, Staff Member & Scholarship Winner

Underscoring its commitment to excellence, TDC is granting staff access to more than 100,000 free courses from over 200 training providers. It has also announced a new Training Consultant and the winner of this year's NIDA student scholarship.

Technical Direction Company (TDC), a leading supplier of video technology and production for the Events and Entertainment Industry, has announced the expansion and revitalisation of its in-house training program, TDCT, with the engagement of Graham Henstock as its new Training Consultant.

"Technology constantly improves and evolves, and TDC is at the forefront of delivering the best possible results for our important clients, whether it be amazing visuals for events, immersive experiences, film, or theatre productions with TDC Studios," said Drew Ferors, Head of Technical Services & Training at TDC.

Graham Henstock brings over 25 years of industry experience and educational expertise to the team. His diverse career spans roles as an educator, designer, consultant, arts journalist, and technical manager.

Leading the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Technical Theatre and Stage Management) course as Director at the National Institute of Dramatic Art's (NIDA) Centre for Technology, Production, and Management, Henstock is recognised as one of Australia's leading theatre professionals.

TDC has long collaborated with NIDA, providing students with training in stage and live performance technology such as LED screens, large-scale projection, and broadcast camera systems, as well as supplying such video technology for NIDA's student productions throughout the year. TDC also provides an annual scholarship for eligible students taking the Diploma of Technical Services.

With extensive experience in independent productions and key technical roles at prestigious companies like the Melbourne Theatre Company and Sydney Theatre Company, Graham Henstock's expertise extends across all facets of theatre and event production, characterised by creative and innovative problem-solving.

"We are committed to developing talent and ensuring our team members have access to the best training opportunities available. Graham Henstock's knowledge and dedication to training makes him the perfect addition

to our team as we enhance our own training program and empower our staff with the skills they need to succeed," added Ferors.

Revitalised TDCT coursework includes new Learning Management System

TDC's training initiatives provide free and continuous learning opportunities for all staff members. The recently launched in-house Learning Management System (LMS) offers secure online access to more than 100,000 courses from over 200 training providers, allowing TDC employees to pursue professional development at their own pace and convenience.

The updated TDCT coursework will be introduced to staff through the new LMS, with a combination of online modules, self-driven situational scenarios, and classroom-based learning. Graham Henstock oversees the integration of classroom and online modules, ensuring accessibility for all TDC permanent staff. He focuses on revitalising TDC's Video Fundamentals coursework, strengthening senior technical training, and developing industry-specific project-based and soft skills. These are fundamentals that are currently not available at the requisite level from any training provider within Australia, which is another reason why TDC has developed TDCT in-house.

"At TDC, our people are our greatest asset. Investing in their development ensures consistent project delivery for clients," said Michael Hassett, Founder & Managing Director at TDC. "I'm excited to see Graham Henstock enhance the specialised training for TDC's technical staff."

The NIDA Scholarship

TDC has long collaborated with NIDA, providing students with training in stage and live performance technology, such as LED screens, large-scale projection, and broadcast camera systems, as well as supplying such video technology for NIDA's student productions throughout the year.

It also provides an annual scholarship for eligible students enrolled in the Diploma of



Drew and Graham



NIDA Scholarship winner, Anthony Arcaya

Live Production and Technical Services at NIDA. During the ceremony held on February

28 February, Anthony Arcaya was announced as this year's recipient. Anthony will embark on an exciting secondment with TDC upon completing his course.

Anthony Arcaya hails from a first-generation immigrant family in Western Sydney, where he discovered a profound passion and sense of belonging within musical and creative circles. Engaging in live music events and volunteering in the film industry for short films and music videos, Anthony Arcaya eagerly anticipates advancing his education through NIDA's Diploma program.

NIDA offers rigorous, practice-based training that poses financial challenges for students. The cost of living during their studies often proves the most significant hurdle for talented individuals to apply, accept, or complete their education. Despite possessing the requisite skills and aspirations, financial disparities deter many from pursuing their academic dreams.

Initiatives like the life-changing TDC scholarship intervene at a pivotal moment in student's artistic and career journey. Just as students navigate rounds of interviews, submit major works, and audition, receiving a scholarship offer from TDC marks a transformative milestone. For numerous aspiring students, accepting an offer to study at NIDA seems an unattainable dream, but scholarships like these make it a tangible reality. They provide essential support, enabling students to fully dedicate themselves to their studies and unleash their creativity.

The impact of this scholarship, coupled with NIDA's additional support through work placements, in-kind assistance, teaching, and equipment, is truly life changing. Such initiatives wouldn't be feasible without the generous support from TDC, championing the aspirations of NIDA students.

ROBE ACQUIRES LSC CONTROL SYSTEMS

Robe Lighting s.r.o. has acquired LSC Control Systems in Australia, a move that sees the Czech Republic lighting manufacturer further consolidate its portfolio of leading lighting and control brands.

Having LSC's power distribution (PD) systems as a core element of the 'Robe Business' Team made perfect sense following the purchase of console manufacturer Avolites back in September last year, explained Robe's CEO Josef Valchar.

"We're delighted that this opportunity arose – it's hugely exciting, and we look forward to a long and positive collaboration. It will allow us to offer the best, most complete lighting and control turnkey solutions to our customers, their clients, and projects across all sectors."



Robe's Josef Valchar (left) with LSC's Gary Pritchard

As well as diversification, it also gives Robe a manufacturing base in Australia in addition to its facilities in central Europe and the UK.

LSC's founder and managing director Gary Pritchard is equally enthused: "LSC will gain access to greater investment and resources, and by working through Robe's renowned worldwide distribution network we can reach more global and diverse markets, which in turn will stimulate greater opportunities for creativity, expertise, business and action for all our team!"

LSC's operation, which started over 40 years ago in Melbourne and has since grown into a trusted and respected specialist brand well-known for inventive technology, will continue

functioning exactly as it is now.

Gary sees the move as an affirmation of the company's value. "An organisation of Robe's stature wanting LSC onboard confidently states to the world that we're a dynamic and inventive team, and that LSC will continue doing what it does best, both now and well into the future!"

The plan underlines Robe's commitment to being an industry leader in all areas of lighting technology, further empowering the imagination and choice of lighting professionals and offering an exceptional set of tools to assist in the production of shows, events, and memorable performance experiences for all to enjoy.

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IS PRO Series from dB Technologies are IP55 rated passive speakers designed for indoor and outdoor installations. IS210L is a 2-way passive line array speaker. It has one compression driver (voice coil: 2.4", exit: 1.4") and two 10" neodymium woofers (2.5" voice coil), with a coverage pattern of 90° (H) x 15° (V). IS210T is a 2-way passive point source speaker with a rotatable horn. It has a compression driver (HF exit: 1.4", 2.4" voice coil) and two 10" neodymium woofers (2.4" voice coil), with a coverage pattern of 90° (H) x 40° (V). IS115S is a passive subwoofer, equipped with one 15" ceramic woofer (4" voice coil).

Australia: NAS nas.solutions 1800 441 440
New Zealand: Direct Imports directimports.co.nz 06 873 0129



Ayrton Kyalami

Kyalami is a new laser-sourced, IP65 rated fixture inspired by the revolutionary MagicDot. A 265mm sphere incorporates Kyalami's 100W laser module, cooling system and optics, and outputs through a 126mm front lens. This produces an intensive 1° beam and an extreme range of focus. It uses high-definition progressive CMY colour mixing system and multi-position instant access colour wheel equipped with five corrective filters. Also, 17 complementary colour filters add to the 29 fixed metal gobos, which can be blended with two individually combinable rotating prisms.

Size: 265 x 430 x 265 mm (l x h x d)

Weight 14.5kg

Australia: Show Technology showtech.com.au 02 9748 1122

New Zealand: Show Technology showtech.com.au/homenz 09 869 3293



Ayrton Nando 502 Wash

Nando 502 Wash is a compact IP65 luminaire, specially designed for mixed use stage lighting, both indoors and outdoors, and even in salty environments. Featuring 12 high-performance 40W LED sources with RGB-L additive colour synthesis and a proprietary optical system made up of a unique 210mm cluster in PMMA. It offers CRI >86 and can achieve luminous flux of 10,000 lumens. The zoom ratio of 15:1 allows for zoom range of 3.5° to 53°. Size: 342 x 467 x 268 mm (l x h x d), weight: 14.5kg

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Elations SÖL I modular blinders can be used single-cell, combined into 2- or 4-cell blinder or even more multiples for a versatile effects panel. A 250W RGB+Lime+Amber+White LED engine with 93+ CRI outputs over 8000 lumens. Features fully variable 16-bit color temperature adjustment from 2400K - 8500K and CMY emulation with a virtual gel library. Variable strobe (1- 20kHz) and a selection of 16-bit dimming modes and curves are also included. Fully controllable via DMX/RDM. IP65 rated and convection cooled.

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Shure's new range of wireless clip-on microphones, MovieMic One (single channel) and MovieMic Two (dual channel) are aimed at content creators, videographers, and mobile journalists. Pair with the free MOTIV Audio and Video apps (iOS and Android) to configure audio settings like gain, limiter, compression, noise reduction, and EQ. Use MovieMic Receiver or MovieMic Two Receiver Kit to integrate with devices like cameras, computers, and third-party smartphone apps. 8.2g and 46mm x 22mm per microphone, with IPX4 rating. Each MovieMic wireless clip-on microphone features up to eight hours of battery life. USB-C connectivity for charging.



Australia: Jands jands.com.au 02 9582 0909
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NEW GEAR



Magewell Modular Rackmount IP Conversion Family

Magewell's new Modator family brings the reliability and low-latency performance of the company's standalone encoders and decoders to a high-density, modular, rackmount form factor.

Modator's 2U chassis is designed to fit standard rack deployments and has slots for up to 10 modules. Hot-swappable Modator modules each offer their own network connectivity and can work independently to convert between baseband video/audio signals and IP streams.

Pro Convert HDMI Plus Module: encodes HDMI input signals into high-definition IP streams in the NDI High Bandwidth format.

Pro Convert HDMI 4K Plus Module: encodes HDMI input signals into NDI High Bandwidth at up to 4K (4096x2160) resolution at 60 frames per second.

Pro Convert for NDI to HDMI Module: decodes IP streams up to 2560x1440 in a wide range of formats for HDMI output.

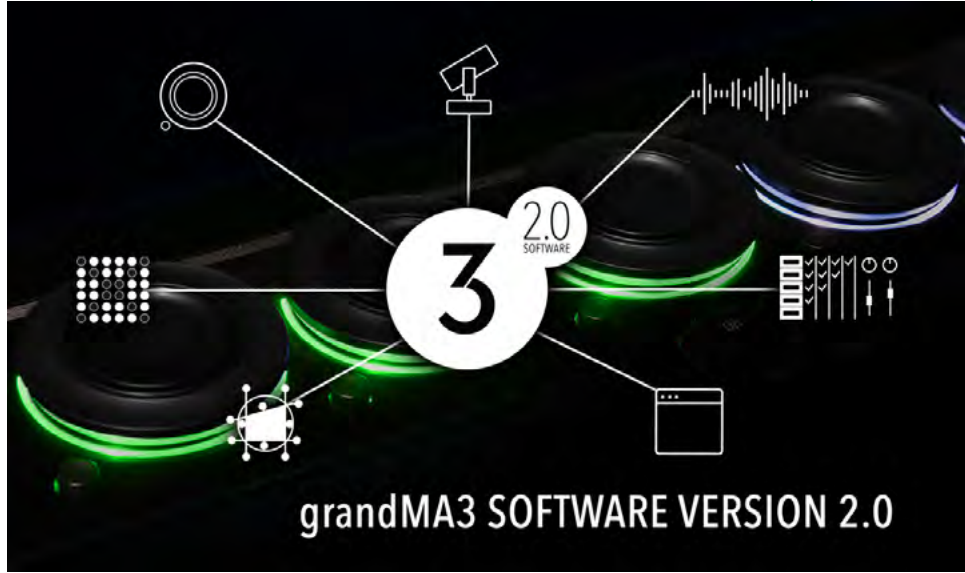
Pro Convert for NDI to AIO Module: the same decoding features as the Pro Convert for NDI to HDMI Module, but with simultaneous HDMI and SDI outputs up to 1080p60.

Australia and New Zealand: Corsair Solutions corsairsolutions.com.au +61 (0)3 9005 9861

MA Lighting grandMA3 software release version 2.0

MA Lighting has now released grandMA3 software version 2.0.0.4. This software release presents new functionalities and workflow improvements for many different applications, including: Customizable Encoder Bar, Special Dialogs, Bitmaps, Soundfiles in Timecode, Selection Grid Improvements and New Fixture Sheet Modes. The MA University with the grandMA3 special course v2.0 presents detailed information about the new software release - online and free.

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Green-GO Stride Antenna

Stride Antennas offer seamless roaming, greater DECT spectrum efficiency and increased user mobility, without affecting range or audio quality of devices on the network. Compatible with existing Green-GO WBPX wireless beltacks, enabling higher DECT device density, and allowing more WBPX beltacks to be used simultaneously within the same area. Stride Antennas synchronize automatically, with DECT time slots synchronized across multiple Stride Antennas via PTPv2 (Precision Time Protocol version 2) technology. Device pools can include up to 250 Stride Antennas and 100 wireless beltacks, while each Stride Antenna can accommodate up to five simultaneous WBPX connections. User interface on the antenna displays configuration information and an RGB LED indicator shows device status. Extended RF monitoring information is available on both the wireless beltback and via Green-GO's Control software.

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Editor's note: While we CX staff didn't make the trek to Frankfurt, Germany, for the Prolight + Sound trade show March 19 to 22, we had a willing volunteer to check out the show for us in Harry the hirer Productions' Marcus Pugh. Marcus has written for the magazine before, and his work is even featured in this very issue of the magazine, in the Melbourne Fashion Festival story starting page 44. So, let Marcus be your guide to all the big news from Frankfurt Messe - over to you, Marcus...

PROLIGHT + SOUND 2024

Coming into Prolight + Sound, most of the chatter was around 'The new Viper' which was the centre of the Martin booth.

The MAC Viper XIP with its 760W proprietary LED engine consisting of 55 x 20W 56,000K LEDs (and for the mathematically inclined, yes that equals 1,100W total), but Martin are only driving the LEDs at 75% to extend the life of the LED engine, reduce heat, and improve light quality. It pumps out 28,000 Lumens (2,000 more than the original discharge Viper) and clocks in at 36.8kg (about 2kg heavier than the original). The Viper XIP does have IP in the name which may lead you to assume that it has an IP 65 rating, but just like the MAC Aura XIP, it is rated at IP54, which basically means that it isn't 'dust tight' but protected from most dust ingress and is protected against splashing water, but not 'jets' of water.



The next unit which was getting a lot of talk ahead of Prolight was the new laser-powered Robe iBOLT.

This being Robe's 30 year anniversary at their 'home tradeshow', they pulled out all the stops. Theirs was easily the biggest and brightest stand with the usual hourly 'shows', some featuring dancers and aerial artists and others being more technical presentations featuring all the facts on each of their current product lines (you know which one I enjoyed more?). The iBOLT runs a 500W LSW-5 White LASER firing through a 300mm diameter front lens. This whopping unit (830mm H x 542mm W x 392mm D at 54.4kg) is a sight to see, so much so that Robe produced a 'gold' version for this year's PL+S stand. The iBOLT with its 0.4° - 8.5° beam angle is in a new-ish category of modern sky trackers following on from last year's Claypaky Skylos. Both units could easily replace a traditional 7kW discharge sky tracker at a fraction of the size. I could see it fitting into a stadium or arena rig doing mid-air beam effects.

German Lighting Products (GLP) certainly brought their A game to this year's PL+S with a great booth location and design featuring a bar, food, and a raised seating area which fast became the go-to spot at the show.

The star of the GLP Booth was the new JDC2 which brings all the features of the much beloved and spec'd JDC and adds a video element surrounding the strobe line (consisting of 84 x 10W RGB LEDs), and an IP65 rating. The JDC2 can now run low-res video through the 1,728 RGB LEDs through the 377mm W x 232mm H tilting face which can run off an NDI source. It also boasts on-board video effects, controlled like a gobo through the lighting desk. GLP devised a creative solution showing off the IP65 rating having a constant supply of its namesake, Jack Daniels and Coke, being poured on the unit.



SGM brought their latest static wash fixture, the P-3 Vision, which adds to their expanding P range of wall-washers/eye candy units.

The P-3 adds 112 SMD LEDs grouped in fours to the array of 18 RGBW 10W LEDs, adding an extra element to the P-3 Wash. SGM have been in the IP65 game for many years and know how to produce a reliable weatherproof fitting. This is the most polished and robust fitting in this category.



The Ayrton booth was impressive and well positioned, with hourly lighting shows which were a jaw dropper for the number of fittings used and sheer amount of time that must have been put into pre-programming.

The star of the show had to be the new Kyamlami, which admittedly I had not heard about before PL+S. The Kyamlami draws on the design aesthetic of the Ayrton Magic Dot and fits firmly in the 'beam effect' category of fittings boasting a 100W, 9,000K source and a 1° beam aperture with no zoom to speak of. It features 29 static gobos, colour mix and colour wheel, and infinite pan and tilt, all in an impressively small head (265mm L x 460mm H x 320mm D, 14.5kg). This could be the surprise package of the show.



PROLiGHTS were out in force this year with one of the best stands at the show, plenty of product at eye and hand level, and lots of useful info and staff on hand to demo the gear.

The Astra Hybrid boasts a 330W source 28,000 lm output, dual gobo wheels (one rotating one static) animation wheel, colour mix plus colour wheel, two overlayable prisms, and onboard WDMX. While the Astra isn't going to blow anyone away, it ticks a lot of boxes in a solid build.

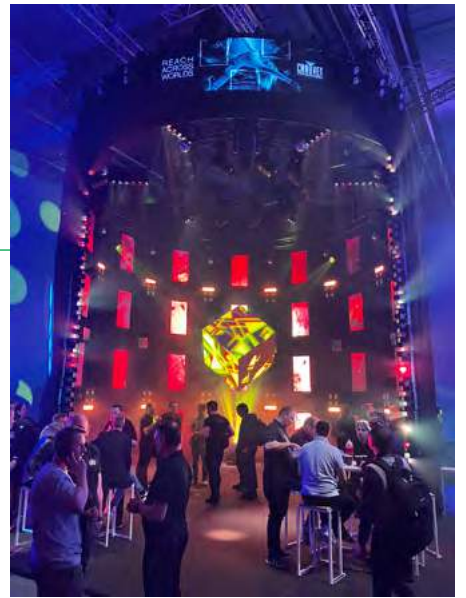


I was excited to see the Claypaky Rhapsody pre-PL+S, being the first real moving head offering colour mixing from its RGBAL source.

This means that the Rhapsody is a 1,200W unit and a quite sizable 860mm H x 452mm W x 416mm D, weighing 48.1kg to incorporate the 6.6° - 61.8° zoom range.

Chauvet had a good stand design incorporating their control partners Chamsys, though they were a little overshadowed by their Czech neighbours in Robe.

While the PXL Curve 12 was officially released at PL+S last year, it featured prominently not only on the Chauvet stand but a few other none-mover brand stands, showing the industry's appetite for this multi-tilting head design. The IP65 12 x 45w RGBW LEDs that can also zoom (5.76 to 36.3°) have been sneaking their way onto riders and TV shows the world over, and I feel they will continue to show Chauvet as a serious player in manufacturing.



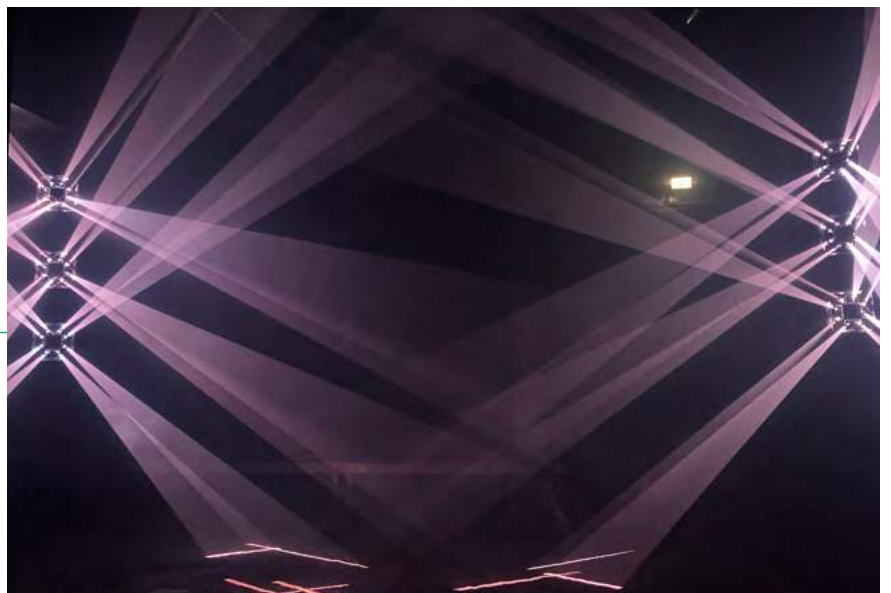
Elation is another brand that have been leading the way in the IP65 world. Their new offering is the Paragon Profile L&S, which also comes in a cool white for max output and warm white for light quality.

One thing I was impressed with is that the units can be purchased with interchangeable lenses to change the profile into a wash without having to buy a second unit. The Paragon range have all the features we've come to expect from a modern moving profile in what has to be the most robust housing on the show floor. If I were spec'ing an outdoor installation with movers, I would be going in Elation's direction.



Special mention must go to Minuit Une, the newest players on the block who continue to innovate with their laser-based designs.

While they didn't have a booth at the trade hall, they demo'd offsite in an underground nightclub; a perfectly dark and hazed venue with our undivided attention to show off their niche product. Minuit have obviously listened to their customers, coming out with a more robust, compact and modular design in the IVL Dice. My photos don't do the demo any justice, but props to the team.





Amelia Lever-Davidson

Lighting Designer

Hour of the Wolf. Jack Green & Kevin Hofbauer. Photo credit: Pia Johnson

Like most theatre professionals, Amelia Lever-Davidson's interest began in her high school drama department. As a teen she tried her hand at various roles – pulling curtains, handling props, wheeling set pieces on stage. At the time Shane Jacobson – now best known as an actor and comedian – ran Premiere Lighting, a company responsible for installing the lighting for the school's shows. Amelia remembers him generously teaching her about lighting and how at the end of one of his technical spiels he'd say, "Oh wow you're still listening."

After high school, she studied a live production course at WAAPA and once graduated, she started working on the factory floor at Bytecraft (now PRG). Testing and tagging cables for months on end is not the dream of most young thespians, but soon enough she landed a job as a lighting technician at the Nine Network.

"Channel Nine gave me a really intensive learning environment working in film and television surrounded by people who were pushing me and encouraging me. It was an amazing opportunity to work for a major company at a time when it was making large scale shows."

Amelia says TV is a great training ground for how to light to compliment a face. "Looking at a face as architecture and how to support that, keep it separate from the background, but also make the set look fantastic. That's what theatre design is too. How to light a figure in space, support it and separate it from the set."

Of course, there are differences between lighting for screen and a live audience. "There's not really washes in TV. They are just an emergency thing you have on a fader in case someone steps out from behind a desk." Another key difference is the kinds of colours used. "Colours that I would never use in the theatre, that to the eye look dreadful, when you look at it on screen it looks like magic."

Eventually after several years Amelia found herself wanting to return to theatre. "TV began to feel like repertory theatre. You're bumping in and out the same shows over and over, making tiny changes, but really re-lighting someone else's design."

She started working on small shows at La Mama and out the back of pubs, before eventually leaving the security of full-time work to do a Post Graduate Diploma in Performance Creation at the Victorian College of the Arts. "Because I had the technical experience at Nine, the course was really about making

connections, building relationships and collaborating. It put me in a course with the people that I went on to work with after uni."

After graduating Amelia started designing for independent theatre. Ten years on her designs are regularly showing on mainstages.

At the time of speaking Amelia has two lighting designs currently showing in Melbourne. Meet Me at Dawn, (Melbourne Theatre Company) at the Fairfax Studio, and Monument, which is running a return season at Red Stitch Actors Theatre. The former's set has a cobalt blue, pebbled rubber floor. For the latter, the set is overwhelmingly blush pink. While the two shows look distinctly different, Amelia maintains that the difference in the lighting colours is minimal. "At the best of times I am slightly resistant towards colour. When you're first designing you're all drawn to very saturated colours. We all go through the phase of using mauve and pink back light. It's something I gradually begun to move away from when I wanted to make light feel the way it does in reality, which is often not hyper-saturated."

There is one gel used in Monument that she describes as a 'nod' towards the pink, and an extra layer of LED top light was implemented to cover the set of Meet Me at Dawn for when the design needed to build the richness of floor colour into a very deep blue, but says ultimately the sets were doing the work. "When something is so colourful you want to lean in to support it a little, but keep everything neutral enough to compliment the actor's faces."

"You get used to a certain kind of tool kit and a certain kind of palette. Once you understand how that applies in design you can be resistant to moving away from it because you know what those colours will do and how they will best support the picture."

More so than any colour decisions these designs were focussed on geometry. The action in Monument happens around a circular platform and spiral stairs at centre stage. The actors wind up and down the stairs as they wind one another up. Amelia's design was focussed on emphasising that circular shape and visually echoing it.

Geometry also applies when referring to the shape of a story. "The framework for Meet Me at Dawn is the clock, of time running out. It begins at the start of the day and ends in the abyss, the characters' last moments with each other. I wanted to replicate that more than any saturation."

One key goal of all her designs is to attempt to light within the stage picture. "The first thing everyone learns about lighting design is the McCandless theory of front light as the main key source. I like to reorient the key to try and light from within the picture, rather than outside of it. I love three quarter back light, I love high sides, I love side light. Pushes of light that feels like the way light falls naturally in the world."

Making the transition from smaller independent productions in non-traditional venues to full-blown productions in major theatres presented its own challenges. "The biggest learning curve is learning how to light for proscenium arch theatres, which you don't really get to attempt until you're actually working in those venues for the first time. When you're starting out in design most of the theatres are black boxes or studio spaces, where the lighting options are often creatively limitless. Figuring out how to light around a



Amelia Lever-Davidson

Amelia Lever-Davidson is an award-winning lighting designer for theatre, dance, live art, installation and events. She is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, The Western Australian Academy of the Performing arts and RMIT. She has designed lighting for Sydney Theatre Company, The Melbourne Theatre Company, Belvoir St Theatre, Malthouse Theatre, Chunky Move, Red Stitch, Chamber Made, Elbow Room, Belarus Free Theatre, Deep Soulful Sweats, The Hayloft Project, MKA, CIRCA, DARK MOFO, RISING, Melbourne International Comedy Festival and many others. Amelia's work has been recognised with Green Room Awards for Diaspora, Contest, Looking Glass and her 2015 body of work. Amelia is an Australia Council ArtStart and JUMP Mentorship recipient, Ian Potter Cultural Trust recipient, and a past participant in the Malthouse Besen Family Artist Program and the Melbourne Theatre Company's Inaugural Women in Theatre Program. Amelia has also worked as a lighting director for Channel Nine, Channel Ten, and the ABC.



Meet Me at Dawn. Photo credit: Pia Johnson



Meet Me at Dawn. Photo credit: Pia Johnson



Monument. Julia Hannah & Sarah Sutherland. Photo credit: Jodie Hutchinson

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proscenium can be incredibly daunting on your first attempt, especially when that theatre seats over 800 people.

It was the 2023 Melbourne Theatre Company production of Theresa Rebeck's *Bernhardt/Hamlet* that offered Amelia her biggest challenge "That was the biggest step up for me – a proscenium arch show that had multitudes of flown things, painted cloths coming in and out, and set pieces trucking on and off."

Designers Amelia admires include Australia's Paul Jackson and Nick Schlieper and, abroad, Paule Constable and Jon Clark. Amelia describes all four designers' work as "austere, precise and incisive lighting." Amelia undertook a mentorship with Paule in the UK and hopes one day to be brave enough to design as dark as Paule does. "I remember sitting in the rehearsals of *Angels in America* and thinking "this is the National Theatre and this is so dark!" Paule's designs sit in this really interesting place visually, absolutely teetering on the edge of darkness. It's amazing to see designs like that which are crafted like intimate studio piece even though it's in Lyttelton Theatre."

As for her career highlights so far, two immersive shows Amelia designed at the Malthouse – *Hour of the Wolf* and *Because the Night* – allowed her to apply her experiences in theatre, television, film and installation.

"Often when you're stepping into a venue you are handed the tech specs and it's like 'here are the lights that are always in the venue', and that is the gear that you inevitably use. But for the immersive shows we were able to create bespoke solutions for all of the spaces. For *Hour of the Wolf*, the Malthouse team built hundreds of LED fluros from scratch, in a multitude of styles, using kilometres of LED tape. After what we learnt from *Because The Night*, we knew that most fixtures need to be custom built, or retrofitted so it could be controllable within the degree that we needed. It was incredibly satisfying being so specific with the build of each fitting."

The proximity to the audience meant she could be bolder with her choices. "I could be darker and create something where they were really invited into the space as opposed to a more presentational style of theatre. I found that very satisfying as it felt like finally all my skills had come to this perfect alchemy."

Amelia Lever-Davidson has upcoming lighting designs at MTC, *The Almighty Sometimes*, and the Malthouse, *MacBeth (An Undoing)*.



Hour of the Wolf. Keegan Joyce, Kevin Hofbauer & Lucy Ansel. Photo credit: Pia Johnson



"I found that very satisfying as it felt like finally all my skills had come to this perfect alchemy."

Hour of the Wolf. Brooke Lee. Photo credit: Pia Johnson



Hour of the Wolf. Emily Milledge (Left) & Natasha Herbert (Right). Photo credit: Pia Johnson



Hour of the Wolf. Jack Green & Karl Richmond. Photo credit: Pia Johnson

INSTALLING AN SSL K...



AT HOME

Not too many studios install a 3.6m, 900kg, 56-input analogue console... at home. But for this particular wood duck the idea seemed not only plausible, but also an unmissable, one-off opportunity with no downside. Turns out the downsides were considerable, but regrets? I have none.

Most studios are 'home studios' these days; a term we're all familiar with in the audio industry by now. These setups are shoehorned into every conceivable space where audio enthusiasts and professional engineers alike have been let off the leash barely long enough to claim the space, growing like mushrooms in spare bedrooms, garages, lofts, attics and garden sheds, assuming every shape and size, and performing almost every function known to the audio industry. They are almost singlehandedly responsible for the massive growth in the 'consumer pro audio' market sector, without which the audio industry as we know it would be utterly unrecognisable, for good or ill.

As a result of the explosion in this market sector, there are very few commercial studios left, at least by any traditional definition of that term. Like a giant sponge, the home studio phenomenon has absorbed the lion's share of the world's audio clientele, and any commercial studios robust enough to survive the initial blast have evolved to fit the new landscape, offering different types of services to a far larger pool of smaller clients.

My own studio, The Mill, which was named after the destructive timber mill that once resided on my property down here in Woolamai, Victoria, is a little different to either of these concepts, or perhaps a hybrid of both.

The studio is set on 21 acres in a distinctly rural environment. We don't cut down pristine rainforest on the property like the previous owners once did; and no doubt they'd be horrified to discover that we're regrowing indigenous bush here again to help restore the native habitat for echidnas, wombats and occasional studio clients to amble through.

While The Mill is certainly a studio at home, it's very much a commercial studio in every other respect. It's not shoehorned into a spare bedroom, that's for sure, but it is theoretically housed in the garden shed, albeit a very large one. The studio was built 17 years ago now inside a repurposed three-bay tractor garage that's a short walk away from the house, literally down the garden path. Commuting to work, needless to say, can be hellish.

The studio has evolved over the years, and in that time more audio gear than I care to contemplate has marched in and out the door, apart from a few cornerstones of the setup that, until recently, hadn't changed much at all: the Neve console, the Studer tape machine, the monitors, most of the outboard gear and even the Pro Tools rig. These had all been my day-to-day workhorses, helping me produce great sounding albums for a wide array of clients and colleagues.

But recently all that changed.

Over a two-year period, and not based on any specifically planned need for change, some momentous shifts took place down here, the dust around which is still settling.

Basically, I got sick and tired of walking into the studio every day and sitting down at my beloved Neve. Now I realise this statement might seem a bit rich to some: I mean, who wouldn't want to go to work every day, recording, mixing and mastering records at the helm of a cool desk like that, right?

Well sure. There's no doubt about it, the Neve was great. But for me, I was just sick and tired of it in the same way as you might get sick of your own office furniture after 17 years. It's a thing...

The difference with getting sick of a piece of furniture like the Neve, however, is that it was not only the technical, electrical and physical centrepiece of the studio, it also weighed several hundred kilos, didn't like being moved, and in the specific case of The Mill, required an external wall of the building to be removed if the console were ever to be extricated safely from the premises.

Needless to say, any prospect of swapping consoles couldn't be based solely on some whimsical notion that I was simply 'sick of sitting in front of it' or 'just needed a change'. Indeed, this would be no mere spruce up of the



Console hits the road between the buildings. From left to right - Robin Lowe, Damon Piercy and Andy Stewart navigate the gravel driveway



Checking for Snakes. From bottom left Andy, Pete Heylen, Dion Meade, James Wilkinson, and Robin Lowe push the K through the gap in the wall

office furniture. A momentous undertaking like this would set in motion a hugely disruptive, long-term saga.

But like most decisions around personal studio setups that don't require unanimous agreement between a board of directors, or the nod from a sceptical bank manager, I went ahead and pulled the trigger anyway... just because I 'needed a change'.

Yep, my decision was whimsical, self-indulgent and naïve, based around a need for change (in the absence of a holiday).

Actually, in truth, I'm being a little self-deprecating here about the decision to throw my entire audio setup into disarray. While there's some truth to my decision being a little on the whimsical side, the decision also involved some fairly grounded technical needs and ambitions that were based around my experience of the sonic capacities of other consoles – specifically SSLs. I even had an Excel spreadsheet documenting the projected (and final) costings of the entire escapade, including shipping! Crazy stuff, I know... so organised.

Stalemate

To me the setup at The Mill had grown stale and predictable. While it still sounded great and got the job done, I really wanted both the studio, and me personally, to become far more capable of a wider variety of sonic manipulation than the old setup had ever achieved before. And I wanted to be excited again about going to work. How else was I going to survive the hellish commute? Maybe COVID had made me sick of my surroundings somehow. I guess I'll never know.

But while my heart was already set on the idea of a change, my head hadn't decided anything specific. So, when the prospect of a 'new' (second-hand) SSL console suddenly appeared on the horizon out of the clear blue sky, I was a little unprepared by the reality of what was to follow.

I'd been chatting to colleagues here and there about my malaise with the Neve and my genuine interest in finding an SSL of some description – indeed, I thought I'd found one in Adelaide at one point, but the seller wanted too much for it and the conversation eventually fell

silent. Then, somewhere along the line, one of these idle conversations got back to the staff at SAE in Byron Bay, and soon after I took a cold call from them asking if I'd be interested in their SSL.

When I realised it was their K-Series console they were selling, my answer was a resounding yes. I had mixed on a 9000K several times before and had always loved the depth and breadth of their enormous sound stage, but never in my wildest dreams had I thought I'd eventually be the proud owner of one.

The Ball Rolleth

Almost before I'd even really grasped the ramifications of this momentous decision, I became the new owner of a 56-channel SSL 9000K, the very same console I had once been invited to check out by its previous owner, Tom Misner, back in the early noughties when the console was new. Tom had himself (by his own admission) bought the console on a whim off the tradeshow floor at AES in New York... a very expensive whim indeed!

But the console I purchased was certainly not new, indeed it wasn't working at all! According to the staff at SAE, the console had both power supply and onboard computer problems, neither of which they seemed inclined any more to want to fix. In fact, the console I was purchasing was, in their minds, an unrecoverable, 900kg lump of very awkward metal.

So, as unattractive as that all might sound on paper, I went ahead and bought it anyway, aware that the purchase might become a far longer-term project than I had initially hoped for or envisaged.

Initially then, when the SSL arrived at The Mill one wild Winter's day, we unloaded it into an adjoining shed, rather than directly into the studio. (If there's one thing I don't lack down here, it's shed space!)

For many months afterwards the console was worked on in this second space to avoid endless disruption to my day-to-day work, which was both a blessing and a curse, in hindsight. James Wilkinson, Geoff Williamsons, Steve Crane and Al Smart (remotely) all contributed their time and expertise to the project, and progress was initially slow and erratic.

But now the console is alive and well; installed in the main control room at The Mill after a short journey across the lawn between the two buildings, strapped to a couple of highly distressed dollies. The Neve was wheeled out somewhat unceremoniously first through a hastily deconstructed gap in the outside wall, looking more than a little miffed that it was getting so ruthlessly replaced. The K was wheeled in with the help of 10 blokes and a block and tackle, and by nightfall the wall was back up and everything – somewhat miraculously – had gone according to plan.

Installed On A Technicality

The power supplies of the SSL, which everyone (including the manufacturer) had advised me were a 'lost cause', have been expertly restored by Geoff Williamson, who it must be said, is the true hero of this install story. Like no-one else I've known, Geoff is stupendously undaunted by electrical equipment. Whether he's staring at a Hammond from 1954 or a K-Series SSL from 2004, to him the language is the same – it's all just current flow and electronics. I am forever in his debt for his fantastic work and hope he'll remain involved at The Mill for at the (extended) life of the console and beyond.

Other notable super-star help and expertise came in the form of two heavy hitters of the Pro Audio ring here in Australia: Steve Crane and Al Smart. Al was tireless with his advice and expertise, reading the console's imposing manual from cover to cover several times (light reading over breakfast, I assume) which he'd done before, having worked at SSL for years as the company's commissioning engineer – better him than me. Steve, meanwhile, was instrumental in bringing the whole project together with his custom-made heart transplant for the power supplies that finally breathed new life into the console. Steve, you are a legend of Pro Audio in this country, and if you don't have several gold medals to that effect by now, we'll have to get you one.

But let's not forget James Wilkinson, my right-hand-man in this saga, who has worked tirelessly on the console, meticulously cleaning knobs and faders in the freezing cold without a word of complaint about either my jokes, the constantly open-ended timeline or the lack of warmth. He has volunteered incalculable amounts of time and moral support throughout.

The SSL is finally on the road back to (almost) full functionality now, and in 2024 the final chapter of this mammoth install saga will be read. The proprietary computer that once ran the automation and recall in the SSL has unfortunately gone the way of the dodo, but the silver lining is that the console will soon be getting a new automation setup courtesy of THD Labs, in Canada. The system will be a vast improvement on the original outdated, clunky system, allowing the console for the first time ever to communicate and interact directly with Pro Tools automation, making the K into a full-blown, fully recallable, 56-channel... Pro Tools mouse pad.

Just kidding. This console is a sonic weapon; a truly awesome, detailed and precise analogue console without peer. I'm in awe of it, and to my knowledge I'm the only one in Australia with a K-series SSL in his backyard who can make changes to a mix over a bowl of corn flakes... wait, make that Special K.

Andy Stewart owns and operates *The Mill* in Victoria, a world-class production, mixing and mastering facility. He's happy to respond to any pleas for pro audio help... contact him at: andy@themill.net.au or visit: www.themill.net.au.



Left to right - James Wilkinson, Chris Ferguson, Pete Heylen and Andy Stewart breathe a collective sigh of relief



"Yep, my decision was whimsical, self-indulgent and naïve, based around a need for change (in the absence of a holiday)."

Some of the heroes of the move, left to right, were - Dion Meade, Damon Piercy, Pete Heylen, James Wilkinson, Andy Stewart, Zac Ablett and Robin Lowe

MARCUS MC SHANE



LIGHTING DESIGNER

Fusing lighting, art, and eco-consciousness

From lighting tech in the late 90s to cycling around Wellington with a pack of animated wolves and sixty masked and howling fellow bike enthusiasts is some journey. Award winning lighting designer Marcus McShane is hard to label, sometimes lighting designer, always artist, occasional improviser, and consistently a passionate advocate for environmental efficiency. He talks to us about where he's been and where to next.

Over the past 12 years, Marcus has tackled over 400 projects, winning 20-plus awards including six Wellington Theatre (formerly Chapman Tripp) Awards for his lighting design, five NZ Fringe awards for his light-based artworks, and two Architecture NZ awards for his work lighting buildings. He is a mainstay of the Wellington Te Whanganui-a-Tara arts scene, with work consistently touring throughout New Zealand and internationally.

Studying writing at university, Marcus worked as a theatre lighting tech, initially to pay the bills but within a matter of years, literature had been sidelined by lighting. For a few years he toured and worked on increasingly larger productions but as the gigs got bigger Marcus' enjoyment waned, "I love being backstage and being part of a show crew and I still operate my designs now and again because I miss that, but I also got bored of the simplicity and standardisation of the larger shows I was designing. I can understand that the huge investment promoters make requires a product that runs perfectly and isn't risky but I love solving problems and things felt too standardised, and not wild enough."

He favours the more eclectic, chaotic, and sometimes never to be repeated shows. He worked on the early stages of Icelandic musician Jonsi's 'Go Do' tour. One test performance was to a small, invited audience whose only price of admission was to dress as animals, "We were in a warehouse in South London full of hundreds of people dressed as birds, mammals, and reptiles, sharing bottles of wine and dancing as they thought the animal they were dressed as would dance. It was so Bohemian and joyous, and set the bar for delight so high that the actual tour seemed a bit deflated by comparison."

He also relished his work at Wellington institution BATS on numerous shows funded through STAB, a sought-after annual commission that encourages companies to push theatrical boundaries, "I was fortunate to be designing some ridiculous productions, absolutely filled with problems and completely exhausting, but in hindsight, delightful. For example 'Everything is Okay'; it was set in a condemned warehouse where we used crushed cars as set objects and had performers dancing on running photo copiers with the lids removed which also lit that scene. All the technical equipment would get covered in pigeon crap between shows, and by pack out we realised we had several tonnes of e-waste we were going to have to deal with."

Which brings us seamlessly on to one of Marcus' other driving forces, a quiet but staunch commitment to reducing emissions, "I'm fascinated by how we can creatively use less energy." At the back of his mind at all times when lighting productions, it is front and central in his artwork. His most exhibited work is performance piece 'Nag', where invited artists pedal bikes that power everything required to work in an art studio built entirely of recycled materials. Old washing machine innards are rewired into generators driven by vintage racing bicycles. The installation also involves record players, demolition timber,

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and some very odd wiring to create an erratic and exhausting workspace, "We took it to the USA for a New Zealand Performance Arts showcase and at one point had New York punk bands pedalling to power recording equipment whilst trying to play their instruments."

Based on the same concept, 'The Book Factory', a human powered publishing house, is currently touring festivals, "It runs best at night for the lighting. The audience assume the role of writer, painter, printer, editor and so on. We use bicycle powered printers to publish a new unique 120 page book every 30 minutes or so, followed by a book launch with fake bubbles and sliced fruit." The books are then digitised and the originals go to the local library, "After Wanaka's Festival of Colour the library had a significant uptake in visitors coming to see what they or their children had produced."

The end of last year saw Marcus take to the streets in 'Velocine' where he used his cargo bike as a mobile video projection unit, powering a 10,000 lumen data projector screening animations onto the upper floors of Cuba Street buildings, accompanied by a bespoke sound track as he rode, "Video designer Rebekah de Roo created a series of animated animals designed for different building surfaces and I had a USB keyboard with QLab hot keys set up to allow me to choose an animation that I knew would work as I cycled past. Different buttons would send whales or albatross or schools of fish swimming across buildings."

For Wellington's upcoming Lōemis Festival marking the Winter Solstice, Marcus will be joined by up to 60 other cyclists who will have attended mask making and howling workshops. Together they will all make their way to Oriental Beach, followed by animated wolves, again projected from Marcus' bike with a new more sinister soundtrack, "It is a very strange, dark and immersive Winter celebration and we will be leading a procession to a ceremony where people can share their hopes and dreams for the next phase of the year."



Nag, 2016. Photo by Sam Trubridge

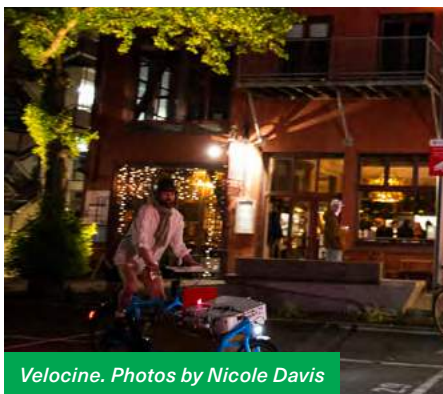


Nag, powering the La Mama Galleria, New York 2015. Photo by Sam Trubridge



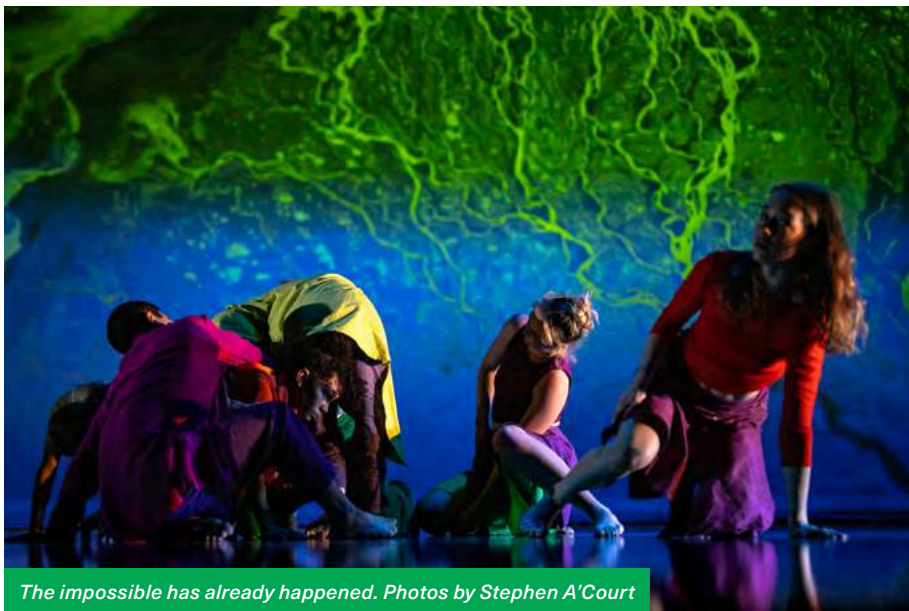
The Book Factory

"Different buttons would send whales or albatross or schools of fish swimming across buildings."



Velocine. Photos by Nicole Davis





The impossible has already happened. Photos by Stephen A'Court



average theatre temperature and that ice can melt inside out meaning whole cups of water would suddenly fall on stage, "That gives the choreographers a challenge. I also couldn't use incandescent glass bulbs as they can break under the pressure of freezing, which would have been a major hazard, so I'm using transparent LEDs but with less ice as the bulbs don't produce as much heat."



"I experimented with freezing water around lightbulbs overnight in moulds to create different shapes."

Where next for Marcus? He is planning on mixing it up, "I still enjoy the theatre projects alongside the art and the architectural work. The sense of community in the performing arts is so strong and can I say the people are more interesting?" he chuckles.

He is also very excited by the increasing intersection of his passions, environmental efficiency and improvisation, "I think over the last ten years the technological developments in lighting have been fascinating. Now we are at a stage where we have affordable programmable waterproof LEDs and hugely improved power supply options. I feel my designs can escape the need for lots of infrastructure, meaning we can take advantage of what non-theatre spaces have to offer and yet still utilise powerful lighting and projection. We can be far more mobile and adventurous." This could spell the end of his aging Nissan Leaf EV, "It's got roof racks, it can carry solar panels, it gets far less use than the bicycles, and it could almost trickle charge itself while parked. I'm pretty tempted to start playing with it."

His theatre work also sees him drawn to shows that are exploring environmental issues. 'The Impossible Has Already Happened', a dance performance by Footnote New Zealand Dance and Mascall Dance, examining our changing relationship with water, is currently touring

Canada; "I experimented with freezing water around lightbulbs overnight in moulds to create different shapes. We hang them over the stage and they slowly drip water and small pieces of ice that flow into structures the dancers build during the show." He learned a lot about

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BALEEN MOONDJAN

The 2024 Adelaide Festival's Spectacular Signature Event



Photo credit: SA-UAVs - South Australian Drone Services

The Adelaide Festival of the Arts always stages the kind of epic productions that no theatre, dance, or opera company could afford to stage outside of the festival environment. Over the years, productions have included a show with a cast of hundreds that built itself out of scaffolding over three days, an opera that filled the Adelaide Festival Centre's Festival Theatre stage with water and included a live horse, and a giant nightclub made of shipping containers where a troupe of bobcats (the compact digger, not the animal), danced.

The 2024 edition did not disappoint in this regard. The Festival Theatre got filled with water again, but this time just the orchestra pit, for a production of Stravinsky's opera *The Firebird*. But topping that was the Festival's opening night premiere of *Baleen Moondjan*, an indigenous contemporary ceremony set on a 120 metre long stage framed by giant fiberglass whale bones, sitting on the beach at Pathawilyangga/Glenelg, often getting wet as the tide came up.

Baleen Moondjan was commissioned by the Festival from director Stephen Page, who recently left his position as the artistic director of Bangarra Dance Theatre, and who was also an artistic director of the 2004 Adelaide Festival. Directly from the programme; "*Baleen Moondjan* tells the story of a proud Elder, a curious granddaughter and the day a baleen whale comes close to shore. The whale is there to catch Granny Gindara's spirit and carry it out to sea – a farewell, a celebration, a poignant start to a final journey. *Baleen Moondjan* recognises the intertwining relationships between all living creatures and our connection to earth, sky and sea."

Baleen Moondjan was inspired by a story Stephen Page learned from his grandmother, a Ngugi/Nunukul/Moondjan woman from Minjerribah/Stradbroke Island. Production

design was by Jacob Nash, and Page co-wrote the piece with Alana Valentine. Music was composed by Steve Francis, the costume designer was Jennifer Irwin, and the lighting designer was Damien Cooper.

So who volunteered their audio, lighting, and video gear to sit outside on a beach for the best part of 10 days, with a real chance it would take a dip in the waters of St Vincent Gulf? Adelaide's own Novatech Creative Event Technology, headed by Managing Director Leko Novakovic.

"We've been working with the Adelaide Festival for many years," relates Leko, "and this was their signature event for 2024. We got the call late last year. It was quite a complex brief; we had to make this work on a beach, with a 120 metre long stage that's probably going to touch the water a few times, with massive, heavy fibreglass bones sticking out of it. And of course they didn't want to have any PA visible, but we still had to get audio to an audience 100 metres deep. You know, typical stuff!"

First challenge on the bench was audio coverage, ideally with magical invisible loudspeakers. Over the last few years, Novatech have been innovators in deploying L-Acoustic's sleek, streamlined line source SYVA in applications it was never designed

for, namely outdoors. They've built custom winch-ups, rigging, and weather proofing and put them into events including the Santos Tour Down Under international cycling race, and Adelaide Fringe drone show and projection event *Sky Song* in 2022.

"We developed a plan that used SYVAs at the front and then three lines of SYVAs as delays," reveals Leko. "We used winch-ups and buried those in the sand. So all the audience saw was a slim column coming out of the sand. Yes, they could still see them, but they're only 144mm wide, which is very different to two hangs of line arrays."

Audio for the show included five main and five backup tracks played from QLab. Live instruments on stage included an electronic drum kit, guitar, bass guitar, and keyboard. Six actors wore DPA headset microphones with Shure transmitters and receivers, along with Shure IEMS on the actors and the band. FoH mixing duties were handled by a DiGiCo SD10, with a DiGiCo Quantum 225 on monitors.

Lighting designer Damien Cooper had a challenge on his hands with no rigging above the stage, and very little front of house. "The only place to rig anything was one scaffold tower at front of house right," outlines Leko, "Damien then did all of his front wash from what



Photo credit: Roy VanDerVegt



Photo credit: Roy VanDerVegt

was the stage left position only. We used the other side of that structure for the IMAG LED screen to hang on, and got the scaffold supplier Nexstage to build a space in the middle of the tower for us to use as tech and control centre for all our gear, protected by tarps.”

“We rigged the two trusses on the tower with six Ayrton Domino long throw profiles,” continues Leko. “Ayrton Domino Washes were brought to the downstage edges of the stage and placed in sunken troughs so they couldn’t be seen.”

The stage itself also couldn’t be seen. It was a timber structure, which, after it was assembled, was covered by pushing sand against it in ramps. While the stage surface was Tarkett, from the audience, it looked like the stage was a mound of sand. “We had these little troughs in the sand to hide lights

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"Amazingly for an outdoor gig on a beach, Novtaech successfully used haze to enhance the lighting."



Photo credit: David Solm Photography

and monitors," explains Leko. "There were timber surrounds made for our lights and loudspeakers to keep the sand away. We did a lot of the downstage footlighting with LDDE FR 1440s, which are really low-profile footlights. The upstage wash was 30 Ayrton Perseos handling rear lighting effects like uplighting the whale bones, supplied by Stage Kings."

Amazingly for an outdoor gig on a beach, Novatech successfully used haze to enhance the lighting. "We got lucky with the wind," admits Leko. "We only had one show where it got a bit breezy, but it still worked. We used our big MDG theONE hazers, which are the biggest hazers in the world. We also used six of our Base Haze Pros, hidden underneath the stage with ducting to sneak some haze out. Despite being in open air, the haze actually stayed in the air for quite a while."

It's testament to the quality of the ingress protection on the Ayrton products, and the build quality of Novatech's stock in general, that everything not only performed for the show but survived ten days on the beach unharmed. "With the right IP protections, sand stays out of the important parts," confirms Leko. "We had a big team back at the shop when we brought everything back. The minute it all came in, we went straight into deep clean mode, just make sure there were no major problems with anything. Everything was washed and cleaned. We didn't find any issues. Having that sort of high-end equipment out on a beach for that amount of time and not having any issues is really impressive."

It wasn't just a test for the gear, either. "It was pretty trying conditions for our crew, and they really stepped up," commends Leko. "Their bump-in day was 36 degrees, but they all had a smile on their face as they knew they were involved in something pretty special. Everyone who saw the show come to life was raving about it afterwards."



Photo credit: David Solm Photography



Photo credit: David Solm Photography

THE GEAR

Audio

- 11 x L-Acoustics SYVA
- 4 x L-Acoustics SYVA LOW
- 8 x L-Acoustics SB28 subwoofers
- 3 x L-Acoustics SB18 subwoofers
- 6 x L-Acoustics X8, front fill
- 10 x L-Acoustics X8, monitors
- 4 x L-Acoustics LA-RAK amp racks
- 1x DiGiCo SD10, FoH
- 1 x DiGiCo Quantum 225, monitors
- 4 x Shure UHF-R 2 ch radio mic receivers
- 8 x Shure UHF-R L3E Beta58 handheld transmitters
- 8 x Shure UHF-R L3E beltpack transmitters
- 3 x Shure UHF-R J5E+ 2 ch radio mic receivers
- 6 x Shure UHF-R J5E Beta58 handheld transmitters
- 6 x Shure UHF-R J5E beltpack transmitters
- 10 x DPA d:fine 4088 cardioid headset microphones
- 4 x Shure PSM1000 dual IEM transmitters
- 16 x Shure PSM1000 P10R IEM receivers

Video

- IMAG: 60 x Di Color M480 Plus LED panels
- 2 x NovaStar VX1000 LED controllers
- 1 x Ross Carbonite Black Solo video switcher
- 1x1 Blackmagic Hyper DeckStudio Pro2 4K
- 2 x Blackmagic Broadcast G2 cameras
- 4 x Lilliput C30P Full HD PoE PTZ cameras

Lighting

- 12 x Ayrton Domino LT IP65 moving head profiles
- 16 x Ayrton Domino S IP65 moving head washes
- 30 x Ayrton Perseo S IP65 moving head profiles
- 12 x LDDE NanoPix Slim FR 1440 floorlights
- 2 x MDG theONE haze machines
- 6 x Base Hazer Pro DMX haze machines
- 1 x ETC Gio 24K lighting console
- 1x grandMA3 full-size lighting console



Photo credit: David Solm Photography



Photo credit: David Solm Photography



Photo credit: David Solm Photography



Photo credit: David Solm Photography

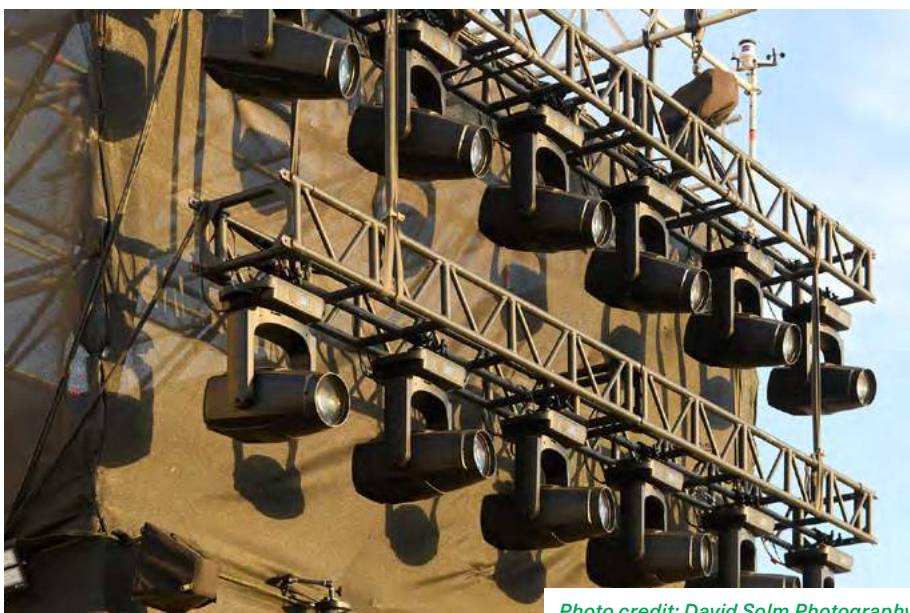


Photo credit: David Solm Photography



Melbourne Fashion Festival 2024

The 2024 PayPal Melbourne Fashion Festival sashayed into town on 24 February, running more than 100 events over 15 days. The official home to the festival was the world heritage-listed Royal Exhibition Building (REB) in Carlton, where premium runway shows ran to 3,000 fashionistas per night. Outside the REB, the Fashion Forecourt served drinks and gourmet food while DJs played tunes, and activations brought the area to life. At this heart of the festival, Harry the Hirer Productions (Harry's) supplied every light, screen, speaker, marquee and chair.

Marcus Pugh, Technical Director and Designer for Harry's Productions, worked on the design for both the forecourt and premium runway shows with Geraldine Frater-Wyeth from Event Gallery, producer of the premium runways. Hugh Taranto stepped up as lighting designer for the runway shows, while Justin Timms designed the audio system. While Harry's have been supplying the forecourt for more than a decade, this was only their second time supplying the premium runways.

"From 4 to 9 March, we were running two premium runway shows each day, and a third on the Saturday," Marcus shares. "We did 13 totally different runway shows over a six-day period. Not only were we supplying every piece of equipment, we were also making the artistic choices on how to light the runway shows."

At the design stage, there was little information on what each show would contain, so the design needed to be as nimble as possible. "Almost all of it was designed before we had a full brief on all the shows," Marcus reveals. "Between Geraldine Frater-Wyeth, Hugh Taranto and myself, we came up with the

overall design and look. For the premium runways, that included a 6 x 6 metre wide silver curved wall at the back, with two smaller 3 x 3 metre curved walls at the front that could be flipped around to be convex or concave. Then we put in two curved 5 x 5 metre LED walls in the middle, and they became digital set pieces."

"The design was all about creating flexibility," continues Marcus, "and being able to offer as many different looks as possible for each one of those 13 runway shows. We had tricks up our sleeve that allowed us to create a really distinctive look and feel for each show without having to put up an entirely new rig every time."

Marcus and the team did get a little prep time during the day before that night's shows. "Each designer would bring out a sample outfit," he says. "Then, prior to each one of the shows, we had walkthroughs with the models."

Working in the REB's heritage-listed confines provided both design inspiration and challenge. "We had a concept that we were creating a juxtaposition between the technology and the heritage architecture of the

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building,” elaborates Marcus. “There were lots of meetings and five or six different versions of the design to get to the point where we thought it was flexible enough, while staying within budget. One big change from last year was that the venue banned the use of haze. When it became official just after New Year that we weren’t going to be able to use haze, Hugh and I changed things around and gave the show a cleaner, more ‘European’ design.”

THE GEAR

Lighting

126 x Chauvet Ovation Profiles

40 x Martin MAC One

24 x Robe Esprite

34 x Martin MAC Aura

20 x Chauvet Storm 2 BeamWash

30 x Chauvet Outcast 2X Wash

50 x LED Fresnels

32 x TourPro Soft Panels

48 x NikLite IP65 Wash

6 x Ayrton Diablos

28 x Astera AX9

32 x Astera AX5

48 x Astera AX1

24 x Astera Titan Tubes

2 x LumenRadio Stardust

4 x LumenRadio Aurora

1 x grandMA3 full-size

1x grandMA3 light

2 x grandMA3 compact XT

Controlled over 50+ Universes of DMX,
over 20,000 individual channels of DMX

Audio

Justin Timms designed a distributed audio system that helped to keep the PA within the vibration limits in the Royal Exhibition Building while giving the audience a full-bodied audio experience. The main PA consisted of:

2 x DiGiCo S21

24 x d&b audiotechnik T10 run as point source

8 x d&b audiotechnik B4 subwoofers

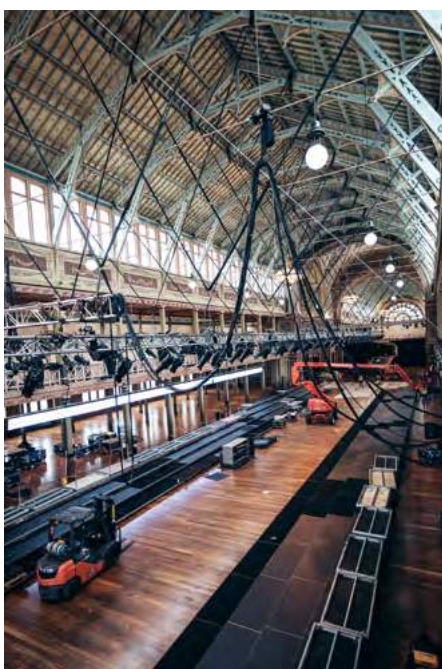
Driven by d&b audiotechnik D80 amplifiers

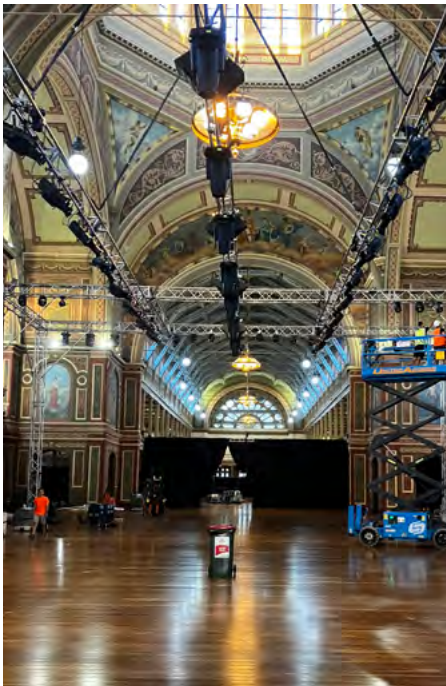
Less than 3dB variation in coverage across 600 square metres of audience

Video

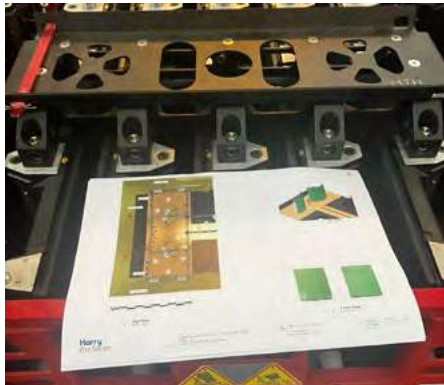
More than 100 square metres of LED screen (13,107,200 individual pixels) using VuePix ART Series 3mm pitch LED panels

Brompton LED processing





With operational and physical restrictions on cabling, Harry's used LumenRadio's Stardust, eight Universe DMX/RDM transmitters and LumenRadio Aurora single Universe DMX/RDM transmitters to get data to some of the lighting rig; "There were areas where we just couldn't get cabling," Marcus admits. "It was great to get data to lighting on the set, lighting in the foyer and also out in the forecourt. I love the LumenRadio system!"



THE CREW

Project Managers:

Wade Cameron (Premium Runway shows), John 'Disco' Darbisi (MFF Plaza), Carl McKinnon (Satellite Runways and Corporate Shows)

Lighting Designer:

Hugh Taranto

Lighting System & Tech Designer:

Ollie Pool

Video System Designer:

Jensen Evans

Video Operator:

Blair Nicholson

Video System Tech:

Daniel Thompson

Audio System Designer:

Justin Timms

Audio Operator:

Jared Hansford (Premium Runways)

Audio Operator:

Harry Scott (MFF Plaza)

Technical Director/Designer:

Marcus Pugh

ELATION

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Harry's utilised its stock of VuePix ART Series 3mm pitch LED panels, running with Brompton LED processing, to power the vast number of LED screens both inside and outside the REB. "The 5 x 5 metre LED digital sets we used inside, along with all the screens on the forecourt, were VuePix," confirms Marcus. "There were three LED screens out on the forecourt as part of different activations, and a main screen out on the plaza that showed highlights of the runway shows, and advertising."

The heritage listing and restrictions also came into play when contemplating audio design. "There are new audio restrictions at the REB, brought in to help preserve the building," Marcus explains. "They've got vibration monitors set up in the venue. Our new audio lead, Justin Timms, designed a distributed system using d&b audiotechnik T10s, which can be used as a line source or point source. We flew them along the catwalk truss, using them as a line source. We had eight d&b audiotechnik B4 subwoofers running in cardioid mode to keep the energy focused forward. We had to 'tools down' for an hour during bump-in to do full audio testing, running the system as hard as we could, to get the vibration readings out of their sensors. That way, we knew where our noise ceiling was. We managed to get the coverage to 104dB average across the seating banks, with a variation of only 3dB."

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GTX24



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Bringing the world to Melbourne

Distributor and manufacturer Group Technologies really know how to throw an industry shindig. Their now annual in-house tradeshow, GTX, runs at their beautifully appointed Melbourne HQ, featuring dedicated demo and showcase spaces for each section of their business. A host of overseas visitors representing their brands were in attendance, as well as over 300 customers, for the 2024 edition on 21 February.

GT's Pascoe Vale premises has been immaculately renovated to showcase

their consoles, loudspeakers, studio products, cabling, and more. Unknown to some, audio brand's Quest design and manufacturing happen behind the scenes in the same building. It's an Australian audio powerhouse on one massive industrial block.

I caught up with all of the new product news, international rock stars, and a lot of colleagues on the day. I had to miss the legendary party that happened that evening, but what happens at a Group Tech party, stays at a Group Tech party!

Austrian Audio

Kurt Richter, Sales Rep

Joining us from Vienna, Kurt Richter isn't shy about Austrian Audio's origin story; "Austrian Audio's employees came from AKG," states Kurt. "Not all of us, but most of us. We are inspired to improve on the microphone technology AKG developed. And that's exactly what we've done with our OC7."

The OC7 is a condenser instrument microphone with an incredibly useful swivelling head. "It shares the same capsule as our small condenser microphone, the CC8. It's based on the legendary CK 1 capsule from AKG."

Another improvement inspired by AKG is the use of ceramic capsules in Austrian Audio's premium OC818 and OC18 condenser mics. "The original AKG brass capsule CK12 was one of the most respected microphone capsules on the planet," explains Kurt, "but it was so hard to build that it had an up to 80% failure rate, which wasn't possible to sustain economically. They changed to nylon, but it wasn't the same. Our first design goal was to build a new capsule. Ceramic is a fantastic material to build microphone capsules; it doesn't have problems with humidity, it's a total isolator, and it has enough weight. We can produce it to the tiniest tolerances, and it doesn't age. If you buy an OC818 or OC18, and three years later you buy another one, you will have a matching pair."



Austrian Audio's Kurt Richter

DiGiCo

Austin Freshwater,
Managing Director

A beaming Austin Freshwater flanked the big new flagship for DiGiCo, the Quantum 852. "This is the first time showing it in Australia, and the southern hemisphere for that matter," boasted Austin. "We've got loads of people already booked in to come and see it. We've been messaged by everyone we know here that can't wait to get their hands on it. Everyone who's seen it today has been blown away. On top of that, we're showing the Fourier Audio transform.engine, our VST3 plugin server, which is a game-changer, as it means you can use almost any plug-in with our desks. We are well set for the year!"

DiGiCo's Austin Freshwater

Cordial Christian Langer, Head of Sales and Marketing

Standing in front of the huge range of Cordial cables that GT import, Christian had some surprisingly interesting insights into the future of cabling. "There are some new products coming," teased Christian. "We're redoing all of our CAT portfolio. The market trend is heading more and more towards CAT. Even though

there has been a trend to optical cables in the past, that has declined."

One of the biggest influences on what Cordial will do with their CAT range is PoE. "The range of Power-over-Ethernet products is growing exponentially," observes Christian. "You've got

to have a decent quality cable if you're going to run up to 200 Watts in some cases. According to our research, 100 Watts over 100 metres is what's required the most. We also think that everything might be heading to single pair Ethernet. The gear is not there yet, but we believe that will be the market centre in the next 10 to 15 years. It will be cheaper, it will be lighter; a whole lot of pros."



Cordial's Christian Langer

NST Audio

Dan Cartman, Managing Director

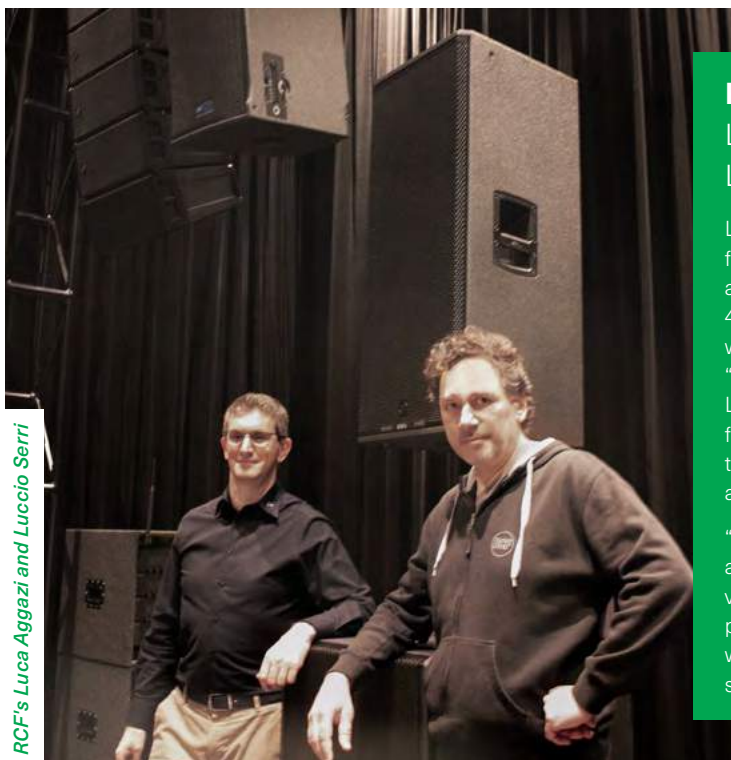
High-quality English DSP manufacturer NST Audio were getting themselves under control with new capabilities for their hardware controllers, and V-Remote, the new iOS app to control their systems. "There's our new VL2 touchscreen PoE controller which adds a whole lot of new features," explains Dan Cartman. "It's not just the touch screen. It's got multiple user levels, password protection, and IP commands to control third party devices. The V-Remote iOS app has pretty similar functionality, including multiple user levels, volume control, and password protection, but will be free in the App Store, available from March 2024. Configuration is stored in the unit, so it makes it totally foolproof for end-users."



Dan Cartman, NST Audio



Photo credit: Melissa Butters



RCF's Luca Aggazi and Luccio Serri

RCF

Luccio Serri, Product Specialist Manager, and Luca Aggazi, Sales Manager

Luccio and Luca from RCF were espousing the benefits of the formidable TTL6 three-way active line source sound column. It's a line array, but in one big box. It's sporting 2 x 12-inch woofers, 4 x 6.5-inch midranges, and one 2-inch compression driver, with onboard amplification totalling 2200 Watts RMS of power. "We can control the system with our software, RDNNet," explains Luccio. "Version Five of RDNNet is now available for download from our website. The TTL6 can also be used as a big array with two of them flown, or can be pole mounted for small to medium applications."

"The point is, a standard line array is not ideal for everything," adds Luca Aggazi. "It has many advantages, but the reality is, both visually and acoustically, there are situations where you would prefer a point source solution. Since we were developing a three-way system, this was a way to implement a modern take on a point source system, with a line array's performance."

Nexo

Joe White, Business Development Manager, and Gareth Collyer, Sales and Marketing Director

Nexo's big news was the P18, an all-new coaxial loudspeaker with a 18" LF Neodymium driver and 4" diaphragm HF driver. It comes with a matched sub, the L20. "The P18 is really the only box like that in the world," explains Joe. "A lot of people are not going to understand it. Why we would make an 18- inch coaxial product?" And why, indeed, have they?

"It's a natural extension of the P Plus Series," explains Gareth. "Our R&D department have created what is probably the most versatile 18-inch box that ever has been on the market. When run active, it gives you so much control that we can see this box being used for live music, gigging bands, nightclubs, through to football stadiums, and even stadia voice evacuation. The other great thing R&D have done is that we have different horn flanges that change the directivity. Just one screw to get the grill off, then magnets hold the flange. The flanges are colour coded so you can see exactly what dispersion you have. It's brilliant."

"It's got an absolutely massive sound," confirms Joe. "We can see rental companies using a pair of these instead of a line array. You can do the same job and have even more SPL, but with less labour, trussing, rigging, and time."

Nexo's Gareth Collyer and Joe White



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PSI Audio

Roger Roshchnik, CEO

One of the most extraordinary things I experienced at GTX was the PSI Audio AVAA C214 active bass trap in action. PSI are a Swiss company that make world-renowned studio monitors, and as such, have learnt an awful lot about how to make very accurate transducers. They're fixated on their all-analogue signal path keeping phase coherence tight.

The AVAA C214 was housed in a little box in the corner of the studio, and you could stick your head in it. Roger would thump

the box, then turn it on, and thump it again, so you could hear the resonance decrease. The amazing part of the demo was when he ran some 80Hz tone through the studio monitors and got me to walk around the studio space and find a resonant node or two – there was a big one at the mix position. Then he turned the AVAA C214 on, and the node disappeared. It was like magic, and I demanded to know how it worked.

"It works like a panel or membrane resonator," explained Roger. "A panel resonator will move back and forward, absorbing energy or pressure, but it'll only move passively, and very little. The AVAA C214 uses exactly the same physics, but it's active. The first thing about active is it can move at any frequency you want. The second is that it can move further. You can be pulling

pressure from further away. And that's what happening in here; you have a microphone that measures the pressure. Then, according to the pressure, the membrane moves back or forward. There's no tuning; it's totally broadband between 15 and 150Hz."

Why hasn't anyone done this before? "Because it's very difficult!" exclaims Roger. "You have to be extremely accurate with the movement of your membrane, and you have to be extremely quick between the microphone and the movement. The fact that we know how to make membranes move properly, with low latency, in phase, is why we were the first ones to come up with it. And it's very tricky." Incredibly, the AVAA C214 can get rid of bass resonances in a room 45 times the size of the unit!



Roger Roshchnik, PSI Audio



Photo credit: Melissa Butters

Sound Devices

Gary Trenda,

RF Applications Engineer

Sound Devices are a relatively new addition to the Group Technologies stable. They're very well known in broadcast and TV for their 'bag mixers' that sound techs on location use to capture audio. They're now making major moves into wireless, with some incredibly capable new product. The developments come in the wake of Sound Devices acquiring Audio Ltd in 2018, a UK manufacturer and developer of high-performance wireless microphone systems.

"We're taking that heritage and growing it into wireless products like our Nexus here," says Gary. I had just been raving about seeing the Super Nexus wireless receiver and manager at ISE in Barcelona. The Nexus is a half rack version, and handles 16 channels. "The Super Nexus is the evolution to a full-width rack receiver, handling 32 channels. That opens up more markets for us." Both sizes of Nexus can assign frequencies based on where you are in the world, operate in multiple bands, scan

and manage RF, and more. They are extremely powerful devices, to say the least!

Gary was showing me the paired A20-TX body pack transmitter. "This is what you'd expect from a full-sized body pack transmitter, with a couple of special Sound Devices additions," Gary pointed out. "There's the really wide

tuning range, from VHF all the way up to 1.5Ghz. There's a flexible mic pre on it that can run your standard lav mic or headset mic, but you can also do 48 volt phantom power with a balanced audio input to run a condenser mic. It's got digital input capability for AES, or even AES42, so you can connect a wide variety of sound sources."



Gary Trenda, Sound Devices

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GTXtra



L-R David Gilfillan, James Love, Shane Cannon, Glenn Leembruggen, and Mark Hanson

A Meeting of the Minds

Not even a week after the GTX event documented in the previous pages, Group Technologies hosted a much smaller, but just as influential affair at their HQ. The group of electroacoustic consultants collectively known as ICE Design were invited to learn all about GT's audio brand Quest Engineering, designed and built in-house, and visit the last remaining loudspeaker driver manufacturer in Australia, Lorantz Audio, who supply Quest.

ICE Design is made up of three separate businesses and their staff; Glenn Leembruggen's Acoustic Directions, David Gilfillan's Gilfillan Soundwork, and Mark Hanson's Hanson Associates. Until late last year, Rod Louey-Gung's Integrated Media was also part of the group, but Rod announced his retirement in October.

Collectively, ICE Design have been responsible for the electroacoustic and AV designs of some of the region's most complex and consequential projects; High Courts, Supreme Courts, Parliaments, airports, universities,

stadia, government buildings, museums, and more. ICE are known for such exacting audio performance that if a product doesn't exist that meets their requirements for a specific project, they'll design and build one.

I caught up with Glenn, Mark, David, David's associate James Love, and Group Technologies' Director of Sales Shane Cannon just as they had returned from the Lorantz Audio factory in Dandenong, in south-eastern Melbourne. The consultants were buzzing as only those with a deep love of audio and respect for quality could be.

"I've been around transducers a little while, as you know," observes Glenn. "But I've never seen one being made. Lorantz are making their own cones and spiders (the support structure that keep the voice coil and cone aligned – Ed.). The wealth of knowledge at Lorantz is profound. Their General Manager, Mikhail Barabasz, is in his 70s, and we want the knowledge he has to continue. There needs to be recognition of the skill that's there. He's got all the best test equipment, showing loudspeaker distortion curves, how the suspension and magnetic field can become nonlinear, and why one design is better than another. He makes it all come alive."

"Lorantz are building two particular drivers for the Quest subwoofer range," adds Mark Hanson. "That was a complete eye-opener for me. I thought a driver was a driver, just a bit of paper or something else for the cone. To experience first-hand the decades of knowledge that's gone into refining the drivers that are used in Quest products was just fantastic."

Quest Engineering

Quest design, manufacture and test loudspeakers and amplifiers at Group Technologies' facility; the same building that hosts their demonstration rooms, offices, and warehouse. Quest's range includes loudspeakers for any kind of installation, matched with amplifiers, mixer amplifiers, DSP, and rigging. You see Quest products in almost every market sector in Australia, and they export a significant amount overseas.

ICE Design got to peek behind the curtain at Quest's operation in Pascoe Vale, including their anechoic chamber, testing facilities, and assembly line. That was followed by listening sessions across the Quest and Nexo ranges.

"I really get a sense of the passion Group Technologies has for Quest," notes David Gilfillan. "Because they're making it themselves, it becomes really special."

"I'm thrilled that an Australian company is doing this level of work with this level of investment," Glenn relates. "It's been amazing to see what you have to do to make a product that's more than the acoustics or the electronics. It's exhilarating to understand that we have an audio manufacturing industry in Australia. The Quest electronics are beautiful, and world class. It's really exciting to see that they're performing so well on the world stage."


"Through ICE, I've learnt a lot over the last few years about making your own equipment; whether it's for reproducing, testing, or measuring audio," elaborates James Love. "To actually see people who are doing it within a large-scale product manufacturing process is a real eye-opener."

"I've learnt a hell of a lot today," reports Mark Hanson. "I've learnt a lot from my colleagues over the years in terms of how you put a finished product with measured performance into a space. But to really appreciate what goes into building, designing, and manufacturing audio products; the practical challenges you've got to overcome, making sure grills don't fall off or go rusty, for example. There's so much to it."

So, how has experiencing Quest's presence influenced how you would approach a system design? "When you respond to a tender or you're designing a system, it's easy to go back into your established patterns," admits Glenn. "At ICE, we don't go back into our patterns when it comes to acoustics; we're always in first principles mode. When it comes to electronics, I think I have a tendency to go back into my patterns because of history and supplier relationships. I think it's time to break out of that. We've seen evidence of product here that shakes you up and says, 'come on, look at this stuff!' I've known of Quest for a long while, but I never really understood how serious it all was, really."

"From a Group Technologies perspective, it was great to have the ICE Design team in," concludes Shane Cannon. "While I only met James last year, I've known the rest of team for 25 or 30 years. It was great to bring in the brains trust of our industry, who have all been working at the top of their game a long time, and are very passionate about it. It's an opportunity to not just share what we're doing with Quest, but then get feedback as to what products the market needs, where the gaps are, and what is missing. We've demonstrated what we do, the passion we do it with, and the capability of the products."





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CHRISTOPHER BAUDER'S VEKTOR

German light artist Christopher Bauder's latest installation is **VEKTOR**, a personal piece loosely based on his life experiences. **VEKTOR, Memories in Light & Sound**, is Bauder's third installation at Berlin's Kraftwerk, an old power plant-turned-art gallery that Bauder refers to as an 'industrial cathedral'.

The abstract work is a personal 'memory chest' using small audio snippets of memories from Bauder's childhood through to present day: the sound of the sea from his childhood living on an island in the North Sea, church bells on a Sunday, laughter of loved ones, as well as samples recorded from the Kraftwerk building itself. The recordings can be precisely targeted throughout the building, transforming the building itself into a living, breathing work through sound and illumination. "The audience doesn't need to understand the thoughts behind it, or be aware of the massive amount of technology behind it, but I hope they will catch glimpses of the references here and there," says Bauder.

The new artwork consists of 50 lasers mounted on 10 evenly spaced, heavy-lift

winches specifically developed by Kinetic Lights which synchronise movement of all the lasers. These enable Bauder to create a sculpture in mid-air that fills the whole volume of the enormous exhibition space.

"It's important for me to start from symmetry that allows me to break from symmetry later," explains Bauder. "By starting with a very symmetrical layout I am able to create completely random shapes and spacing in the second stage of the creative process. If your initial layout already creates a shape, then you are always bound to that shape and can never break away from it."

"I use the lasers to create three-dimensional shapes and textures that I hope will evoke a memory and an emotional response within the viewers. I like to play with these things, taking a step further to tell a story by very abstract means, and encourage the audience to create their own picture, rather than just showing shapes synchronised to music. For example, in **VEKTOR**, I have an 'under water' scene where I play sounds of the ocean with birds flying over, and have created a surface with the lasers in blue with bobbing lights reminiscent of floating buoys. This combination immediately makes everyone think about the sea and an underwater scene, but it is just technology triggering their memory of it. It's an emotional and poetic show."

As with any light show, a basis of good haze is of paramount importance to reveal the work

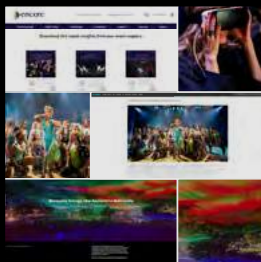
of the artist to its full extent, and Bauder states that he uses MDG hazer generators and fog machines whenever possible to create the 'right' atmosphere for his pieces.

"The visibility of the light is important as I use light in an architectural sense, like a material that I can shape and form in space into a tangible form that almost feels touchable. At the same time, of course, the light is intangible, not physical, so I need the haze as a basis to materialise the light in space."

"When looking for the perfect haze there are two aspects to take into consideration – translucence and visibility. If I have a lot of haze I have good visibility of the lasers in close proximity, but it obstructs the view of the lasers that are further away. So the quantity of the haze is extremely important, but also the quality: the quality needs to be translucent enough to keep the whole piece visible across the full 100m distance. I still need to be able to see the back of the space, but at the same time give enough texture in the air to create the visibility of those lasers."

"It's a really fine balance between the two, and MDG haze delivers that balance. The key factor is the fineness of the droplets in the air which defines the visibility throughout the space. It mainly just reacts to, and refracts, the light without obstructing visibility. That's why I always try to use MDG haze generators as they provide both these aspects."

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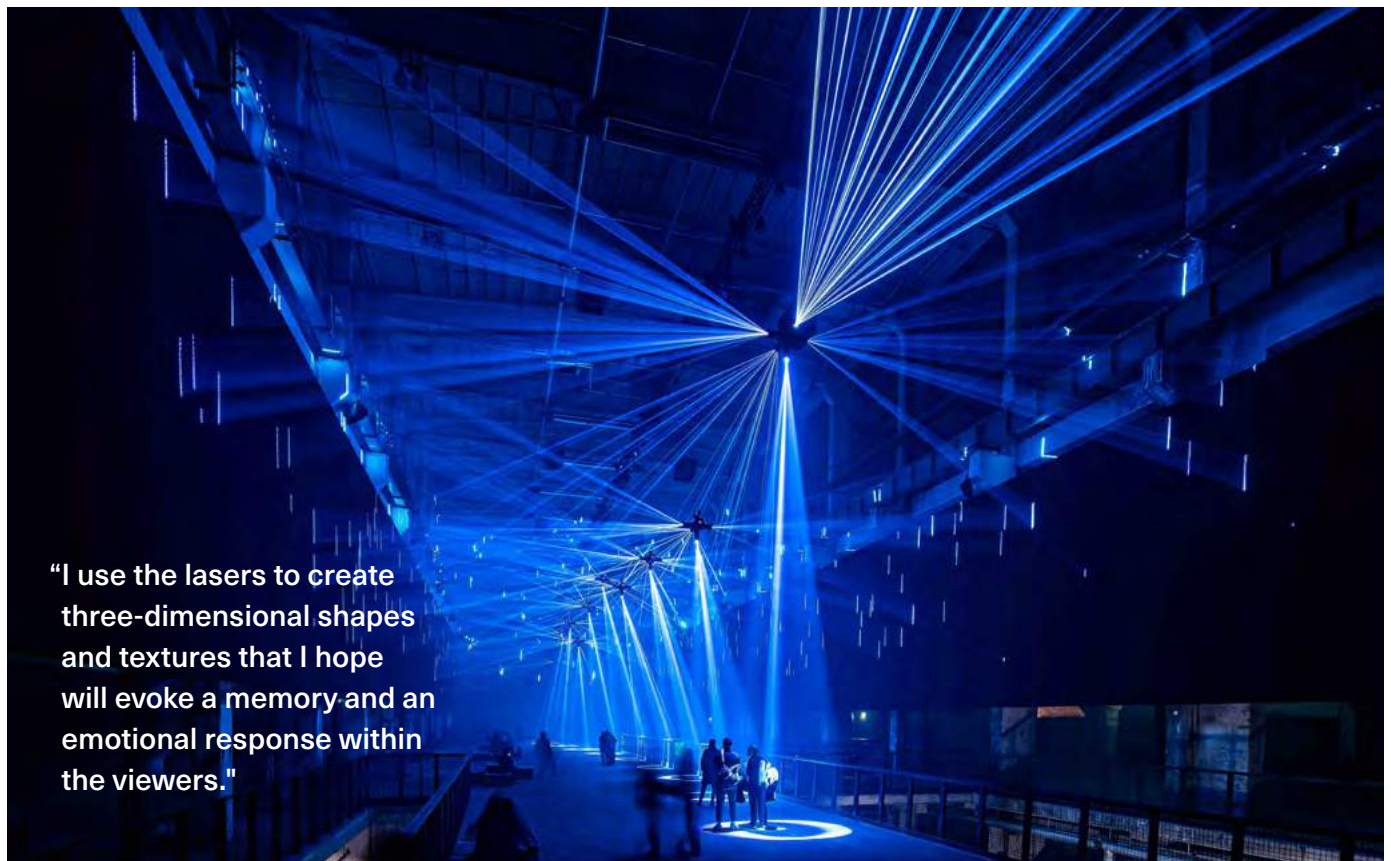
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Kraftwerk's exhibition space is a massive 100m x 60m x 25m high, naturally dark, indoor space on two levels. "The volume is huge," says Bauder, "but we have just two MDG ATMe hazer generators, and two Me2 fog machines running at intervals, to fill the whole space."

The two ATMes are located at each end of the hall, and the two Me2 fog machines in opposite corners. "At the start of the day we run the Me2 fog machines for about 10-15 minutes to quickly fill the space and introduce enough texture. Then we have the ATMes running on 100% for the rest of the day, with two of MDG theFAN to aid circulation, which keep the stability of the amount of haze for the rest of the day and maintain the visibility. Even running at 100% we only use about 20% of the fluid and gas compared to the systems we've used in the past."

Each MDG ATMe, with theFAN, is housed with gas and fluid in purpose-built MDG Vertical Flight Cases for convenience, storage and transportability. The supplier was cast C. Adolph & RST Distribution, MDG's exclusive distributor for Germany. "Cast are super – we love them," concludes Bauder. "They are always ready to demo products for us and quick to react when we need service or supplies. We have a great relationship with them."

The Berlin art scene has a notably discerning audience, but VEKTOR has received an overwhelming response. Four live shows ran 15 March and 5 April with music written by Bauder for the first time. "We didn't know what to expect, but from the start it was crazy – 6,500 people on the first weekend and 30,000 in the first four weeks!" says Bauder.



"I use the lasers to create three-dimensional shapes and textures that I hope will evoke a memory and an emotional response within the viewers."



A PA System Tech's

Secret Weapons

I love it when you find out someone's using a bit of gear in a way that you never thought of, and getting a result you never would have expected. I got tipped off that globe-hopping, Perth-based PA system tech and crew boss Christian Peterson had something in his travelling rack that might surprise me, and I should give him a call.

I managed to touch base with Christian in a rare week he was actually at home. He'd just come back from the Australian leg of Blink 182's tour, which he will soon be jumping back onto for a South American/Mexico/USA stint. In recent years, he's worked with twentyone pilots, boygenius, Foo Fighters, and Cirque du Soleil. He is in demand internationally, and the contents of his system and measurement rack should be of interest to anyone who wants to keep up with current best practice in PA deployment.

Without keeping you in further suspense, the secret weapon in the rack is.... a 1RU, 4 channel, MIPRO ACT-848 wireless receiver. I'm assuming that, like me, you're used to seeing the brand MIPRO on portable loudspeakers with wireless mics in schools and shopping centres, but not so much in professional applications. Why is a world-class system tech rocking the MIPRO brand proudly on some of the world's biggest stages?

"It's funny you should say that," chuckles Christian, "A buddy of mine was down in South America with me last year, he had a channel of MIPRO in his rack. The local system engineers were laughing at him; 'Ha ha, MIPRO!' kind of thing, And he's like, 'don't knock it 'til you've tried

it.'" A little digging on the internet reveals that the MIPRO receivers are a cult-like secret weapon for savvy systems techs all over the world.

Christian is using the MIPRO receiver in his SMAART measurement rig. "They're digital, they don't compand, and they have a great plug-on transmitter option," explains Christian. "That's three things that are very hard to find in any other product at the same time. Especially without the companding; anything that compands you can use for time alignment, but is useless for frequency response. With this system, I can throw any mic on any one of those plug-on transmitters; they're matched in gain and response well beyond the amount I need them to be to trust them. An in terms of value for money, you can't match the MIPRO approach."

Being in front of all of the big PA names on the planet, Christian has to have the I/O options to stay flexible. "The other cool thing about the MIPRO ACT-848 is that there are Dante options, AES, and analogue out. My SMAART setup revolves entirely around Dante."

So how did Christian discover this little-known MIPRO hack? "I'd seen the product before COVID," reveals Christian. "I was interested,

but never acted on it. Post-COVID, I was using other products and getting variable results. I spent every single day putting up three or four microphones, and having to re-measure them to work out what was different between them that day. So, in the end, I decided to try MIPRO, because it was my money and price was definitely a consideration. It's worked brilliantly."

The all-important measurement mics sitting on the end of Christian's MIPRO transmitters are four Earthworks M30s. "The best thing about this system is that you stick them on the ground to take a ground plane measurement, and there's less than 0.1dB between them. And if you've got the calibration file loaded into SMAART, it's rendered null. They're total workhorses; they do get thrown around a bit, but they come up clean every single time. I do a measurement once every month to verify them, and they've never failed me once."

Christian's measurement process is as follows; "I take four to six measurements on-axis of the main hang," outlines Christian. "I then take a timing measurement between the main and the side. I do another four on the side, another one between the 270 and the side, and then another four on the 270. And the great thing is



"I can walk around with my iPhone controlling SMAART and the PRODIGY.MP to unmute, take measurements, and move on. The workflow is just wild!"



Christian Peterson



I can go through, take all those measurements and trust that every single mic is reading as it should. But the really great thing is that if we have any onstage fills or delays that are going in later, I can keep working offline with the previous measurements and I don't have to use the exact same microphone every single time."

Working in stadiums and arenas involves a lot of range, and Christian definitely gets his steps in. "The range with just the standard whips that come with MIPRO receiver is great," confirms Christian. "That's all I use for the stadiums and arenas I've been doing. I get about three shows on one battery charge with the plug-on transmitters, and that's with full 48V phantom running the M30s. I just recently time aligned the entire Lollapalooza Brazil site using only these two whips. It only cut out past the second ring of delays!"

Another cornerstone of Christian's rack is a DirectOut PRODIGY.MP multifunction audio processor. "There's nothing I've found that has quite the amount of processing abilities and I/O options," reports Christian. "The clocking is incredible; I've found the clock on it to be more reliable than every other piece of gear we've got in the rig. The PRODIGY.MP receives all the various inputs from the consoles and sends to the PA outputs. It outputs to the SMAART rig via Dante. I've got 16 channels I can send to SMAART for all sorts of measurement options. It's an extremely streamlined system, and its input managing options are absolutely incredible."

The PRODIGY.MP's output options mean Christian is covered no matter what PA he's in front of. "I spent most of last year sending AES to L-Acoustics M1 processors," Christian illustrates. "From there it was AVB to the

LA12X's, and now this year it's been mostly d&b audiotechnik, with AES via Dante to D80's. Keeping fluent in both of those worlds is really important. This is the only way I can do that, especially with the PRODIGY.MP having both a Dante card and an AVB card. I can switch between the two, but the front-end processing remains entirely the same."

Keeping the rig running is a Netgear AV Line M4250 network switch. "Everything goes via the Netgear AV switch," extolls Christian. "The Dante network, the AVB network; I've got those split across two VLANs on the switch with a couple of management ports. I've got a couple of Ubiquiti wireless access points, so I can carry a tablet around the whole venue, listening and adjusting. I've got PoE on them all, so all of my wireless access points just power straight up from that. The beauty of the Netgear AV switches is that they're so easy to programme."

Christian's ingenious rig is all about delivering the best workflow for him and his crew, and the best experience for the audience. "The festivals I've got coming up are a perfect example," offers Christian. "I'm going to be doing some on d&b rigs, l'Acoustics, Meyer, EAW and JBL. I can say to the crew 'give me eight lines into your system,' and I have control over every single discrete output. It really helps me with my measurements to get the consistency the FoH engineer needs. I can give someone analogue, and AES, and Dante, and AVB. I can even give them coaxial MADI in and out if I want to. I've upgraded to the Unlimited license which enables OSC for the PRODIGY.MP, so I can use a software with it called Companion, from Bitfocus. It's incredible

at simplifying tasks between devices, using a wide variety of protocols. Given the native support for SMAART API and OSC on the PRODIGY.MP- I can walk around with my iPhone controlling SMAART and the PRODIGY.MP to unmute, take measurements, and move on. The workflow is just wild!"

I agree. In Christian's own words, this is all very, very cool.

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In this occasional series, Julius Grafton talks to the people out there holding the placard high, working against the odds, keeping our historical theatres open. *Do you know or have a 'Theatre in the Wild'? Email juliusmedia@me.com*



THE PARAGON THEATRE

Queenstown, Tasmania

Queenstown is on the 'wild west' coast of Tasmania, four slow winding road hours from Hobart, one of a quartet of pocket sized historical towns where the major industries are tourism and mining. The impenetrable mountains are either rocky peaks or rainforest thick, and utterly eye candy. It also has the heritage listed Paragon Theatre which can and does host 400 people for the occasional concert.

Built at a cost of over 5,000 pounds by the Paragon Picture Co as a "talkie theatre", the Paragon Theatre opened in 1933. It did the thing through the movie era, and like most then became a decaying orphan. But people loved it.

Co-owner Joy Chappell says she and partner Anthony Coulson bought the theatre from Dr

Alex Stevenson in 2017. The Doc had rescued the place in 2003; it had become an indoor cricket stadium. The original pitched timber floor had been backfilled and a concrete slab laid over. Doc painstakingly loved the place, and painted the floor to resemble marble. He did a really good job.

A year later Joy and Tony noticed small floor cracks start to grow, and research quickly revealed the bad news. The timber under-floor had rotted, and the slab was now hanging in free space. An engineer delivered the worst news: fix it by drilling 6-inch (150mm) holes, then drop cylinders and rebar into the rock way below. 68 were done, costing almost \$70,000. Faced with 68 neatly bored holes, the owners engineered round shiny dedication plates, so now each is a feature!

The couple of years that followed were encouraging. Live shows came through, name artists could fill the space with 400+. Bands were (and are) accommodated at Joy's two adjoining guest houses. Paragon gained a name; a quirky historic theatre on the wild West coast that loved live music.

The partners built the 6 x 5 metre stage, installed the cinema screen and cinema audio,

and now each day at 5pm they screen a local doco. Self-guided tours through the day are well worth the \$7 fee, which we paid before doing this story. Yet sadly some of the transient tourists are too tight for \$7. We saw this; 'Oh can we just have a peek?' No? And then drive off huffed up in a \$300,000 rig!

Then COVID descended in March 2020 and the place went as dark as any and every venue. Those following two nuclear winters of our collective lament ravaged and raged silently. One blessing: Joy and Tony got the JobKeeper subsidy, something they hadn't and haven't seen since. So how do they keep the lights on these days?

Joy: "We have other businesses. I'm a chef, my sister and I have the two accommodation houses, and Anthony runs tours and transfers for White Water Rafting." Between them the partners have the energy and commitment; but what of this 2024 summer?

"It hasn't really happened," Joy laments. "For the shows, since the pandemic people just don't come out. They spent two years at home watching Netflix. The grey nomads don't come out either; they seem budget constrained." Some recent shows haven't

come close to breaking even. The venue depends on grants, and they anxiously await this year's allocation. At time of visit (February), a forthcoming show by The Wolfe Brothers in April looked promising.

Paragon gets help from state and the feds. Joy acknowledges this wholeheartedly. They had a grant and put production gear in. An EV ETX point source PA with an Allen and Heath SQ7 mixing desk do the audio, 20 lights do the rest.

With the poor showing of the 2024 summer, Joy is trepidatious but resolved. The forthcoming grants will determine whether, or how much, support exists for shows through the year. Price shocks like public liability insurance (doubled last year to \$75,000 for the accommodation and the theatre) seem to have stabilised.

Some of the slowdown comes from the variable tourism fortunes of the four somewhat remote west-coast towns. Queenstown is inland, but Strahan, just 40 very slow kms on a twisty road away, is on a coastal inlet with a world famous lake cruise. At time of visiting, we couldn't get accommodation in Strahan but Queenstown had many available. Turns out that is at the peak of the issues.

Queenstown is pretty, provided you don't look over your shoulder at the denuded mountains laid bare by copper mining. The other direction is verdant and pretty, bucolic even. Historical with old pubs. Tick! And a world-famous scenic railway with a steam engine! Built to serve the mines, then appropriated to tourism some decades back. And utterly mismanaged since.



Sam and Anthony, owners of The Paragon

In lockdown, there was zero maintenance done. The town folk watched a literal slow-motion train wreck, which has now metastasised into a town-wide downturn.

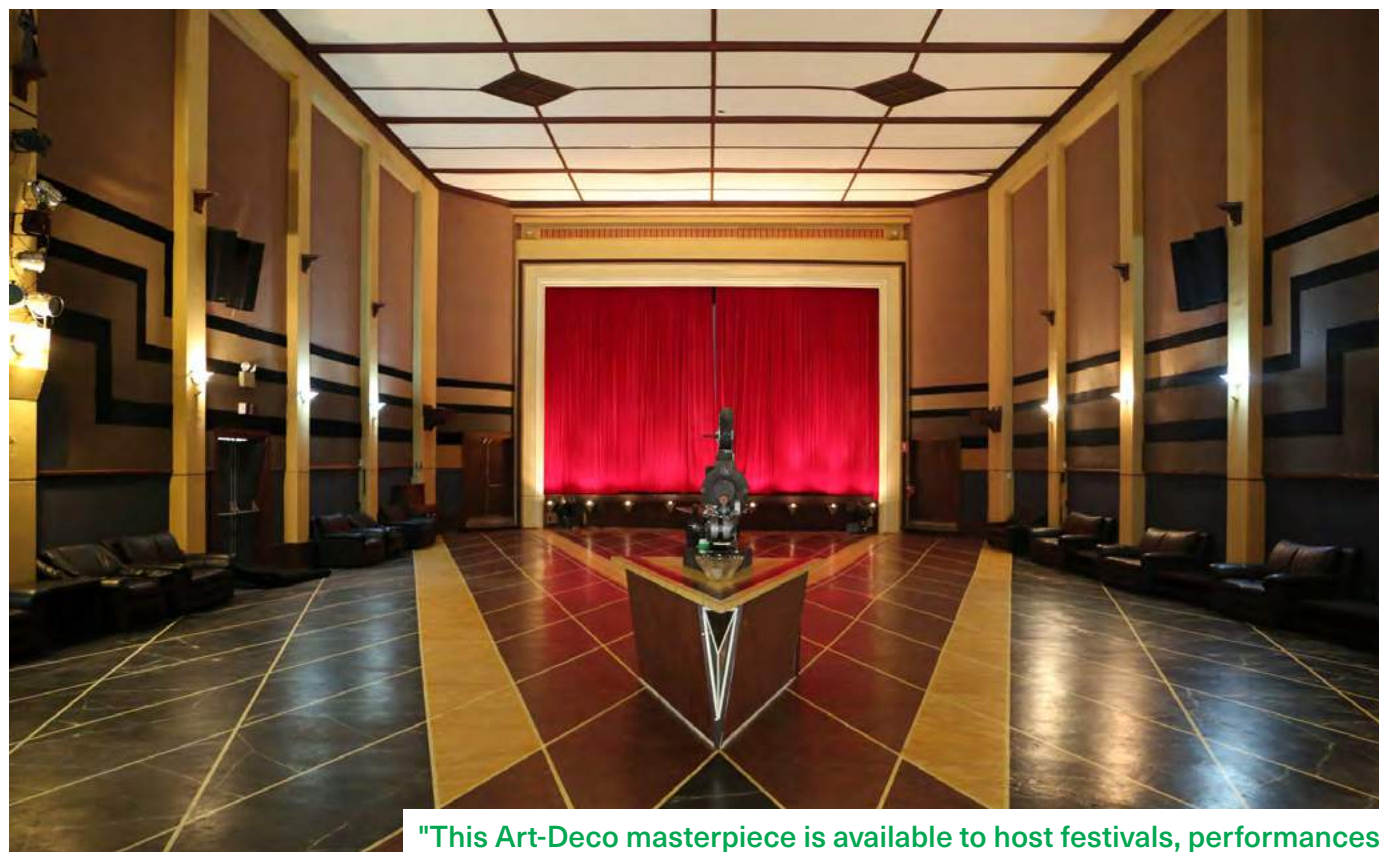
We had ruled out that 90 minute rail outing at 11.30am as FAR too expensive and also prone to diesel locomotive substitution rather than steam. Seems many others feel the same. The formerly once well patronised attraction is a downsized and pale ghost of itself. Yet the town hasn't got an effective Chamber of Commerce, and the regional tourism association seems sanguine because Strahan

is firing on all cylinders. And QT is not. It's obvious as we walk the streets and test the couple of pubs.

Which leaves the Paragon looking for the unicorn – a festival, a sporting gathering (like, trail biking or any of the endless adventure possibilities in this oh-so-almost NZ corner of Tassie) or – something.

One and all, visit or consider doing a show in Queenstown Tasmania!

www.theparagon.com.au



The Paragon

"This Art-Deco masterpiece is available to host festivals, performances, celebrations, or any number of events in this stunning corner of Tassie."

WHY DO I STILL DO THIS?



Stephen Askins *still* treads the (audio) boards at 67

Sydney's Shellbourne Hotel is a planet away from the pubs of yore, where a young Stephen Askins played drums in his band forty years ago. By day he was an un-mild bank teller, his hands caressing more money than he would ever make flailing at his drumkit.

He got lucky and married Michelle who he'd known since the age of 12. They have three adult sons, (two of whom work in AV for MusicBox): James (40) David (32) and Kieran (29).

Settling into the first of many beers, I kick off proceedings with Stephen by asking him how he started out.

SA: A young drummer – me – got hooked into how our band's PA ran, then I started mixing

supports. Then I found a thing called the NEIS, New Enterprise Incentive Scheme, which back then paid you to start a business. That went well, after which I was offered a full-time job with The P.A. People doing design and AV. After some years there I went full-time touring, mixing FOH. Last year was the biggest, we did 105 shows with the Robertson Brothers. This year I'm staying home mainly doing corporate work, and there's a hell of a lot of it. In 2024 I'm doing at least 50 shows around Australia.

JG: *You're forthright about rogue promoters and charlatans in the music industry...*

SA: I was doing a lot of work at Evan Theatre in Penrith Panthers Club that, along with Twin Towns, are two of the best clubs in the land. Noticed neither venue or any crew were nominated for a Mo Award, which was a club entertainment award scheme. I looked into it, and now it's gone. I started getting pissed off with promoters when, in 2017, I did a tour and

the crew I'd hired weren't paid for months. It all came to head when one of my kids helped us out at the last minute, and they took four months to pay him \$400. There's a bunch of these guys; they go broke, change the business name and are straight back at it.

JG: *You seem to find more and more of them!*

SA: Unfortunately, yeah. Touring with Robertson Brothers I heard about their experiences. The latest rogue promoter is an unpleasant individual, he got his fingers into a club I was working AV at and started booking in the wrong kind of shows. After I'd left, I started hearing that some of the bands hadn't been paid. When I started talking about it to people, they found out and threatened me...

JG: *I know! I saw him online openly threatening to come around to your house and sort you out! Looks to me like an open and shut public threat in his own name!*

SA: Yeah, this had me a little rattled. They talk big. One of the other rogues is putting on shows that are flopping and he found me at the baggage carousel at Sydney airport. Needless to say, the crowd waiting for their bags got some brilliant entertainment!

JG: *What wouldn't you do again?*

SA: Buy a flashy mixing console that kept breaking down. Ask industry people for advice; with social media it's easy now! On that, I'm toying with buying a small-format mixer next year, so I know what I'm using rather than walking into a venue with a strange console. That's stressful. With the Robbo Brothers I was touring with an 18-channel Behringer.

JG: *Have things gotten easier over the decades?*

SA: The vagaries of consoles are tough; but the sound systems in venues are better, and the crew are good at everything. We're not

carrying tonnes of gear anymore. Things are definitely easier.

JG: *Biggest stuff-up?*

SA: At the level I work at you can't afford mistakes, especially doing corporate gigs. These days there's more rehearsal time too. The rookie mistakes occur when people don't check things; we come from an era of being thrown in the deep end. Today, for example, we both arrived early, meanwhile some young kids rolled up one minute to the call. I tell them: 'double check everything'.

JG: *Do you find a different level of humour amongst the young techs?*

SA: They enjoy the experience because when they make a mistake, I don't have a go at them. Lighten up! I still get nervous just before a show waiting for the first note. To deal with stress I try to lighten it up, make the day a bit of fun.

JG: *Do you think this decade finds the venue people, crew and bands interacting differently?*

SA: Good question. Back in the day it was whatever it takes to get the gig done, and it often wasn't pretty. You took whatever drug you needed, and a lot of people died! We endured crazy hours. It's far more professional now.

JG: *How are you holding up?*

SA: Ha! I'm starting to feel my age! Now I'm paid to walk in and walk out and I'm paid more. Rarely do I need to push cases, and people are happy to pay for my experience. 14-hour days aren't physically hard but mentally they're very taxing. These days I'm working smarter.

JG: *What great shows have you worked lately?*

SA: Right now, Joey Fimmano's Music of the Night. We did 30 shows last year with 50 this

year. It's great that a lot of shows are starting to book themselves and are networking and backing themselves. Kudos!

We ate pub grub, a cheeseburger for Stephen and a pork chop for me. After about eight beers each we finished off with a glass of wine and took public transport home.



Julius Grafton and Stephen Askins

Why do I (still) do this? – About this series and Author

Julius Grafton left live production work for good on Australia Day, 2024. At the tender age of 66 he ran out of enthusiasm and started to live a Groundhog Day of live sound gigs. In this series, he does lunch with people who've outlasted him, and asks them the vital question: why do they still do this?

Are you concerned about your mate's mental health?

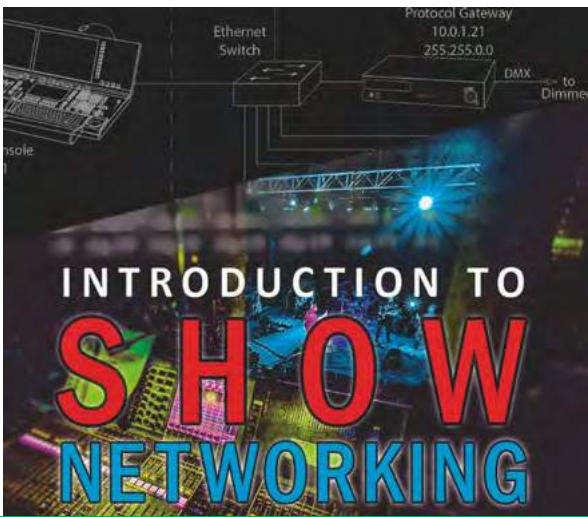
FACT: Most Australian tech crew and roadies have attempted or considered suicide¹!

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www.entertainmentassist.org.au
Supporting the mental health of Australian entertainment industry workers



¹Passion, Pride, Pitfalls Dec 2014



...ance and Show Technology

INTRODUCTION TO SHOW NETWORKING covers the basics of how networks provide a platform for entertainment control and audio media distribution for concerts, theatre productions, corporate special events, cruise ship revues, wrestling shows, houses of worship, museum presentations, fountain spectaculars—any kind of controlled live for an audience. The book's bottom up approach is designed with show technicians in mind, starting with the basics of moving up through cables, network switches, and layering through Ethernet, and network components like TCP, UDP, IP, and net masks, all with a practical focus. More advanced concepts are included, including broadcast storms and VLANs, along with showing best practices. Closing out the book is a network design demonstrated through practical, real-world examples for lighting, video, scenic automation, and show control networks. An appendix covering binary and hexadecimal numbers is also included.

Introduction To Show Networking



by John Huntington

Expert, John Huntington, and classroom experiences to live shows, concerts, and entertainment industry, including: Associates of Ferrell, The Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Radio City Music Hall, Designs/PRG, and the Tribeca Film Festival. Huntington has written over 100 articles for industry publications such as *Lighting and Sound America*, *ESTA's Production*, *Lighting Dimensions*, *USITT's TD&T*, *Theatre Crafts*, and hundreds of articles on his popular blog, www.controlgeek.net. Huntington is a professor at New York University College of Technology/CUNY ("City Tech") and through his company, Zircon, provides show technology and audio consulting and training. He is a member of the IATSE Local #1, has a NYS Class B Laser Operator's Certificate of Competence, is a Level 3 Dante Certification, is a Subject Matter Expert for the ESTA ETCP Level 1 Electrician certification program, and is an ETCP-recognized Electrical and Dante-certified Trainer. Huntington has a BFA from Ithaca College, an MFA from the Yale School of Drama, is a storm chaser and an award winning photographer, and has lived in New York City since 1990.



About the book

'If you set things up right, use good quality gear, and follow some basic best practices, Ethernet just works.'

Introduction To Show Networking is an introduction to the networks found on live shows, it follows the decades long evolution in entertainment control technology. This particular book traces back to 1994 (30 years ago!) with the book *Control Systems for Live Entertainment*.

Introduction To Show Networking covers the basics of how Ethernet networks provide a platform for entertainment control for any kind of show presented to a live audience.

In overly simplistic terms, what this book gives the reader is a primer on Ethernet networks and a seven-step network design and implementation process for building and maintaining your own network.

Although packed with information and a rather dense read, it is only 152 pages long. Not exactly a light read, but at the same time, it's not a text book either. It took me about half a dozen sittings to read it once, then I spent a few hours over the next few days trying out some of the concepts for myself.

I feel that the greatest thing about this book

is that it was written specifically for our industry, by someone who works in the field and teaches this for a living. There are a lot of networking books out there that just don't quite hit the mark. There are even more blogs and videos out there that explain various networking concepts. But this book is the best resource out there for anyone looking to make a start or to improve their Ethernet networking skills. The author does a great job explaining the concepts and stays on topic.

Who is the book for?

Show technicians, systems technicians and AV installers who are starting out or looking for a refresher. It would also be for anyone involved in the operation of any show control gear.

Who might benefit from reading this book?

Anybody involved in the set up or operation of a show or installation. Nowadays any professional show or installation will likely have a network-based control component. Any set-up crew looking to take that next step or any production manager types looking to drill down a little deeper and gain an understanding of how show networking happens may benefit from reading this book.

Who is this book not for?

I feel like anyone in our industry could derive some benefit from reading Introduction To Show Networking, but I would say it is not for those involved in anything that doesn't require an Ethernet cable (at least not yet), so people like followspot operators, flies, stage hands etc.

What I liked about the book

Networking and Ethernet networks are topics I often see explained by outsiders (IT/computer programming/gamer types). This book is written by an industry insider who understands not only networking, but how our industry works, making this book extremely relevant. Another thing I really liked was the author's ability to go through and explain the jargon and the acronyms without it reading like a dictionary. Jargons and acronyms seem to be a big part of networking. Learn the jargon and the rest of the concepts tend to flow a lot easier.

How I think the book could have been better...

It would have been helpful if the book went into how to configure managed switches and a bit more in-depth about some of the



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more common hardware elements found in networks. However, you can find most of that information in the user manual.

I can understand why the author didn't go that deep, as it's all in the first word of the title of the book (Introduction), but I still would have loved to have seen a chapter on each of the main disciplines (lighting/audio/vision/automation/comms) and have them drill down a little deeper into their nuances.

That said, the author does offer this:

"A network is a network, and an IP address is an IP address, whether that IP address is used

to transport audio, video, lighting control data, or pyro firing information."

Verdict

Arguably the best book you will find on this topic. Yes, it's a niche topic, yes there are not many books out there like this, however this book is hard to top unless it was revised to be three times the size.

For me personally, I found the seven step network design and implementation process so useful I've taken it, applied it, found it to work, and so I'll use it well into the future.

Ratings

Readability: 6/10

I found Introduction to Show Networking to be fairly readable, given the nature of the book. It didn't flow quite as well as I would have liked, and I did have to go back and re-read topics to understand them. I appreciate that it would be hard to write a light and enjoyable piece about such a dry topic. I am also aware that some of the re-reading could be attributed to my lack of understanding and slowness in grasping some of the ideas.

Supporting materials: 7/10

The supporting materials in this book were mainly diagrams to illustrate the points and concepts written about in the book. I thought they did a great job as supporting materials, but could not have told the story by themselves. There is also an accompanying website for the book, but the website doesn't directly relate to the topics in the book, as it's a blog by the author – an interesting read nonetheless.

Relevance: 10/10

Its uniqueness coupled with its relevance is probably the main selling point of the book. It is a very niche book written specifically for the live events and entertainment industry. As it was written in 2020, it isn't filled with outdated terms and concepts. If you are working in our industry and want to learn about the networking side of things you will not find a more relevant book.

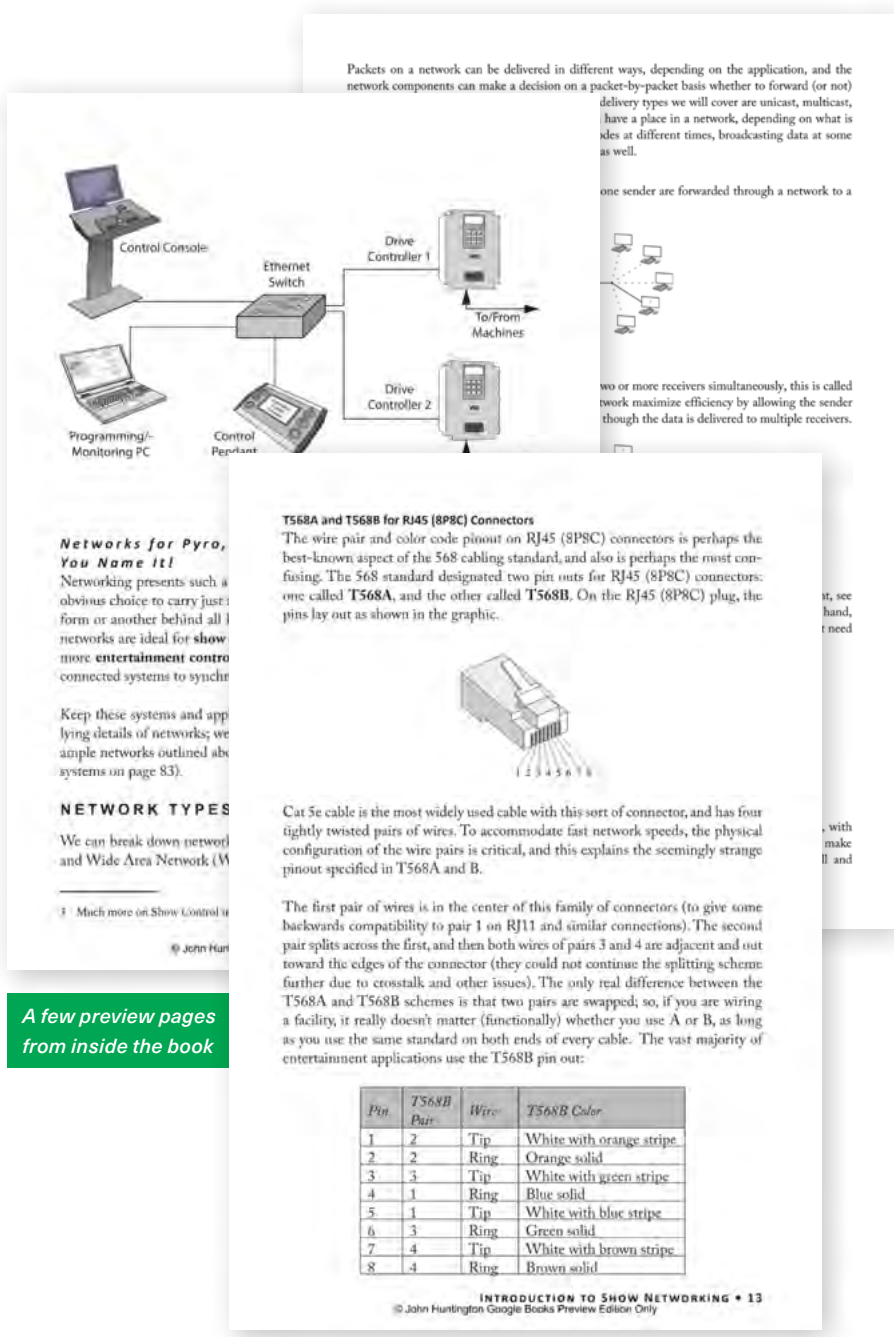
Usefulness: 8/10

It is a very useful book, especially if you deal with networking day in and day out. The primer is helpful and warrants re-reading until it becomes memory. The seven step network design and implementation process is worth writing out and using when you put together or maintain any network. This is a book worth owning and keeping.

Value for money: 9/10

They say price is what you pay, value is what you get. For a bit over \$40 you get a book tailor-made for our industry with a solid primer, a proven formula and best practices for setting up an Ethernet control network. A great investment indeed for both money paid and time spent digesting this book.

Total: 40/50 = 4 Stars



A few preview pages from inside the book

About the Author

A trusted expert, John Huntington draws on more than three decades of experience in the field and classroom to clearly explain what goes on behind the scenes, bringing bold performances to life in real-world settings. Huntington has worked on live shows, feature films, concerts, and installations with major companies and venues throughout the entertainment industry. Huntington is a professor at New York City College of Technology/CUNY ("City Tech").



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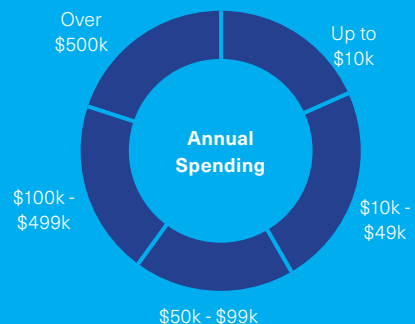
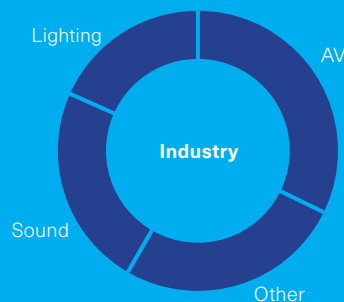
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ACME AECO 5



At Krank'd, we have a large inventory of profile lights. With our company focussed on theatrical lighting, they are one of our core products. We still have a large fleet of MAC 700 profiles but wanted some LED options. We were looking for something that was LED, but particularly something that was high CRI, having a nice profile and framing shutters. We demo-ed a number of fixtures, including a couple of different ACME products, and we settled on the AECO 5.

We both provide design services for our own theatrical works with producers, but also work very closely with lighting designers and

presenting companies. When choosing new stock, we have to keep in mind what these clients will best enjoy. With any product, there's always a certain apprehension with something that you don't know. So, we do a lot of groundwork with (especially local) designers to see what works best for them.

Krank'd started investing in ACME products back in 2018, starting with typical LED pars. And we've since grown from that all the way through from small format LED pars to zoom pars to bars to moving washes and now the moving profile fixtures.

The AECO 5 works best for us as a key light from front of house, with really pretty texture or gobos. The framing shutters, variable CTO and CMYK adjustments all make this a beautiful fixture for that purpose.

The colour mixing is excellent, and the high CRI engine really helps with natural pastel colours as well as the classic saturated colours that we all love. It is particularly good on the skin tones and not too green like some fixtures are. It produces quite a natural light. We do a lot of work in theatre, but it's important in dance as

well, when you're looking for nice skin tones.

The other main strength of the AECO 5 is the accuracy and repeatability of movement. We made them work very hard during our initial shoot out, putting a couple of objects in the room and recalling cues forwards and backwards. From that, we were very happy with the repeatability and accuracy of movement.

The shadows are in multiple planes. Like any moving lights, you've got to focus to which plane you would prefer. But we've certainly had no issues with it not being able to accurately recall particular pallets that we've stored in the console.

Concentrating on theatre work, we need all fixtures to be quiet. These units are no exception. We typically run them in their quiet mode in intimate venues, and people have been really happy that they don't generate a particularly high amount of fan noise. We generally go in with full rigs of ACME fixtures, using both the AECO 5s and washes. And we've yet to this day had any complaints about fan noise where we have had complaints about

other fixtures in the past.

The AECO 5 has somewhat of a uniquely designed road case: they actually travel laying down in their road cases rather than the typical topper kind of design that we're used to. But a lot of people prefer it: you can pick the unit up with two hands and handle it much easier.

The hook clamps are permanently attached to the fixture and then collapsed down when packing. So, you're not having to remove omega brackets or anything like that. It's really easy just to pick a fixture up out of a case and then either rig it on a bar or set it on the ground or change between the two. It also greatly reduces the 'oops, we left the clamps in the warehouse' factor.

These AECO 5 fixtures are very robust up to all of the expectations and all the requirements that we have for them.

Product Info: en.acmelighting.com/Info/productdetail/cat_id/265/id/5607

Distributor Australia: ULA Group
www.ulagroup.com or 1300 852 476

Distributor New Zealand: ULA Group
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About Wes Bluff

In 2006, Wes started working for production companies and then got into musical theatre touring. He also worked for venues and ended up at the then Gold Coast Art Centre, now Home of the Arts. Originally an audio operator, Wes moved into lighting and became a senior lighting tech at Gold Coast Arts Centre. He still freelances for Opera QLD, among other companies.

About Krank'd

Opening in 2017, Krank'd Audio Visual Productions is proudly based on the Gold Coast. They specialise in lighting design, supply, and production services for the performing arts industry. Their specialisation is theatre, concerts and events.

The Specs

450W LED engine and 120mm diameter front lens

Colour temperature: 6,000K

Total lumen output: up to 13,000lm

Colour rendering: Ra \geq 95, R9 \geq 90, R15 \geq 95, TLCI \geq 95, CCI:0-0.5G, TM-30RF: 91, TM-30Rg: 99

Linear CMY colour mixing

Variable CTO: 2700K-6000K

Static gobo wheel: 1 static gobo wheel with 8 gobos

Rotating gobo wheel: 1 rotating gobo wheel with 7 gobos

Colour wheel: 1 colour wheel with 6 colours

Prisms: 1 4-facet prism rotatable in either direction

Beam angle: 6.5°-54°

Frost: 2 different frost filters to create wash effects. Can be used independently and overlaid

Four fast and smooth framing shutters; The position and the angle of each shutter blade can be controlled individually. Each shutter blade can block light completely. The framing module can rotate at \pm 45 degrees

Flicker free operation





CLAYPAKY

AROLLA

PROFILE MP

The Claypaky Arolla Profile MP lays claim to being the smallest and lightest moving head fixture available in its class. It is a moving head profile with a 470W White LED engine. It weighs 25kg and has dimensions of 250mm(W) x 360mm(L) x 593mm(H). Maximum power consumption is 740W, meaning you could get three to a circuit.

Claypaky is an Italian company with research and development, manufacturing and all other functions located in Bergamo, Italy. You may be familiar with the Sharpy, Axcor, K-Eye/B-Eye or the Mythos - all made by Claypaky.

They were originally founded in 1976. Their founder, Pasquale 'Paky' Quadri was an innovative trail blazer who drove the creative and entrepreneurial vision for the company. When he passed away in 2014 the company was acquired by Osram, one of the worlds leading light producers. In 2023, Claypaky was sold to Arri. Although they make lights (think the Arri Skypanel range) they are best known as manufacturers of motion picture film equipment. Building a more compact light with a larger frontal lens and more than a conscious effort to address noise levels suggests a more TV and film-friendly line up may feature in the coming years.

One thing that really stood out for me when testing it was how bright it was for such a small fixture, as well as its zoom range. We tested it next to a much larger LED moving head profile and found the Arolla to be noticeably brighter, at least to the eye anyway. Something that piqued my curiosity was the fact that the

light had 5 different fan speed modes. Simply having the option of a quiet mode seems good enough, but the fact that this has five figures to be a real nod towards the film/TV side of things - an area in which parent company Arri has a significant foothold.

The Arolla has 5 different fan noise modes

1. Theatre fan mode: 40.6 dBA
2. SLN fan mode: 40.6 dBA
3. Standard fan mode: 46.8 dBA
4. Auto fan mode: 48.4 dBA
5. RNR fan mode: 48.7 dBA

The Light's Construction

It's a sleek well-proportioned light that looks 'finished'. Claypaky have developed a reputation for building tasteful looking fixtures, the Arolla is no exception. It would seem as though how the light looks is just as important as how it performs.

One of the selling features for the light is something called the 'eswap'. Essentially it allows you to interchange the framing module of the profile version of the Arolla with the gobo module of the spot. While this isn't the first modular light where its possible for the framing module to be swapped with the gobo module (think Viper Profile/Viper Performance from 10 plus years back), but there is a

difference. These modules can be swapped over, the fixture's electronics can recognise and configure the fixture to operate with the module automatically. This means you don't have to make any changes to the patch or to the menu of the light. I personally have not had a chance to do this swap first hand but on paper (reading the instruction manual) and the instructional video, it seems pretty straight forward. There are lights out there where it is harder to change the gobos, let alone the whole gobo module.

Optics, Colour and Brightness

The 470W White LED engine is a native 6000K. The open white is a very crisp, clean white with a flat even field. With 6000K being closer to natural daylight it gives a much more natural look, effortlessly, for camera and in person.

Optics have been a focal point in the development of the Arolla and it shows. The Arolla boasts a 6 to 50 degree zoom range which maintains intensity as you zoom out, a CMY colour mixing system that produces deep, rich colours (including deep red), a seven-colour colour wheel that includes an 88+ CRI enhancement filter and linear CTO.

The Arolla is a 25kg light producing 22,000 plus lumens. This gives you about 880 lumens per kilogram of fixture.

There are always interesting bits to be found in the specs and the user manuals of new lights. Deep in the Arolla specs, it lists the heat dissipation for the light; something not seen too frequently.

Total heat dissipation for the Arolla: 2527 BTU/hr \pm 10% / 2664 kJ/hr \pm 10%

BTU stands for British Thermal Units. It's a unit of heat measurement, representing the amount of energy required to raise the temperature of one pound of water by one degree Fahrenheit.

Kilojoules per hour (kJ/hr) is a unit of energy transfer rate. It quantifies the amount of energy equivalent to 1 kilojoule being output in an hour.

Will heat dissipation be a relevant metric when it comes to 'wasted energy' or efficiency in the future? Could it perhaps be harnessed and stored?

Applications and Features

The Arolla Profile MP comes with one rotating wheel with 7 gobos. There is minimal loss of intensity when gobos are dropped in. It also contains a framing module with 4 shutters and the ability to do a full blackout with each blade individually, a feature that can't be understated from an operating perspective. It also features a rotating animation wheel and a four-facet rotating prism.

It has the option for four different dimming curves, a mechanical iris and variable frost.

Control and Programming

Control protocol options include: DMX, Art-Net, RDM and sACN. It can only be run in one control mode which takes up a parameter footprint of 37 channels. It takes 5 pin DMX XLR in/out as well as ethernet RJ45 in and uses a trueCON for power (powerCON TRUE1). The single personality makes it easier to patch and program.

Pan and tilt range is respectable at 540° for pan and 270° for tilt. Both are 16 bit controllable with 24 bit digital dimming.



Verdict

Pound for pound it's a very impressive light that punches well above its weight. It has a great zoom range, it's bright, the shutter kit does what a shutter kit is supposed to do (full blackout with a single blade) and everything it does, it does really well. The open white is very crisp and it has good gobos. It can get a little iffy around the edges if you really push it though. Put a gobo in, pick a colour, zoom it all the way out, focus it and then set a slow gobo rotate and a slow large ballyhoo it will start to look a little clunky. Use it well within its parameters and it is a fantastic light you can use in just about any (indoor) setting.

Although originally released before the latest ownership change, the Arolla could give us a hint as to the future direction of Claypaky.

The Specs

Light Source Type

470W white LED engine

CRI: 70+ with selectable filter for typical CRI value up to 90

Colour temperature: 6,000K

LED life expectancy: 40,000hrs

Photometric Data

Zoom range: 6.2°- 48.8°

22,054 Lumen output

Front lens diameter: 120mm

Control And Connections

Personalities: single mode with 37 control channels

Control protocols: DMX, Art-Net, RDM, sACN

DMX and RDM connectors: locking 5 pin XLR IN/OUT

Ethernet port: RJ45 IN

Power connector: powerCON TRUE1

Built In Web Server

Dynamic Effects

Colours: linear CMY colour mixing, linear CTO, fixed colour wheel with 7 dichroic colours including high CRI filter

Gobos: 1 rotating gobo wheel with 7 HD indexable and replaceable gobos

Framing system: 4 blades with +/- 60° rotation of the full system

Frost: linear heavy frost 5° for wash effect

Aluminium animation wheel with continuous rotation in both directions at variable speed

4 facet prism with rotation in both directions at variable speed

Iris: motorised with variable pulse and random effects

Movement: Tilt: 270° - 16bit, Pan: 540° - 16bit

Accuracy: resolution \pm 0.17° (Range 0.54°)

Dimensions

Weight: 25kg

250x360mm (base dimension) - 593mm with vertical head (h)

AYRTON ZONDA 3 FX

"A really handy fixture to do anything you want to."



Sightline is always looking to improve our inventory. In 2023, we had been looking for a smallish lighting fixture that was multi-function, and tested a whole heap of different units. Our director Joe Murray was keen on the bigger Zonda 9 but I couldn't really justify the expense at that time. It seemed like a lot of money for just a couple of LEDs pointing at a screen.

We've been using Mac Aura's as our go-to small light but they were getting old and really needed a replacement. We like to do different ideas for sets and looks, so a small versatile unit is a fairly quick way to just chuck something onstage and have it look different.

We investigated many similar fixtures and there are a lot available but only one ticked every box. Basically, the Zonda 3 FX is the only one that can do everything I want it to do.

I wanted great zoom, great colour, high speed and pixel control of everything. It also needed to just look good onstage as eye candy. I really like the look of the front - I think it's very unique. I generally like to have them somewhere they are seen. Even if they are on the rear truss doing a backlight, you can still - when they are not doing a stage wash - have them doing something nice and pretty and actually be good to look at.

The Zonda 3 FXs really come into their own when you use them in multiples. People have seen every light under the sun these days so a unique new thing that we can do is pixel mapping with lots of fixtures. The pixel definition of these units is awesome. When you get a bunch of them together and they are mapped properly, you can tell it meshes seamlessly between all the fixtures. It looks pretty impressive, to be honest.

On paper, they may not seem that bright (at 5200 lumens) but every manufacturer seems to run a different testing routine. In person, they are super bright. I've had them running next to Auroras and these 3 FX seem twice as intense.

Colour reproduction is really good too. Even single colour beams are very bright. However, it only has a CRI of 86, so it's not a unit that I

would use when there are cameras involved.

Three DMX modes are handy and we sometimes use the 79 channel one for pixel map jobs. I've made a map of every parameter for the MA console and the liquid effect for the 3 FX takes a full universe of 415 channels, so it's easier to use Mode3 DMX to achieve the same thing. I've been using a software program called MadMapper that lets me basically map out where the fixtures are, overlay video feeds and play them really quickly. This does need ARTNet support, so you require both DMX and CAT5 runs to each unit if you want liquid effects.

The Zonda 3 FX are small but robust and seem fairly heavy for their size. But the motors must be pretty good, because they are very fast and responsive. The 3 FX also come with an arm-locking feature to stop them spinning around when you are rigging or packing them away.

There is a silent mode available, and I tested it on a bar show one night: they ran fine without overheating.

My big gripe is the use of a jog wheel for navigating menu settings. I much prefer discrete buttons, but this wheel works ok for what it is.



About Steven Hill

Steven originally trained as an accountant. After seven long years he hit the wall. "It was terrible. I don't recommend it to anyone. It was no fun." After helping a friend install a car stereo, he was encouraged to ask for a job at Microhire. He got the job, then moved to Sightline as their second ever employee and has been there ever since. After starting with audio, he now prefers lights and is responsible for the company's bright and shiny things

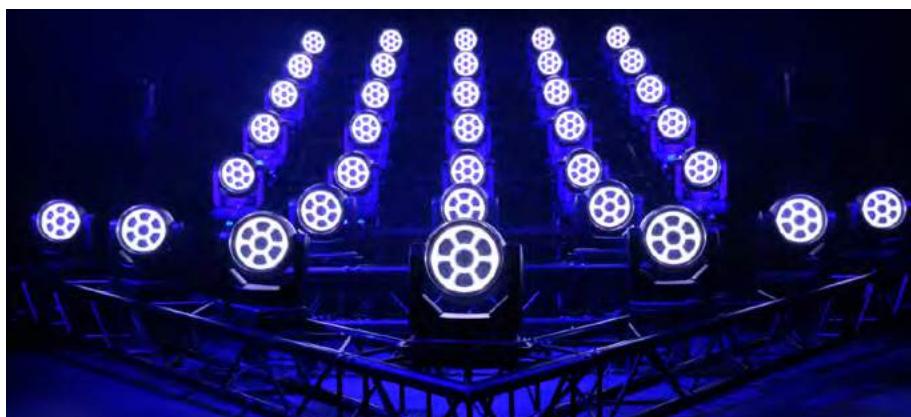
About Sightline

Sightline is a technical production company. We take care of all the production - whatever it may be - from start to finish. We help our clients pretty in depth with whatever they need. Obviously, we do the technical stuff, but we also like to think outside the box a lot and just be unique. Our directors are Adriano Candeloro and Joe Murray.

Product Info:
www.ayrton.eu/produit/zonda-3-fx/

Distributor Australia: Show Technology
www.showtech.com.au or (02) 9748 1122

Distributor New Zealand: Show Technology
www.showtech.com.au/homenz/
 or (09) 869 3293



The Specs

Optics:

2 elements 14:1 zoom high-resolution optic system

Beam aperture: 4° to 56°

Light Source:

7 x 1,000 lumens RGBW High-Power LED sources

Movement:

High-resolution stepper motors operated via microprocessors ensure extreme accuracy and smooth movements

Pan and Tilt automatic repositioning

Moving-head range: infinite pan & tilt rotation

Colours:

Sophisticated 4 colours RGBW mixed, reaching Colour Rendering Index of 86

Effects:

2D & 3D graphical effects capabilities

Effects can be coupled with beam, wash or matrix applications

Built-in pattern effects with speed and fade controls for scenic applications

Individual control of each pixel

LiquidEffect

Other:

Weight: 11.1kg

Power: 350W maximum

Summary

The Zonda FX 3 is versatile enough that it can do all the fancy things that some lights can do and some that other lights can't, and these basically knocked everything else out of the water. We use them on a lot of jobs now.

I would still love an even smaller fixture - maybe something that you can actually hold in your hand, with one LED that's bright enough. You could chuck up a heap of them. If anyone wants to make a battery powered and wireless one, I would probably buy 100 of them straight away.

In the meantime, I'll keep leaning on the excellent support from Show Technology and using plenty of Zonda 3 FX while I'm waiting for them to come up with the ultimate small universal fixture.



TO RTFM OR NOT TO RTFM

That is the question for the tech-obsessed

There are two main schools of thought when unboxing and installing a new piece of equipment...

School 1 says: empty everything out of the box, identify what each component is, where it likely fits and get stuck into it.

School 2 says: also empty everything out of the box, but to find the instructions and read them. Before anything else! Check the manifest (to ensure that you have indeed been delivered every key widget / component as promised on the invoice). Then, RTFM (Read The F***** Manual). Or, at the very least, skim the opening pages for red flags. Only once you are familiar with manufacturer recommendations do you start racking gear and wiring up.

Those that do RTFM, would have seen the *Warning* sheet on top of the pack and

duly followed directions. Those that see the supplied documentation as little more than packing material, just jump right in. Sometimes, this is a win for speed, and they are on to the next task pronto. Other times, it means halting what they are doing, uninstalling the gear, repackaging it, arranging an RMA and shipping it out for repair/replacement. Which drags the whole job back days or weeks.

Just do it

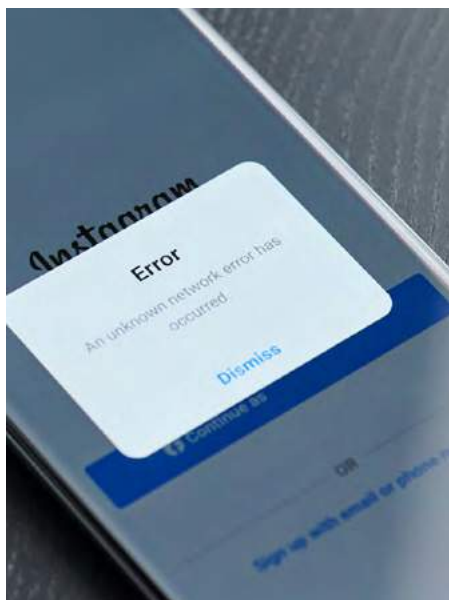
Diving straight in mostly works when it's gear you have used before. You already know the quirks of that unit and what needs doing to get it singing. This can save a heap of site time.

This approach can also encourage observation and analytical skills. When all you've got is a pile of black boxes and wires, it takes some mental gymnastics to unscramble the puzzle. Do it often enough, and you can solve most problems.

The dilemma with this tactic is when it doesn't work first (second or third) go. This can then turn into a major time suck, losing far more hours in trouble shooting than a quick 10 minutes of reading could have avoided.

When you rush in with haste, it's easy to overlook missing or wrong components. Most AV manufacturers are diligent with their packing and shipping, but mistakes happen. I've opened two identically labelled boxes to find different items inside before. Maybe they forgot a dongle, or adaptor plate or some such thing. However it happened, you are now at risk of delay.

As you unpack, a quick check of the shipping manifest versus site schematic can avoid many of these hassles. If you find an anomaly, call your PM asap and they may even be able to get a rep to drop the missing parts straight to site while you get on with the rest of your day.



At worst, your haste may encourage magic smoke generation. As we all know, once released, this genie cannot go back into the bottle. Encouraging its presence will only create grief for you with the boss. They are the one who will have to order a replacement (at their cost) and reschedule your time to get back and reinstall (also at their cost). I've been there (on both sides) and it is embarrassing at the very least.

Taking time to read the instructions

The careful school is slow and steady - kind of like a snail vs the rabbit above. This unhurried method (mostly) eliminates any risk of frying gear on boot up. It promotes a thorough understanding of any equipment being deployed, enabling the installer to get the best out of components in the system. Sometimes, you might even uncover a feature that you, or the system designer, were not aware of. There are major brownie points on offer when this occurs.

Yes, it does take longer to go over the paperwork up front. I know a lot of otherwise very good site techs who cannot stand reading anything beyond the sports section of the newspaper. When I've had these folk on my crew, I read the instructions for them and let them know any crucial warnings or pitfalls before they could occur.

From my experience, RTFM generally takes less time than trying to solve a mistake that could have been avoided with a few minutes of preparation.

Hybrid approach

Although cautious, I still have a foot in both camps. I know the value in RTFM but get frustrated by the time it can take. Nowadays, I tend to skim the manual and look for any major hazards to avoid. Bright highlighters are helpful here. After that, I jump right in and start plugging stuff together. As soon as I hit the first roadblock, I then sit down with the book of instructions and dive a little more in depth.

This approach comes from combined experience of both installing myself and supporting installers out in the field. I know what it's like to have time pressure on site, the boss wanting you done TODAY! and the end client hovering around, wondering aloud if they can have some more speakers over here, another screen over there or any other number of scope blowout temptations.

When an installer is stuck on site with gear that doesn't seem to work, it is an awful feeling. Particularly when the person paying for this system is in your face asking you why it doesn't work, when you have no clue why. At this point, look confident, tell them that you are resolving an air-gap-rectification issue and get on the phone to tech support...

...who hopefully answers with empathy. From the support end, it is an easy trap to condescend and talk down to the poor tech

onsite. You may see this exact issue every other day and know the insta-fix backwards. But the tech in the field, who only installs your gear once in a blue moon, requires supporting. (That is why it is called 'technical support' after all.) They don't necessarily know that firmware XYZ_v123.4 needs to be installed before connecting to a network or it all goes pear shaped. A good tech support person understands this and shows mercy as they calmly outline the fix.

The 2020s method

Many people now skip the manual altogether and go straight to YouTube. Someone has surely already done what you are about to do. In most cases, this is probably true but if you brick the unit while following @technerd69's hand-baked instructions, good luck getting a warranty honoured.

Good manuals are succinct, well indexed and easy to understand. These beasts are rare. Most likely, what you get will be written by engineers (as a rule: great technicians but poor communicators), translated through several languages and missing critical up to date information. Even so, a few minutes of light reading can save hours of headaches later. If nothing else, you may get to begin the day with some good belly laughs over the ineptitude of the Chinglish mangling, toss the manual back in the box and forge ahead regardless.



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Snippets from the archives of a bygone era



Dave White (R) with Doug Murray (centre) and the Triple M Breakfast Show crew

the MIGHTY WHITEY

Dave White's Journey to the Stars

In my search for the 2SM radio announcer who gave the Ted Mulry Gang their name, legendary breakfast announcer Ian MacRae slipped me the phone number of former DJ and 2SM Program Director, Dave White. Dave couldn't confirm who the mystery DJ was; however, after chatting with him for a short time, I was transported to another world, where I learned about his amazing journey, which led him to interview and hobnob with some of the biggest stars and celebrities in the world.

When Dave White arrived at 2SM in 1969, change was in the air. Former DJ and 2SM Good Guy, Rod Muir, was the newly appointed Program Director, and he'd thrown down the gauntlet to Sydney's highest-rating music station, 2UW.

"Rod Muir came in with the 'more music' format and the second wave of Good Guys. He put me on the midnight-to-dawn shift for

my first gig with 2SM. It was quite intimidating. Rod sucks the oxygen out of any room he walks into, and there he was with his cowboy boots on and his feet up on the table, watching me through the glass window from the other studio."

"Then Macca (Ian MacRae) would come in and take over for the breakfast shift. Once radio is in your blood and you've finished your shift, you're on a high. So you listen to the next shift, particularly a guy like Ian MacRae, who was a very funny man. Eventually, the second wave of Good Guys took 2SM to the number one rating spot," said White.

Dave White went on to become 2SM's Program Director, and he also worked for Digamae, which was a radio consultancy company conceived by Rod Muir. White ran the concert division, which dealt with concert promotions throughout Australia. A flow of high-profile interviews followed.

"I loved the interviewing side, which led me from rock stars to documentaries, to specials about the Middle East, to the environment, and into politics. It was a springboard from one form of interview to another."

"When Alice Cooper toured Australia, we flew to Perth to do an interview. He was an amazing guy; I walked into his hotel room and the entire wall was stacked with Budweiser beer, and he insisted we drink a couple before doing the interview," said White.

During the 1970s, Muhammad Ali enjoyed the same star status as rock stars and movie stars, and Dave White conceived a plan to interview the world heavyweight champion.

"At the time, he (Ali) was going to fight the 'Thrilla in Manila' (1975: Ali vs. Frazier III), and I thought it would be great to get an interview.

I thought I'd try a different approach, get his opinion on his meeting with The Beatles, and skew towards the likes of the music audiences. I called his hotel and asked for Angelo Dundee, and he picked up the phone. I said, 'I'm calling from Sydney; we know you're up there for the big fight, but I want to talk to Muhammed about what he loves in music and about his meeting with The Beatles.' Dundee called Muhammed Ali to the phone, and it blew me away. He was an absolute gentleman. We talked at length about The Beatles, about his love of Motown, and soul, and it was just enormous. That interview was played back on 2SM interspersed with the music that Ali had talked about," said White.

Dave White was known to use other innovative tactics to get high-profile interviews. When Rod Stewart and The Faces toured Australia in 1974, knowing Stewart's passion for beer and soccer, White prepared a wheelbarrow filled with beer and soccer balls, which he wheeled into Stewart's radio press conference. "We walked into the press conference, and he (Stewart) looked across and said, 'I've got to talk to these guys.'"



Dave White with Muhammad Ali

The list of stars that Dave White interviewed during the 1970s reads like a celebrity who's who. He flew around the world to interview both rock 'n' roll and cinematic stars including Barbara Streisand, Nick Nolte, and Anthony Quinn. And some twenty years later, as the news anchor on the 2Day FM morning show with Wendy Harmer and Peter Moon, he would be firing questions at Jack Nicholson. Here, White does his impression of Jack Nicholson's opening comment to the team. "They tell me you're the crazy guys."

Other rock 'n' roll superstars that White met and interviewed included Bruce Springsteen, The Rolling Stones, John Lennon, George Harrison, Led Zeppelin, Elton John, Harry Chapin, David Crosby, Lou Reed, The Doobie Brothers, Fleetwood Mac, Steve Miller, 10CC, Grace Slick, Eddie Money, The Moody Blues, and Meatloaf.

"Barry Chapman and I were in New York (1977), and there was a totally unknown band called Meatloaf. Sony Music, or CBS, as it was known then, said, 'Do you want to go out and see this guy on Long Island?' They got us a limo and we went out there and saw Meatloaf perform, and it blew us out the back door. It was one of the most amazing concerts I have ever seen. It was at the time when the *Bat Out Of Hell* album was ready to go, and you could just hear that the songs were hits. So, we formed a great relationship with Jim Steinman (songwriter on *Bat Out Of Hell*) and Meatloaf, and we broke the band in Australia, which was the first market in the world to break Meatloaf globally," said White.

White also toured with the Rolling Stones. "I met Mick Jagger on a number of occasions. We toured with the Stones; we spent a lot of time with them; they were incredible guys, and we had amazing access to them."

In the early 80s, White left 2SM to join FM radio station Triple M, where he initially worked the drive-time shift. Here, he reconnected with Rod Muir, who was the Executive Director, and he connected with Doug Mulray, whose breakfast program was dominating the airwaves.

"Wherever Doug was, he was the centre of attention; he was incredibly witty, and he would take over the room." But White felt that the news on Triple M didn't complement the contemporary style of music or comedy that radiated out of the station. "It almost felt like the ABC," he said. Eventually, Triple M appointed Dave White as the newsreader for the breakfast show with Doug Mulray. "It was a more conversational style of news. Mulray loved it, and from that point on, it changed the direction of news on the station," said White.

It was Mulray who gave Dave White his nickname, The Mighty Whitey, and the synergy of the new style of news and Uncle Doug's zany breakfast show blended like Arabica coffee, albeit with Mulray's comedic interjections during news broadcasts. "I never knew what was coming, and you'd just let it fly and hold onto that kite as long as you could."

Mulray's pranks weren't restricted to the confines of the Triple M on-air studios. In 1987, Dave White hosted a Channel Ten music show called *Nightshift*. "Mulray actually came in at one stage and sawed the desk in half; he was always trying to be outrageous," said White.



Dave White with Jack Nicholson and the 2Day Morning Crew



Dave White with Meatloaf



Dave White with Mick Jagger



Barry Chapman, Harry Chapin, Dave White



Led Zeppelin and the Boeing 720 Starship

Eventually, Triple M topped the ratings as the number-one Sydney radio station. "The first time we hit number one at Triple M, Rod Muir went out, and as the story goes, bought up all the champagne in Bondi Junction. He then opened up the boardroom and announced, 'It's in there; we're number one. Come in and get some.'"

Dave White had now worked for two of the top-ranked stations in their heyday, 2SM and Triple M.

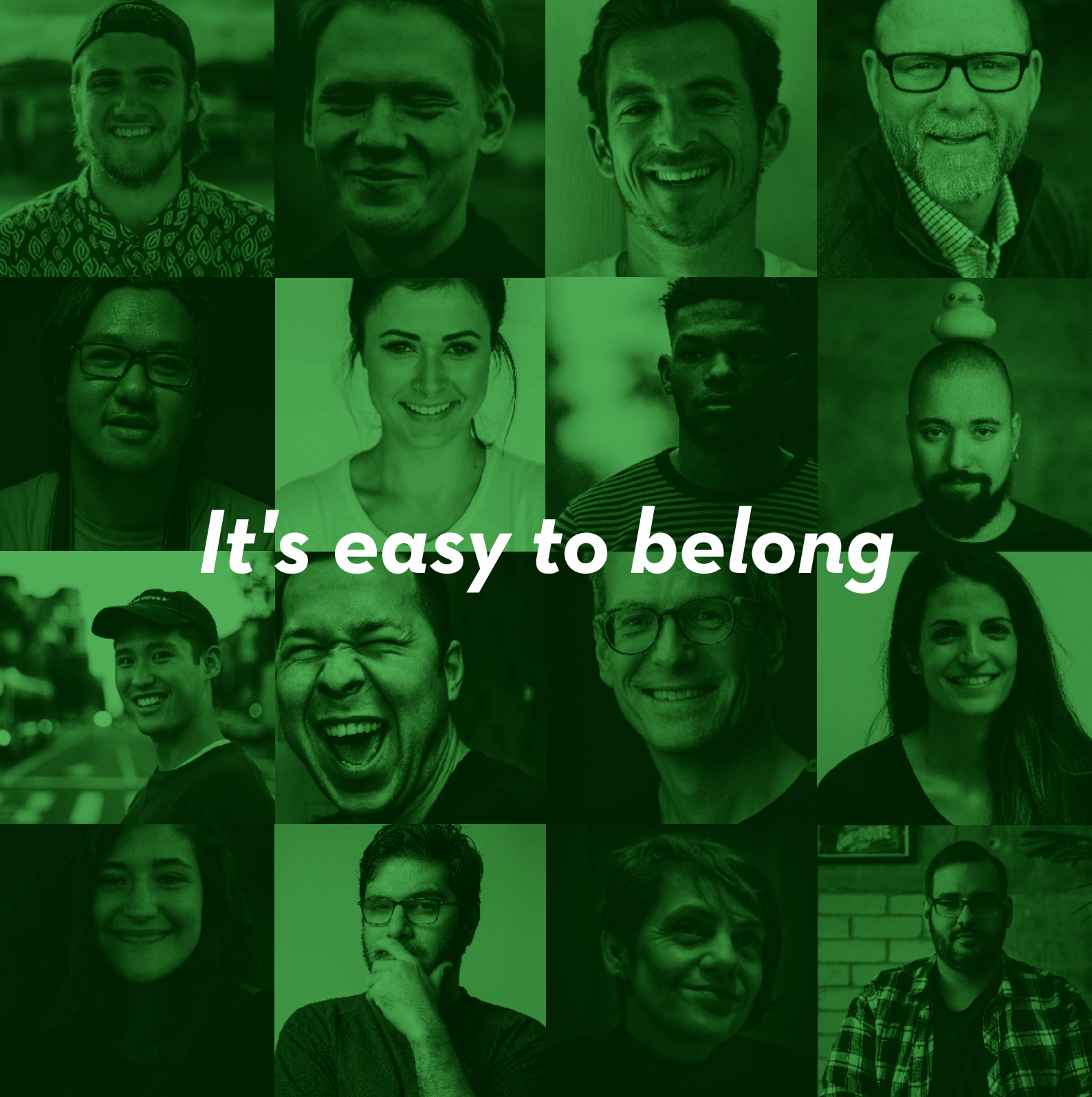
"You can compare different eras, different comedy styles, cultures, everything. Macca (Ian MacRae, 2SM) was brilliant at the time, and then, with the introduction of FM, Mulray came along and made it hilarious; I used to work with him every morning as the news presenter. Anyone who can make you laugh at 3:30 in the morning has got to be a bit of a genius, as far as I'm concerned. Mulray pushed the envelope and did some incredibly risqué things. There was none of this cancel culture: 'I'm offended by everything you say routine.' People were open to what Macca and 'Mullos' were pushing, and it worked," said White.

Reflecting on Dave White's career in radio announcing, program directing, news anchoring, and celebrity interviews, I asked him if there was a standout event in his career. He nominated his journey with Led Zeppelin in their Starship, which was a former United Airlines Boeing 720 passenger jet that flew him and Barry Chapman, along with the band and their entourage, to Zeppelin's 1977 concert in Baltimore.

"When we initially went to the Plaza Hotel (New York), we were having a drink at the bar, and Robert Plant was across the other side. We'd met Led Zeppelin in Sydney at 2SM Studios in 1971, and we'd gotten along pretty well. Robert Plant has a great memory; he looked across at me, and we waved, and he invited us to come across and join them. We started talking, and Peter Grant, the manager, said, 'Well, if you're doing interviews, you've really got to come and see the band play.'"

White and Chapman were told to be out in front of the Plaza Hotel that evening. Thousands of Zeppelin fans, held back by NYPD barriers, surrounded the hotel. A long line of black limousines waited for the Zeppelin entourage. Peter Grant bundled them into one of the limousines, where they were seated beside Welsh singer-songwriter Dave Edmonds for the trip to the airport.

"We came around a corner in the limo, and there was this plane with Led Zeppelin painted on it. I had to pinch myself; we both did! Being invited to fly with them to a gig in Baltimore on the Led Zeppelin Starship, being at the gig, and seeing the concert was unbelievable," said White.



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