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THE ARTISTIC ISSUE

EXPO

INTEGRATE

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All the gear from Integrate 2024.
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- / Firelight 2024
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Monumental Launch for Robe iBOLTS in France

The Newline Interactive FLEX screen

OA Reimagines The Ring Cycle with BlackTrax

Painte-Ing Gigant, Robe Style



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NAS announces its exclusive distribution of AtlasIED products in Australia and New Zealand



NAS, one of Australia and New Zealand's leading distributors of world-class professional audio and visual brands focused on commercial installation and production markets, is now the exclusive distributor for AtlasIED products on both sides of the Tasman.

"AtlasIED has been of great interest to NAS for some time," said Brad Kivela, Business and Product Manager from NAS.

"We've been watching the development of new innovative products and a large investment in personnel over the last 12 to 18 months. We see clear product roadmaps and ambition from all the AtlasIED team to be the best and deliver the best products to market."

"NAS is excited to be a part of the AtlasIED story in Australia and New Zealand. This new partnership enables our customers to access market-leading DSP, Speaker, Amplification, Sound Masking, Security and Mass Transport products. We are all proud here at NAS to represent such a well-respected brand and look forward to delivering AtlasIED products and solutions to our customers."

AtlasIED's Executive Vice President, Matt Czyzewski, shares the same sentiment.

"Supporting the commercial AV industries in Australia and New Zealand is a significant focus for us. Partnering with NAS – a widely renowned and deeply connected distributor – will enable us to reach all facets of the industry from specifiers to integrators and end users. We're committed to continuous growth that benefits our worldwide customer base, and we look forward to this partnership, which will catapult us further in that direction."



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FIRELIGHT FESTIVAL

In late June, as Melbourne hunkered down for a bitterly cold winter, the Harry the Hirer Productions (HtH) team rolled out its third Firelight Festival on one of the most exposed and unforgiving sites in the city: the Docklands Precinct.

Firelight is Melbourne's epic winter festival with fire pits, mesmerising light shows, live music, and pop-up foodie feasts all themed around fire, winter, and family fun. The community festival is organised by the City of Melbourne and aims to bring people out into the Docklands Precinct during the winter. Firelight includes three main entertainment stages along with a small DJ Stage, roving performers, flame and lighting installations, site-wide music

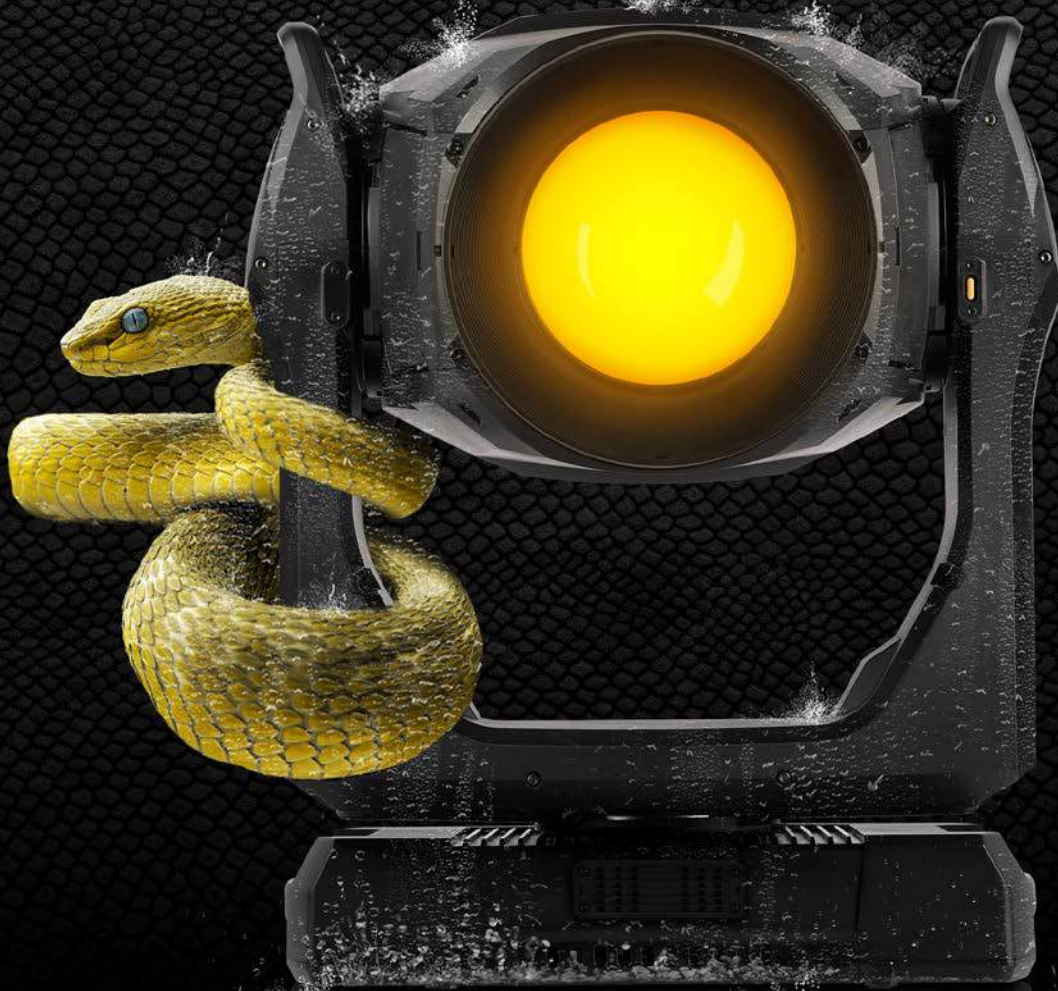
(provided by Optical Audio Productions), and plenty of winter foods on offer.

For the third year, Marcus Pugh of HtH has been tasked with lighting the event. "The sheer size of Firelight makes it a daunting proposition. It can take 45 minutes just to walk from one end of the site to the other, so my push bike gets a good workout during bump-in every year," commented Marcus when quizzed on the show. "Much of the

design is based around atmospheric site lighting, which takes a fair bit of logistics given the size of the area we light. We create the site lighting with strategically placed lighting towers with IP65 lighting (Chauvet Storm Wash Beams and Outcast 2s) in colours that relate to the themes of warmth, fire, and the industrial history of the Docklands. Through much experimentation of lighting control, we use a combination of fibre-optic cabling and wireless DMX."

Martin

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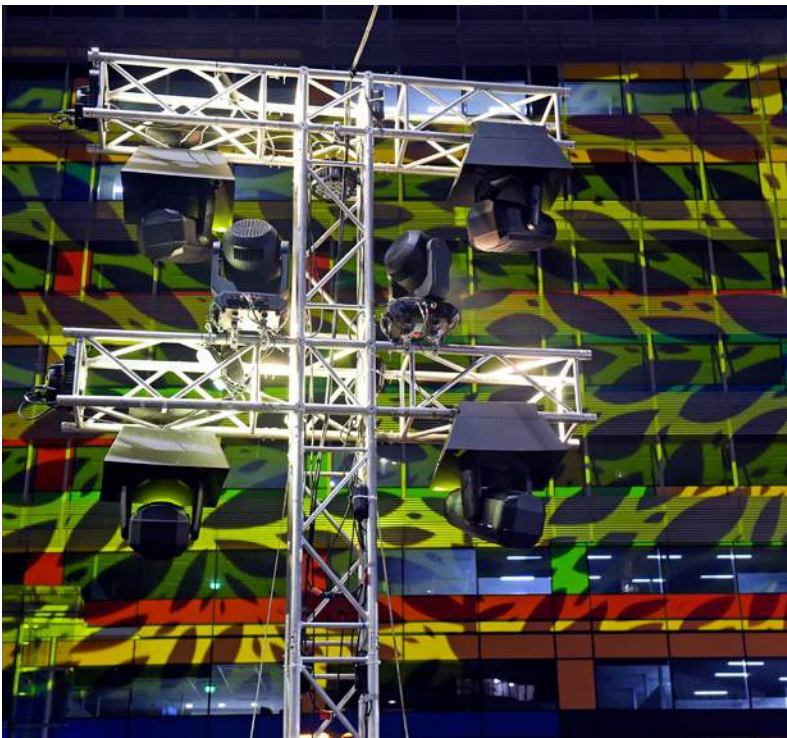
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SHOW
TECHNOLOGY

HtH updates and changes the lighting each year, bolstered by its ever-growing stock of premium lighting and rigging equipment. The 'hero-piece' lighting gear this year was HtH's new GLP JDC2 IPs. "These new JDC2s kick some major arse; they've got all the features we've come to love from the original JDC1s, plus so much more." Marcus enthused. "The new IP65 casing is a huge bonus for a gig like Firelight. The flexibility in controlling the JDC2 panels without burning up heaps of parameters makes these perfect for busking live music, especially when there are eight-plus acts each night. I'm a huge fan of the new Digi FX and the ability to run NDI video feeds directly into the units. Luckily, ShowTools managed to get these delivered to Melbourne just in time for this show."

Firelight 2024 allowed Marcus to debut HtH's new 'Lumi Dawg' eye candy range of fittings.





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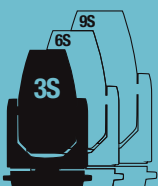
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"The new 'Lumi Dawg' range worked well upstage of the bands and was an easy choice for creating a flexible floor package backdrop on each of the stages," he said.

HtH also utilised their new stock of IP65 UV floods, with many of the installations for this year's Firelight based around UV lighting, with UV-treated playground equipment in the shape of giant native Australian animals, UV face-painting and a UV-themed installation called 'Morphology' from the local art collective, the indirect Object. Marcus and the HtH team worked with the indirect Object and engineers to create massive truss arches to hold hundreds of coloured UV Tubes that made up Morphology.





Marcus Pugh

Marcus commented, "I love lighting this show; it throws up many challenges each year, and I enjoy overcoming them with a mix of cutting-edge new tech and a few old-school solutions. For example, we use gels to colour the streetlights but we use a CNC machine to cut them into a complex shape that fits well over the streetlight fittings. Firelight is well received each year, and I love seeing the community embrace the event despite the less-than-desirable weather!"

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Focal Partners with Group Technologies for Professional Audio

Group Technologies Australasia has been appointed the new exclusive Australian distributor of French studio monitor manufacturer, Focal.

Based in Saint-Étienne, Focal has been developing high-fidelity audio systems since 1979. Recognised worldwide for its acoustic expertise, consistent innovation and exclusive engineering developments, Focal systems have had a presence in studios around the world for decades, including recent solutions such as Alpha Evo, Shape, ST6 and SM6 series, which are popular for their unrivalled transparency and sonic precision.

"We are pleased to announce the signing of a strategic partnership between ourselves and Group Technologies, a renowned distributor of cutting-edge technological products and solutions," stated Vincent Moreuille, Pro Audio Head of Global Export Sales at Focal.

"Through this collaboration, Group Technologies will exclusively distribute Focal Professional products in both Australia and New Zealand," he added. "This partnership will enable Focal to expand its market presence and better meet customer needs, by providing more direct access to its innovative and high-quality products. We are delighted to partner with GT, whose expertise and deep market knowledge are unparalleled. Together, we are confident that we can offer our customers an exceptional experience and strengthen our market position."

Lance Harrison, Retail Brands Manager at Group Technologies echoed Vincent's enthusiasm. "We are delighted to be working with the team at Focal. Their range of products embody the peak of French professional studio monitor and headphone design. We look forward to delivering unmatched audio excellence together, for both enthusiasts and professionals alike, across the Australian and New Zealand markets."

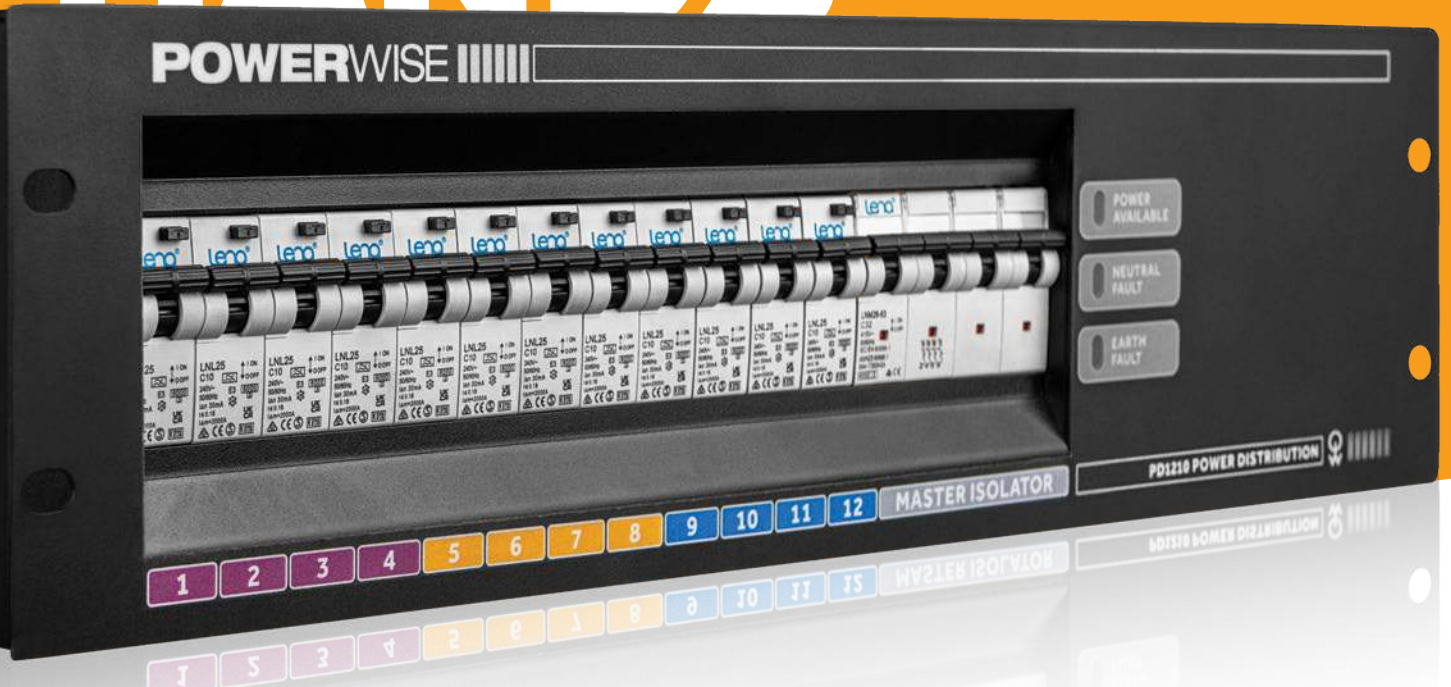
With over four decades of engineering expertise, including the training of its teams in rare and specific techniques in design, manufacturing, cabinetmaking and testing, Focal has pushed research into loudspeakers, materials and unique processes to continuously improve sound reproduction. Emblematic of the manufacturer's commitment to quality, 2024 saw the Focal brand become a member of the prestigious Comité Colbert, which brings together over 90 French luxury brands, including Chanel, Cartier, Dior, Hermès and Baccarat.

Anthony Touma, General Manager, Group Technologies added: "We are very excited to partner with Focal, a manufacturer with a rich history in Pro Audio and a distinct flair within the studio monitor space. Solutions from Focal will be right at home amongst our portfolio, as their elite approach to manufacturing reflects GT's own emphasis on brands that deliver world-leading quality."



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ROCKING THE OUTBACK



FROM THE START TO THE LIVING END

Outback festival off to an explosive start as thousands descend on Mundi Mundi Plains

The iconic outback landscape beyond Silverton, NSW transformed into a musical haven in mid August when 14,000 festival goers journeyed to Broken Hill for the Mundi Mundi Bash – outback Australia's biggest ever live music event.

Running from 15-17 August, the family and dog-friendly Mundi Mundi Bash was a sold-out event and its biggest iteration ever staged.

Day one set a high bar with an electrifying performance from legendary headliners The Living End. The trio's dynamic showmanship

and punk rock flair ignited the audience, making the desert night come alive. Fans were treated to a mix of new songs and beloved anthems like 'Prisoner of Society', 'White Noise' and 'All Torn Down', which had the crowd on their feet.

Shane Howard, of Goanna fame, took the main stage earlier in the day getting the festival off to a heart-warming start. Howard delivered a powerful and moving set, joined by a 45-child youth choir called The Subtext. The Subtext came together from a mix of regional schools (including three in Broken Hill) and performed renditions of a new song, co-written by and featuring Tasman Keith, who is a Gumbaynggirr man and artist, for the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation.

The Subtext choir also performed the iconic Goanna chart-topper 'Solid Rock' with a Barkindji translation.

The collaboration brought an extra layer of emotion and resonance to Howard's show, especially during 'Solid Rock', as the young voices harmonised beautifully, underscoring the song's message of unity and hope.

Daryl Braithwaite was another highlight of the afternoon, captivating the audience with his timeless hits. With the golden late afternoon sun painting the sky, Braithwaite's much-awaited rendition of 'The Horses' created a magical moment, with thousands singing along in unison. His set, filled with a mix of classic tracks and crowd favourites, reaffirmed his status as an Australian music icon.

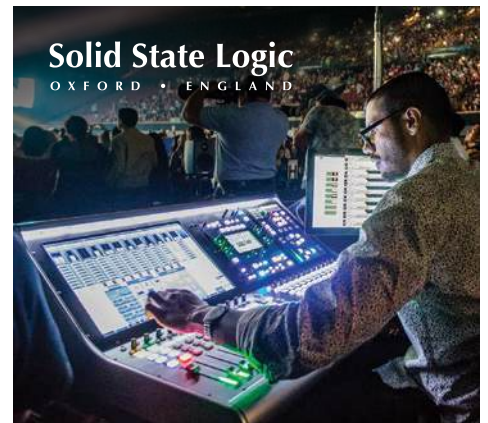


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See you there!



Next up was Ian Moss, whose powerful guitar riffs and soulful vocals resonated through the open air. Moss, known for his work with Cold Chisel and his successful solo career, delivered a high-energy performance that had the audience rocking along to every beat. Highlights included his classics 'Tucker's Daughter' and 'Telephone Booth', which drew enthusiastic applause and cheers from the crowd.

Festival goers were treated to a host of other stellar acts including Pierce Brothers, Mark Seymour, Casey Barnes and Furnace & The Fundamentals.

Before the mega musical line-up hit the stage, punters got involved in Big Blue Day, a world record attempt for "The largest human image of a country" raising funds and awareness for Beyond Blue. The initiative saw 7,243 punters wearing blue wigs and head gear corralled into the shape of Australia, beating last year's record of 5,467 from the Big Red Bash, raising \$115,888 of much needed funds for Beyond Blue.



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Days two and three of the Mundi Mundi Bash continued with the same energy, with performances by James Reyne, Jon Stevens, Ash Grunwald, Richard Clapton, Diesel, Tim Finn, Baby Animals, The Rolling Stones Revue, and Bjorn Again.

Off-stage, punters were treated to a family-friendly line-up of outback-inspired activities – from camel rides and helicopter joy flights to Dunny Door Painting, and all sorts of strange and spectacular surprises in between.

The Mundi Mundi Bash is produced by the Outback Music Festival Group, which also stages the Birdsville Big Red Bash which took place in outback QLD in July. For more information, visit www.bigredbash.com.au



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The P.A. People Go West

Further to the recent establishment of their first interstate office in Queensland, The P.A. People have announced the establishment of a new office to service the growing Western Australian market.

“With the continued expansion of our Venue Engineering capability and the recent and significant consolidation of the local staging market, we felt the time was right to increase the support for our installation and service customers in Western Australia,” Peter Grisard, Manager – Venue Engineering, said recently.

“The P.A. People have several significant contracts already underway in the region,” he added, “and we’re looking forward to being able to better service our WA-based customers. We are delighted to welcome Steve Browne to head up our Western Australian operations.”

Steve is well known in Perth audio-visual and venue engineering circles, having worked for over 10 years in this space in his previous role. “I am sure that Steve’s ‘hands-on’ approach and expertise will be welcomed

by our existing and new customers alike,” commented Chris Dodds, Managing Director of The P.A. People.

Steve is looking forward to representing The P.A. People in the Western Australian market. “I am sure our new office will play a key role in providing a local installation capability for our existing customer base, along with delivering preventative maintenance services for Western Australian venues and theatres up and down the coast,” he commented.

Over the past 50 years, The P.A. People have had the opportunity to work throughout Australia, installing systems in venues across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and the ACT from its Sydney base, as well as providing solutions in the Northern Territory, Tasmania, and Western Australia.



Steve Browne

Jodie Steele Joins The P.A. People

The P.A. People has also added Jodie Steele to their growing team. Jodie will be heading up Marketing & Events, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge in the industry.

Jodie’s appointment comes at an exciting time for The P.A. People as the company continues to expand its capabilities and service offerings across its four operational groups: Sales Hire Service, Venue Engineering, Installed Systems, and Event Communications.

“We’re excited to welcome Jodie Steele to our team,” said Chris Dodds. “Her extensive experience and proven track record make her a valuable asset to our company. We look forward to the fresh perspectives and energy she will bring to the business.”

Jodie’s experience in Entertainment Technology and AV spans over 20 years, in both a national and international capacity, having worked for several leading manufacturers and distributors over this time. She has also worked with several local events and integration companies.

“I’ve admired and worked with Chris and the team at The P.A. People in many ways over the past two decades,” said Jodie. “I am thrilled to be able to contribute to their growth and success moving forward.”



Jodie Steele

CAST Announces CMI as Exclusive Distributor for BlackTrax in Australia and New Zealand

BLACKTRAX

X

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CAST Group of Companies, a global leader in pioneering next-generation software and hardware solutions for the live event and entertainment production sectors, has announced CMI as its exclusive distributor for BlackTrax in Australia and New Zealand. This strategic collaboration expands CMI's established role as a key distributor of CAST's award-winning BlackTrax range.

BlackTrax is a vision-based tracking system that merges different fields together into the same tracking application, such as lighting tracking, media, immersive audio, game engines, camera tracking, and many others.

This partnership is aimed at enhancing the availability of advanced real-time tracking technologies within Australia and New Zealand, and providing the highest level of support for any organisation or creative looking to leverage the technology and seamlessly integrate it into their production workflows.

"We are excited to extend our partnership with CMI and expand the reach of BlackTrax in Australia and New Zealand," said Dekkar Densham, Global Sales Director for CAST Group Inc. "With a strong track record in pro audio distribution, CMI is the ideal partner to propel BlackTrax in the region. We believe that CMI's expertise, market presence, and client support will significantly contribute to the brand's success in the Live Event and Entertainment industries."

Lee Stevens, National Business Development Manager for CMI, also expressed enthusiasm for the new collaboration, stating that "The CMI team, which consists of industry-recognised individuals with years of experience and cutting-edge knowledge in servicing consumer, commercial pro audio and event technology needs, are looking forward to championing BlackTrax's technology into our market."

With vast experience in installation, touring, theatrical, and performance environments, the inclusion of BlackTrax in CMI's portfolio is set to offer innovative and transformative tracking solutions to the Australian and New Zealand markets, reinforcing the commitment of both CAST Group and CMI to deliver cutting-edge technologies to the live event and entertainment production sectors.

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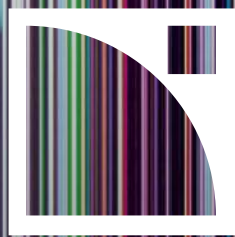
Event Communications Australia has taken on the distribution of AudioPressBox's well-regarded suite of products in Australia, an introductory set of which the company recently exhibited at last month's Integrate trade show in Sydney.

AudioPressBox is a sophisticated tool for audio distribution at press conferences, presentations and other events where audio signals need to be transmitted or recorded by multiple TVs, cameras, audio recorders, reporters and journalists.

Famous for its all-in-one solutions, the company's soon to be released AudioPressBox 'Mini' (the APB-312 C-USB), touted as the world's smallest active professional press distribution amplifier, crams a lot into a sturdy briefcase solution. It offers two mic/line inputs, eight balanced, transformer-isolated mic/line outputs, along with four USB-C outputs for connecting smartphones.

AudioPressBox also manufacture a variety of fixed installation boxes providing Danté input, mic/line outputs, as well as USB-C outputs. In-wall or surface mount models are also available.





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Digital Projection Projector Controller II

Digital Projection have released new projector-based auto-calibration and design tools for their electronics platform, Nexus. It allows automatic projector calibration – including advanced align, warp and blend tools – without the need for third-party applications. The pixel blending and warping is done directly in the projector hardware. The tech stack is split into two distinct areas: pre-installation, for users' design needs, and installation tools, which enables them to realise their vision. There are two versions of auto-calibration tools: Smart Align, a free add-on ideal for simple flat-screen calibration using only a mobile phone; and Advanced Align, a camera-based solution for complex, multi-channel surfaces.

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ADJ Vizi Beam CMY

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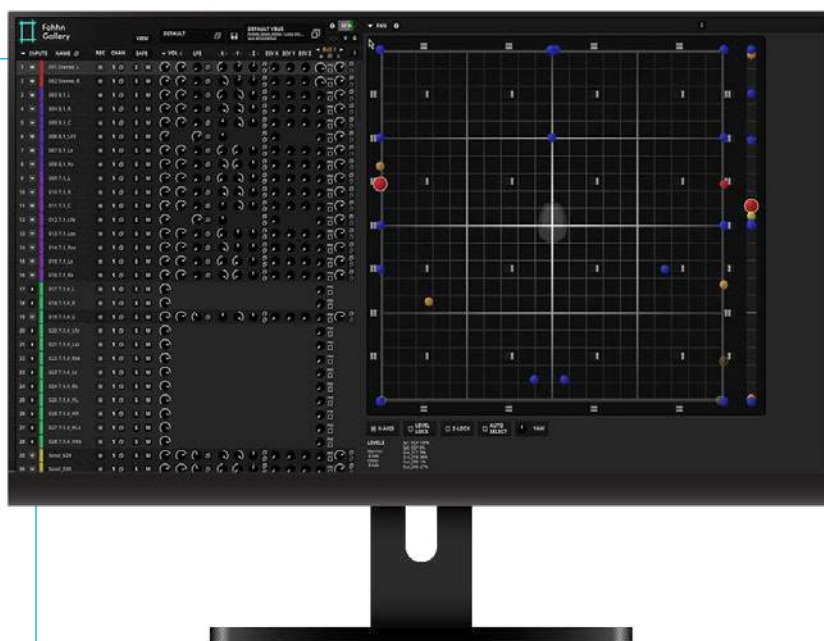


NEW GEAR

Fohhn Gallery

The Fohhn Gallery processor is designed to handle rendering and signal management for the realization of three-dimensional sound worlds and complex multi-channel projects. The software installed on the 19-inch server can be operated without a separate PC and enables the control, placement and movement of audio objects and live inputs in the room. It has various input and output formats from binaural headphone playback, 5.1, Dolby Atmos, IMAX 3D to fulldome environments with 128 channels. The device is equipped with a Dante interface and supports the OSC and EMBER+ remote control protocols.

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Science Image FLOW Edge

FLOW Edge features a powerful multi-channel up-down video cross converter with both baseband and optical connectivity available on the device. It delivers conversion between SDI and HDMI, resolution conversion, and remote optical transmitting via the SFP cages per channel. Furthermore, up-down cross-conversion and optical transceiving outputs can occur concurrently. FLOW Edge comes in six variants, the only difference being the number of channels on board. Each channel allows the up-down cross-conversion of at least 1849 resolution formats and up to 20km of optical transmitting. Each channel has an independent switch and scroll wheel for channel control. The built-in silent fan guarantees its continuous and stable operation.



Australia: D2N Technology Solutions d2n.com.au (02) 9837 6748

Science Image Studio Edge

Studio Edge features a powerful multi-channel and bi-directional full NDI 4K video encoder and decoder with both baseband and optical connectivity available on the device. It allows NDI encoding and decoding from either HDMI or SDI, as well as remote optical transmitting. Furthermore, full NDI encoding and optical transceiving outputs can occur concurrently. Studio Edge comes in six variants, the only difference being the number of channels on board. Each channel allows the encoding or decoding of full NDI plus up-down cross-conversion of at least 1849 resolution formats and up to 20km of optical transmitting. Each channel has an independent switch and scroll wheel for channel control. The built-in silent fan guarantees its continuous and stable operation.



NEW GEAR

Obsidian Netron DMX/RDM splitters and switches

Obsidian's Netron IP66 rated range of data distribution devices for entertainment applications include a 6-port EtherDMX Node (EN6 IP), a 6-port DMX/RDM Splitter (RDM6 IP), and an 8-port managed PoE Switch (NS8 IP). They are designed specifically for outdoor shows and events and suit any applications that require rugged and reliable data solutions. They all integrate with the ONYX Control platform.

Australia: ULA Group
ulagroup.com 1300 852 476
New Zealand: ULA Group
ulagroup.com 09 218 6532

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NEW NEAR TO



Midas HUB4 PRO

Midas' 96k monitor system Hub features 4 PoE Ports for personal mixers or compatible stage boxes, AES50 In and Through with SRC, StageCONNECT and balanced analogue outputs for sending 4x2 personal stereo mixes to IEM transmitters in the side rack or enabling connection to the brand-new Midas DL8 Stage Box.

Australia and New Zealand: Australis Music Group australismusic.com.au +61 2 9698 4444



Midas DL8 Stage Box

The DL8 Stage box includes eight Midas PRO microphone preamplifiers with switchable +48 V phantom power; eight electronically balanced low impedance line level; integrated ULTRANET distribution hub for connecting to Behringer P16-M personal monitor mixers or Turbosound speaker systems; plus dual AES50 SuperMAC ports for cascading additional stageboxes. It's PoE powered too.

Australia and New Zealand: Australis Music Group australismusic.com.au +61 2 9698 4444



Infinity Raccoon P7/7

The Raccoon P7/7 is a high-CRI, high-brightness, IP65-rated PAR Can. It uses 7 LEDs that have 7 colours each. Featuring five different internal dimmer curves, including a Tungsten shift simulation that works even with a colour filter applied. Control through regular DMX, RDM, Manual, and Master/slave. PWM frequency is adjustable between 640Hz and 25kHz, ensuring flicker-free camera images.

Australia: Clearlight Shows clearlight.com.au 03 9553 1688

New Zealand: Kenderdine Entertainment Lighting Ltd kelpls.co.nz 09 302 4100

Infinity Raccoon Junior P4/7

Like its bigger brother (Raccoon P7/7), the Raccoon Junior P4/7 is a high-CRI, high-brightness, IP65-rated Par can. With similar features, this little unit uses 4 LEDs, all with 7 colour outputs.

Australia: Clearlight Shows

clearlight.com.au 03 9553 1688

New Zealand: Kenderdine Entertainment Lighting Ltd kelpls.co.nz 09 302 4100



Bluesound NODE ICON

The NODE ICON is Bluesound's flagship wireless music streamer for the most discerning audio enthusiasts. Every detail of the design has been performance engineered to set a new benchmark in the category, from its breakthrough Dual-Mono DAC design implemented to perfection with two ESS SABRE0 DACs, to its sleek aluminum chassis and stunning 5-inch full-colour display. The NODE ICON also features all digital/analog inputs and outputs including HDMI eARC and balanced XLR outputs for high-quality connectivity.

Australia: Amber Technology ambertech.com.au 1800 251 367

Shure SM4 Home Recording Microphone

The SM4 Home Recording Microphone is a versatile, large-diaphragm condenser microphone engineered for at-home and studio recording of both vocals and instruments. With a meticulously engineered dual-diaphragm capsule and a patent-pending RF shielding system, the SM4's built-in features make it easy to achieve professional-quality recordings with minimal effort. The controlled low-end response enables EQ adjustments without introducing unwanted elements, making it easier to achieve a big radio voice and full-sounding instrument tracks. The magnetic pop filter helps diffuse air blasts while the shock mount reduces handling noise and rumble. The microphone's cardioid polar pattern provides a forgiving and large sweet spot, enabling vocalists to move freely without compromising sound quality.

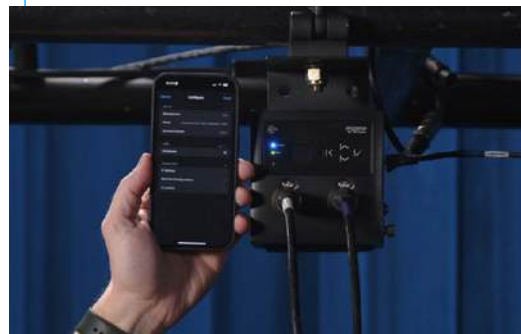
Australia: Jands
jands.com.au (02) 9582 0909
New Zealand: nsl.co.nz
 (09) 913 6212



ETC Response Mk2 Gateways

ETC have announced that 2-port and 4-port (non-DIN) models of Response Mk2 DMX gateways now support NFC configuration. A simple tap from a mobile device running the Set Light app (v1.9 or later) allows users to retrieve a gateway's configuration, edit it in the app, then effortlessly update the gateway with another tap, even while the gateway is powered off. The labels for each port are visible in the About screen for each port as well as Concert. Users can view and edit port information in the latest version of Concert (v4.5.1) and in the Set Light app. All of these features are available for FREE for all existing Response Mk2 DMX gateways. Activate features in the field with a simple upgrade to software version 2.1.0 or 3.1.0 via UpdaterAtoR.

Australia: Jands jands.com.au (02) 9582 0909
New Zealand: Jands jands.co.nz (09) 941 9780



Endemol Shine Jungle Skin

A world-first, these water-resistant covers for Bolero intercom packs are a game changer. Developed locally in Australia, they allow you to work in challenging outdoor conditions while protecting your equipment from the elements. With a small functional change of buttons five and six for volume, the cover simply slips over your intercom pack, and away you go!

Australia: D2N Technology Solutions
d2n.com.au (02) 9837 6748





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WHEN PLUG-INS DECIDE THINGS FOR YOU



When it comes to audio dilemmas, creative solutions or mixing options, plug-ins are invariably everyone's go-to solution. Got a problem? Reach for a plug-in. Have an issue with a sound's tone, dynamics, or general viability in a mix? Grab a plug-in. Don't even know how to mix? No problemo... plug-ins to the rescue! But wait... how do plug-ins help if you don't really understand what they do or how they work?

Knowing your plug-ins is a tricky subject, especially these days. The sheer quantity of options available in 2024 is truly mind-boggling, and if you're into 'collecting' them, all I can say is, look out! If you're not careful you can wind up with a plug-in list longer than The Great Wall of China, and once that happens, knowing how they all work on any meaningful or creative level becomes highly questionable.

Having a million plug-ins at your disposal seems like a good idea in some ways: it gives you options, makes you versatile, allows you to solve any problem, open someone else's session, create any effect, and balance any combination of sounds... or does it?

I'm not convinced that owning a plethora of next-generation plug-ins really equates to better sonic results, especially if you're just starting out. Instead, owning too many plug-ins, each with an ever-widening scope for turning your audio signal inside out, tends to make engineers overcook things, veer hopelessly off track, get into bad habits, or end up lost in a thicket of endless options. In the end, a million surgical tools are no use to anyone if you don't know how to operate any of them. Maybe it's time we talked about the pros and cons of plug-in ownership, en-masse.

More Plug-Ins, Better Outcomes?

Like anything, the problem with owning too many plug-ins is that you run the risk of never knowing how to use them effectively. If we were to compare plug-ins, like for like, with old outboard gear, in many cases engineers now own the equivalent of a wall of gear 10 feet high and 100 yards long. I'd reckon if engineers had had that much stuff at their disposal back in the day, they would have struggled to know much about how any of it worked!

Back when audio engineers did apprenticeships in studios, their workplace might have had a dozen bits of outboard gear, a console and a tape machine. When they were forced to use this limited amount of equipment to achieve every sonic outcome they imagined, it encouraged them to push the envelope of what every device could achieve. They got to

know the equipment extremely well, and more importantly, when to use it.

But all that's changed. Apprenticeships are now rarer than rocking horse poo and most people learn their trade at home with a few mics and instruments, a DAW, countless plug-ins and access to YouTube – often acquiring their technical information from others who barely know more about the software than they do.

So how then is it better for the next generation of less experienced engineers to own 10,000 plug-ins, many of which are more complicated than any single piece of outboard gear ever was, if it inevitably leads to them barely scratching the surface of how any of them work, frequently to misuse, and poor sonic outcomes? It's like putting a P-Plater behind the wheel of a Formula One racing car. Sure, the car can go breathtakingly fast and steer more accurately than your mum's RAV4, but if you're an inexperienced driver it's also exponentially more dangerous! Chances are the thing will hurl you into a wall long before you're likely to win any races in it.

So, if you're relatively new to this engineering game – and despite the obvious attraction of the millions of fancy toys out there – maybe it's worth considering a 'less is more' approach to plug-ins when it comes to recording and, in particular, mixing. More specifically, it's probably best to steer clear of the more complex ones until you have some engineering skills under your belt, especially

the next generation of analytical resonance suppressing, dynamic EQ and multiband tone shaping type tools that try to do multiple processes at once whilst keeping many of their internal processes concealed behind a fancy UI. These plug-ins, many of which adjust their parameters in real-time in response to incoming signals rather than statically, tend to affect your audio signal in ways that are hard for beginners to understand, and any interactive controls they do offer tend to assume the user is well versed in the basic principles of things like compression and equalisation.

But what's arguably more concerning is that these plug-ins also tend to discourage beginners and less experienced engineers from learning how to solve problems themselves. That's a bad approach to audio engineering in general because it infers that the plug-ins know more about what you need than you do. Good engineers learn over time how to make creative and technical choices themselves. They shouldn't expect to be spoon-fed solutions by plug-ins that want to take the creative process out of their hands.

To give you one simple example, several of these plug-ins that analyse incoming signals constantly bang on in their advertising campaigns about 'cleaning up the mud in your mix'.

So why is your mix muddy in the first place? Are we, by this logic, to assume that we don't care what's happening further back up the mixing chain? Should we not investigate why

the mix is muddy and use some simpler tools – like an EQ or a fader, for example – to rebalance the mix? If we've done such a poor job of our mix that it sounds horribly muddy the solution is to learn what caused the problem in the first place, not just apply a panacea to the output bus and then sit back and claim we've solved the problem. That is not engineering.

Start Simple

Like I said, it pays to learn the basics first. Without a good technical foundation under your belt, some of the real-time sonic shapers like Oeksound's Soothe2 and Bloom, Soundtheory's Gullfoss, and even 'The Masker' (a free plug-in made by music production technology students from Milan University), will happily step in and take control of your tonal balance and dynamics, but none of them will offer you an insight into why there was a problem with your sound in the first place. It's like buying pasta sauce off the shelf instead of learning how to cook. Sure, your gumbo may not taste as good at first, but eventually you'll learn to craft your own unique recipe. It takes time and patience to be good at this game.

Don't get me wrong though; some of the newest plug-ins sound mad and do an incredible job not only on the things they were built to control, but in ways no-one could have predicted. But I balk at some of the propaganda I see out there which tries to describe older EQ and compressor plug-ins as being 'outdated' methods of sonic manipulation. It's simply not true.

Build Your List - Slowly

The last few years have seen the list of plug-in options on the market explode like Krakatoa. Discerning between which ones are best for your signal chains, your workflow, and your wallet is almost becoming a full-time occupation, and the pursuit of the perfect plug-in can lead quickly to a gargantuan list of options, very few of which you are ever likely to use.

The more complex plug-ins that analyse incoming signals on your behalf tend to be expensive, and in many respects only save you time, rather than provide you with a vastly different sonic solution.

So, it pays to know what you need. If you just go looking for stuff in an undiscerning manner you may end up with a mountain of plug-ins you don't need, in many cases will never use, and which may do your audio signal more harm than good.

Start simple, and don't be fooled into thinking you need 10,000 plug-ins. You don't. To be a great recording, mix, or mastering engineer takes time and effort. It's not just about acquiring more stuff that offers to do all the work (and thinking) for you.

Andy Stewart owns and operates The Mill in the hills of Bass Coast Shire, in Victoria. He's happy to respond to any pleas for recording, mixing or mastering help... contact him at: andy@themill.net.au

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The Grid Digital Art Gallery

a Success

Immersive Art Space Pilot in Wellington

Delainy Jamahl and his partner Shannon Brosnahan Inglis have stuck their necks on the line to investigate the potential for a dedicated immersive art space in the capital, in a New Zealand version of Melbourne’s renowned digital art gallery THE LUME. “We wanted to evaluate the public and art community’s interest in a venue capable of hosting large scale digital artwork. This pilot of The Grid is a way of testing the water. Can we create our own homegrown ecosystem for projections, soundscapes and storytelling? Can we attract audiences? Can we make this self-sustainable?”

The Space

Delainy and Shannon fell in love with the industrial mid-50s building that is, for now at least, The Grid Artspace. An

almost 400sqm warehouse located in the heart of central Wellington, it was the perfect blank canvas on which to launch New Zealand’s first dedicated immersive projection environment. Delainy explains,

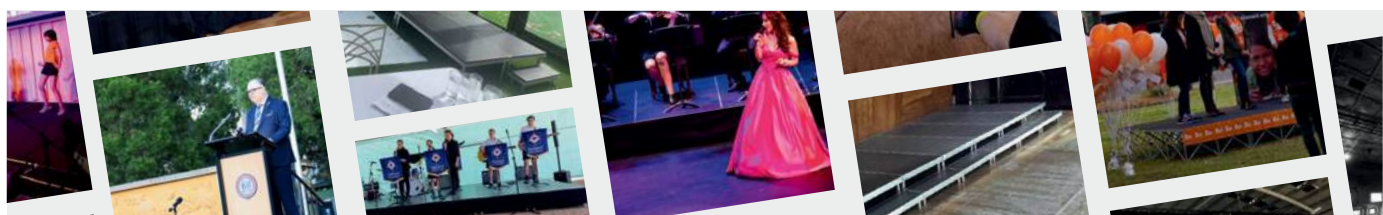
“It was exciting to fit out a space specifically for our exhibitions, to really cater the spatial design to the work that is being presented, and also to have a space that is adaptable to different works.”



The Gear

Space located and rented, the next challenge was the fit out; "We wanted people to be able to touch and interact with the content so we required hard projection surfaces. We brought on the Tāwhiri Workshop to build four 7.2 x 4 metre walls out of plywood and MDF as our projection canvas, with a backbone of truss and pipe from our rigging supplier YOOCrew. When it came time to change over between exhibitions, we were able to reconfigure those walls in about four hours with a good team of people, so it wasn't too demanding."

For projection they worked with Big Picture and opted for four Barco F80-4K12 projectors, with two disguise D3 servers for playback and a Yamaha 4.1 surround system. The data crunching requirements were significant, "On our first exhibit Rivers of Wind, we had 2.5TB of video playback, two 48 minute 8K files, outputting a resolution of 15360 x 2134."



PORTABLE STAGES FOR EVENT PROFESSIONALS

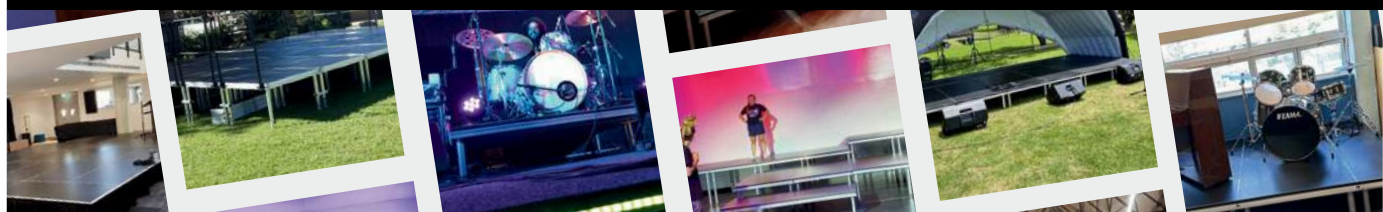
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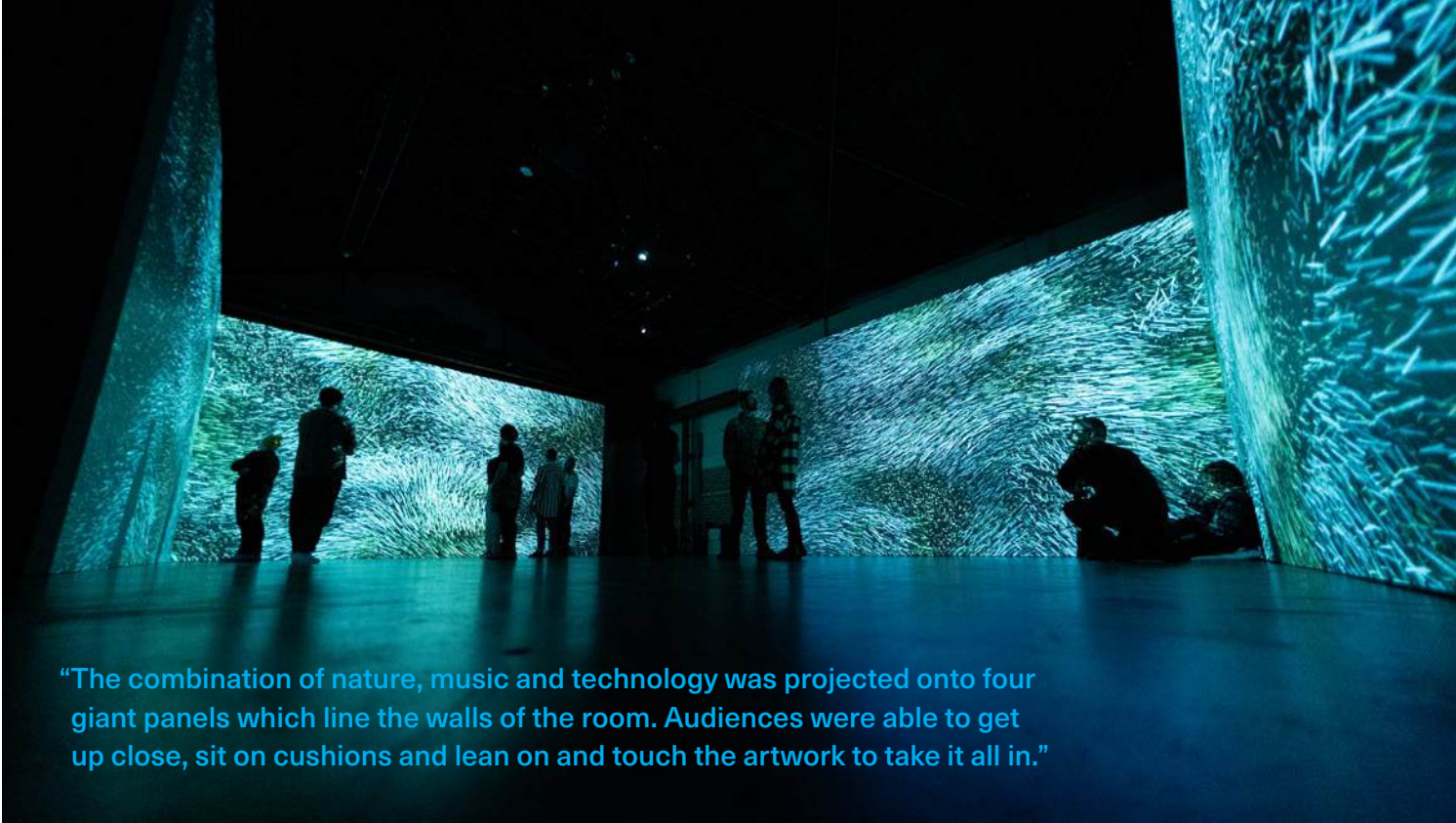
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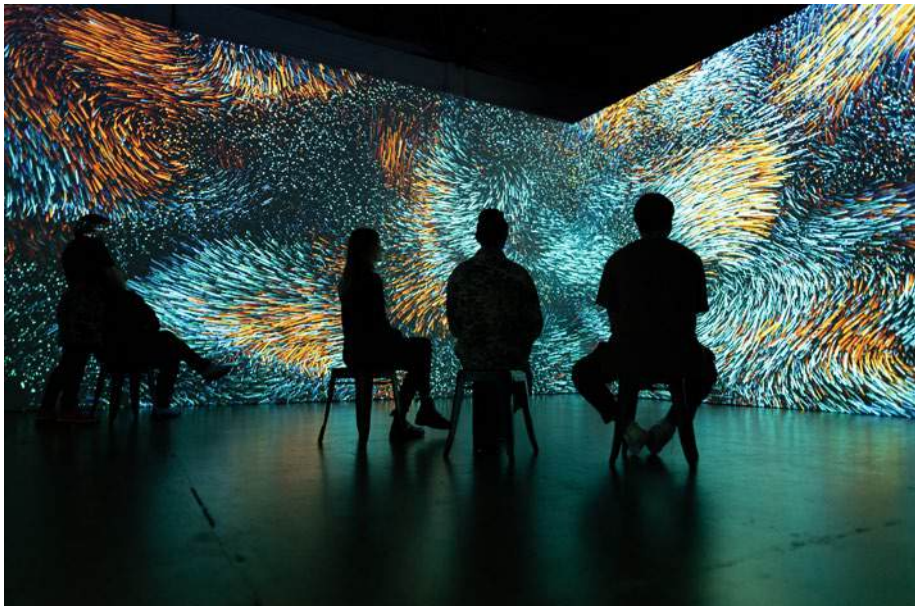




“The combination of nature, music and technology was projected onto four giant panels which line the walls of the room. Audiences were able to get up close, sit on cushions and lean on and touch the artwork to take it all in.”

A second smaller room was designated for a highly interactive display using Samsung Frame TVs; “We placed a TV on a linear track and attached a draw wire encoder to it. This allowed our audience to physically move the whole screen up to seven metres on a single axis and for that movement to affect what was displayed. This acted as a window into a virtual canvas, as the screen moved it would show different parts of that canvas. Although a physically smaller installation than the main space, the virtual canvas was larger in pixels with a total resolution of 19440 x 3840.”

The team also exploited the foyer, “We designed and built a custom front desk out of LED screens and versatile aluminium extrude which visitors have loved, “It’s a good first taste of the experience the visitors are about to have.”



The Exhibits

The gallery opened to the public on 5th July with Delainy's own mesmerising digital artwork, Rivers of Wind, which uses eight years of Wellington's historical weather data to produce a continuous 48-minute looped work, with every second representing a day's worth of data. "After spending time overseas I was inspired by artists who regularly combine their art with data and technology. Being based in Wellington, I know everyone has their own relationship with the weather, particularly the wind, and I wanted to capture the beauty in that chaos."

Delainy approached composer Rhian Sheehan for a soundscape to accompany the visuals. The combination of nature, music and technology was projected onto four giant panels which line the walls of the room. Audiences were able to get up close, sit on cushions and lean on and touch the artwork to take it all in.

Rivers of Wind was followed by the Wellington premiere of the Art of Black Grace 1/5 & 2/5, two immersive dance experiences. One contains excerpts from key dance works spanning the company's 28 years and re-imagines prominent moments in their repertoire and New Zealand history. The other is based on kinetic movement paintings, both created by renowned choreographer Neil Ieremia. Delainy has a long relationship with Neil, involved initially in post-production through his motion design studio Artificial Imagination, and also providing onset supervision alongside their creative team, ensuring filmed content would transfer from the world of physical performance to an immersive digital experience.

The third exhibition is Nowadeus by multi-disciplinary artist Tim Christie, featuring a soundtrack composed by Tom McLeod and spatial sound mix by Mike Hodgson. "We approached Tim around four months ago to see if he would be keen to collaborate on a new immersive experience. Our initial chats ended up lasting for a couple of hours so I knew we would get along well. Our process ended up with Tim creating the artworks and providing my studio with layered Photoshop files, and from there we recreated the artworks in a 3D pipeline for animation. The result is an immersive experience where modern-day obsessions are personified as larger than life deities."

The Response

Delainy and Shannon have been blown away by the level of interest, "Over 1,000 visitors a week for a brand new experience is exceptional. The public's response has been that Wellington needs this, New Zealand needs this. People have acknowledged there is real potential for dedicated spaces for these types of artworks. And for our New Zealand artists, a dedicated space that removes the technical costs of exhibiting digital works at scale is an exciting prospect. We were fortunate to have strong relationships with suppliers who believe in what we are trying to achieve and that made this pilot feasible."

The result of Delainy and Shannon's experiment? They are committed to making a permanent immersive art space happen, hopefully at The Grid's current location. "We love this space so it would be wonderful if we could establish ourselves here, but we'll see. We're building this from the ground up, and there's a lot of exciting steps ahead of us. Our aim is to create a space that can really showcase our epic Aotearoa-made works, and that can also bring international works here from similar spaces overseas."

For now, Rivers of Wind is set to tour. Keep an eye out for locations to be announced.



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AI, AURACAST, IMMERSIVE, AND LASERS...

All the Gear from Integrate 2024

The Integrate expo ran 21 to 23 August at ICC Sydney, with a packed show floor and more new gear than you could point a camera at – but we tried! We walked the hall and brought you all we could pack into our two solid days filming, resulting in this virtual tour, consisting of 42 videos all up.

We've covered it all. There was the debut of multiple Auracast-enabled assisted listening devices, the new implementation of low-energy Bluetooth that enables one-to-many transmission, set to revolutionise assisted listening. AI is now a reality in many AV devices, including video conferencing cameras, bars, and software, with tracking humans a priority (sounds scary, isn't so much!).

Immersive as a buzzword continues unabated. In fact, I moderated a panel courtesy TDC on that very topic; Harman acquisition FLUX adds it to their portfolio, and the very wise Ben Clarke at PAVT had much to say on the subject. We got excited about transparent LED, scared of the new big laser fixture from Robe, the mighty iBOLT, and thrilled with the possibilities of eye-candy fixtures from Elation and ACME.



There's so much to see

Use this QR code to watch all 42 videos, or pick and choose by stand through the rest of this feature – enjoy!



Amber Technology

With a huge range of Amber Technology's AV brands on display, we chatted to:



Holoplot's Gareth Davies



Gerrit Ryan



Hamad Assifi



Per Persson



Mikael Sandstrom and AVer's Jocelyn Chen



Scott Riley

- Williams AV's Per Persson on their adoption of Auracast
- Mikael Sandstrom and AVer's Jocelyn Chen about the FONE700, a combined microphone and speakerphone that can integrate via single Cat5 and PoE to up to four ceiling speakers. It also pairs well with AVer autotracking cameras
- Gerrit Ryan about the latest in unified communications from RTI, including an AI-enabled tracking camera in their videobar, and multiple wired and wireless connectivity options
- Hamad Assifi about the Wolfvision Cynap Video Bar, complete with high-end Fohhn loudspeakers!
- International guest Gareth Davies from Holoplot, introducing the X2 Series, for the first time in Australia! Based on the revolutionary X1, which powers the groundbreaking Sphere in Las Vegas, the X2 is aimed at speech reinforcement; and
- Scott Riley, explaining what Amadeus Active Acoustics can do for your venue, with a little help from Renkus Heinz loudspeakers, LEA power amplifiers, and DPA Microphones

SCAN QR CODE



Audio Brands Australia

The commercial installation audio specialists that are Audio Brands Australia had some solid new workhorse products, plus a couple of surprises:

- Greg Collins shows us new microphone releases from Earthworks, including affordable drum mics and all-new goosenecks. He also shows us new gear from Optimal Audio. Joining their zone processors with fantastic web GUI are new subwoofers, bezel-less grilles for existing ceiling speakers, and new pendant speakers
- Joshua McEvoy guided us through the range of assisted listening solutions available with Univox, including induction loops, tour guide systems, and now Wi-Fi and Auracast through Bettar



Joshua McEvoy and Univox



Greg Collins with Earthworks



SCAN QR CODE



The P.A. People's Chris Dodds

Managing Director of The P.A. People Chris Dodds spoke to us about the company's massive expansion in venue engineering over the last 12 months, some recent projects, and their vast new premises in Greenacre and its new capabilities.



Chris Dodds



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Jands

With two neighbouring stands separated into audio and lighting, there was a lot to see at Jands.

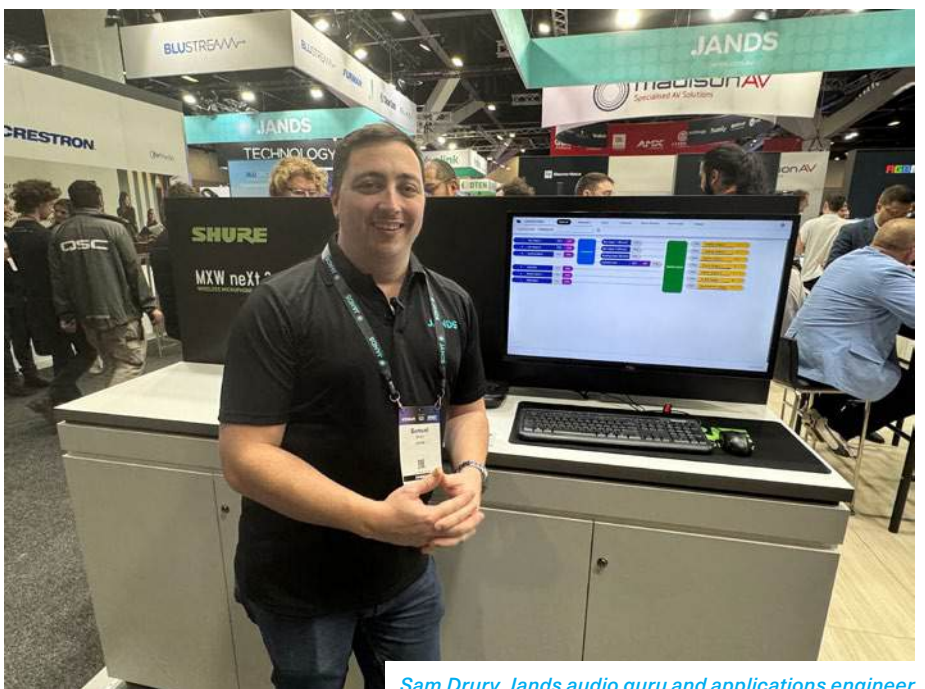
- New ceiling speaker options from Electro-Voice, including the affordable EVID EC Series and the EVID-C-G2 with sub options and easy install SwiftLock system
- The Robe iBOLT, the all new Laser source from Robe. Specifically designed to generate incredible power, and be perfectly safe to use, its white 500W Phosphor Laser source produces an incoherent beam with an incredible intensity of 1,100,000lx @ 20m (42,000lx @ 100m). With such remarkable output, the iBOLT ensures ultimate contrast with the night sky for maximum impact
- ShureCloud – software currently in beta and in use by invitation only, when it goes live, it will enable full control, monitoring, and maintenance of networkable Shure devices, making facility management possible from anywhere you have an internet connection
- Shure Nexadyne, the new standard in stage microphones. Nexadyne Vocal microphones feature patented Shure Revonic™ dual-engine transducer technology, with two precisely calibrated transducers working together to achieve optimal performance. The result is a high-performing microphone line that combines state-of-the-art acoustic signal processing and exceptional cardioid polar pattern linearity
- Shure's MXW neXt2, the all-in-one audio solution for hybrid classrooms, training rooms, and lecture halls that provides superior audio for conferencing and presentations. Simple, easy to set-up, and looking like a category killer to us! and
- Auri, an all new Auracast-enabled assisted listening solution developed in conjunction with Listen Technologies



Nicholas Shaw and the iBOLT



Andrew Attard is very happy about Auracast and Auri



Sam Drury, Jands audio guru and applications engineer



SCAN QR CODE





SCAN QR CODE



Cameron Lucas



Harman's Phil Scobee



Stefan Lenke

MadisonAV

MadisonAV's portfolio keeps expanding, and has been refreshed by major new products from Harman brands in the last year, including BSS, AMX, and software acquisition FLUX. We interviewed:

- Nureva's Jeffrey Ly about their frankly huge HDL all-in-one audio conferencing bars for large meeting rooms. Filling the room with 'thousands' of virtual mics and packing major grunt in the loudspeaker department, these bars promise simple and effective audio in Teams and Zoom environments
- Cameron Lucas on the Spinetix iBX410 digital signage player, iBX440 video wall processor, and extremely robust HMP400 digital signage player. He also talked us through the PTZOptics camera range, which can run on PoE and send out NDI or DanteAV, all on a single network cable
- Harman's Phil Scobee, who introduced BSS's new ONMI DSP platform. The Soundweb OMNI family combines enterprise-grade processors, flexible I/O expanders, Dante/AES67 networked audio, an onboard scripting engine developed by AMX, and a vast library of processing objects, including media playback, AEC, VoIP, and more. The platform is seamlessly managed through AVX Architect and AVX Control, an all-new AVX Suite, built from the ground up to support the latest installed products from HARMAN Professional
- Recent Harman acquisition FLUX has given the audio giant new software tools for immersive audio and system design. Hugo Larin told us what it all means
- AUDIOropa's Stefan Lenke, who introduced us to Bettear, a Wi-Fi and Auracast-enabled assisted listening solution; and
- Harman's Jeff Burch, who explained how AMX's Muse controllers allow you to code in your language of choice, or use low or no-code programming. He also told us all about AMX's SVSI N2600 Series encoders and decoders, cost-effective and robust devices that deliver high-quality, low-latency 4K60 4:4:4 streaming that is ideal for live video and detailed content in classrooms, meeting spaces, courtrooms, bars and a wide range of streaming applications



Harman's Jeff Burch

NAS

NAS had some news and some new products to tell the world about, namely:

- Venerable American manufacturer of speakers, amplifiers and DSP, AtlasIED, has a new home in Australia - NAS. Shane Bailey told us all about it; and
- Anthony Murdoch gave us a tour of some new releases from loudspeaker manufacturer dBTechnologies, including the install-focussed IS range. He also showed us Pliant's budget-friendly MicroCom XR wireless comms system, enabling wireless connectivity in applications where it wasn't previously a viable option



Shane Bailey and AtlasIED



SCAN QR CODE



Anthony Murdoch and dBTechnologies' IS range



Sennheiser's Jason Grbevski

Sennheiser

Sennheiser's Jason Grbevski talked about their now-complete Team Connect range of conferencing gear and the deep alliance partnerships that Sennheiser shares with Q-SYS, Lightware, Crestron, Netgear AV, Audac, and others



SCAN QR CODE



PAVT's Ben Clarke

PAVT

Ben Clarke on EAW and Dolby Atmos

Ben Clarke, Rational Acoustics SMAART instructor and all-round audio guru at PAVT, discusses the most successful and widely adopted immersive audio format - Dolby Atmos - and why phase response is so important when designing and deploying immersive audio systems



SCAN QR CODE





Tony Russo at Martin Audio

- Ewan McDonald caught us up on what's new in the ever-expanding world of Q-SYS's Q-SYS, including AI-powered VisionSuite, audio-based tracking, paging products, some very solid new loudspeakers, and new QIO Series network I/O expanders
- The inimitable Tony Russo showed us what's new at Martin Audio, including the unique Torus constant curvature array series, new three-way 15" with proprietary Martin mid driver, and the tiny FlexPoint FP4 4" coaxial box, which Tony insists could do FoH at a corporate event; and
- The MixWiz, Andrew Crawford, let us know what's new in Allen & Heath's dLive V2, including new effects and scene management tools



Andrew Crawford and dLive



Ewan McDonald at Q-SYS



SCAN QR CODE



Charlie Fan

Yealink

Yealink's Charlie Fan granted us a deep look at Yealink's unified communications solutions, with extensive new AI capabilities, and close integration with Microsoft's Copilot AI



SCAN QR CODE



ULA Group

ULA Group's stand dominated in the centre of the show, with truckloads of lighting brands and their own VuePix Infiled LED products. We looked at:

- The Elation Pulse Panel FX, a powerful strobe, bright blinder, high-output wash light and creative eye candy effect, all in one
- Brompton's TrueLight processing with their own Luke Herford; a game-changing technology delivering high-quality lighting from LED panels with extra emitters, ideal for creatives working in virtual production
- Astera's new LunaBulb - looks like a traditional lightbulb but functions as a pro luminaire. LunaBulb offers filmmakers practicals with perfect skin tones and wireless DMX control. It's easy to operate via smart device, remote, or console, making it ideal for any event, large or small
- ACME's new releases including the versatile Mana Profile, IP66 rated eye-candy Tornado, and workhorse LED Par Sandane Frost; and
- The VuePix Infiled soft curve virtual production studio, with 2.9 pitch LED panels, and their rather clever mirrored interactive LCD that goes from display to mirror on approach



SCAN QR CODE



Jake Horsburgh in the VuePix Infiled Virtual Studio



Pascal Bonnet and ACME



Rod Marshall and the Elation Pulse Panel FX



Zoe Zhou

Yestech



SCAN QR CODE



Yestech's Zoe Zhou demonstrated the rental-focussed LED manufacturer's products for eye-catching new shapes, rugged dance floors, and fine pitched displays

BRISBANE

Showground
Tues Oct 8

SYDNEY

Hordern Pavilion
Thur Oct 10

MELBOURNE

Showgrounds
Tues Oct 15

ADELAIDE

Showgrounds
Thur Oct 17

CLAREMONT

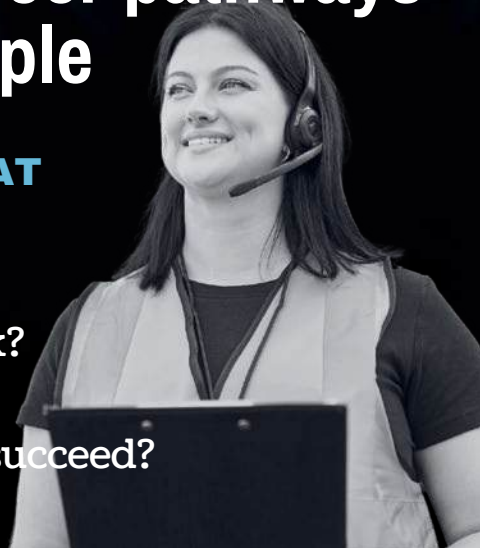
Showgrounds
Tues Oct 22

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LD Round table
Gavan Swift, Rob Cudden



LD / Programmer Relations
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Strategies to Stream Your Event Successfully
Simon Byrne



Bonded Internet Connectivity using Pepwave and multiple 5G Connections
Simon Byrne



How to deal with a corporate client as an AV operator?
Mark Taylor



What is the Colour of Sound?
Cais Nitschke



Want to upgrade your venue - what next?
Presented by Arup



Lighting Kiss! Flash! Bang!
Sean 'Motley' Hackett



Why do I still do this?
Matthew Peckham



Physical and Mental Health and Fitness in Staging
Emma Sputnik AD



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BRISBANE
Showground
Tues Oct 8

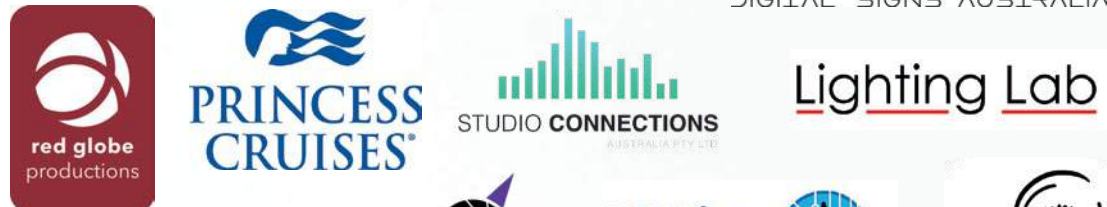
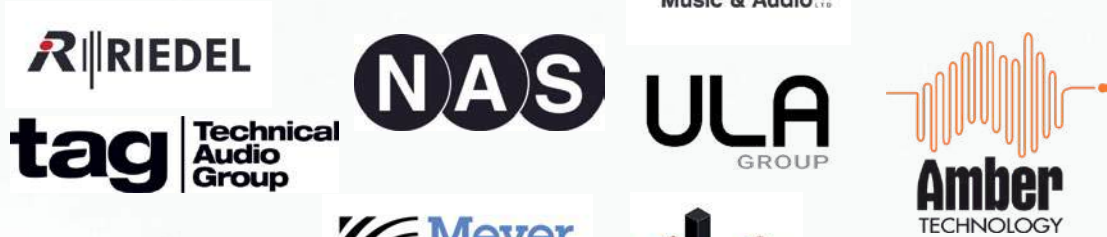
SYDNEY
Hordern Pavilion
Thur Oct 10

MELBOURNE
Showgrounds
Tues Oct 15

ADELAIDE
Showgrounds
Thur Oct 17

CLAREMONT
Showgrounds
Tues Oct 22

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Jason Peters - Artist

OZ LIGHTING TECH ON THE INTERNATIONAL ART SCENE

Jason Peters is a NYC-based conceptual artist whose dynamic sculptures have been exhibited in galleries and museums all around the world. Working predominantly with the medium of light, he chooses to use lighting gear designed and manufactured by ENTTEC in Australia to bring his installations to life. ENTTEC's resident visual artist, Damon Torsten, spoke with Jason in order to learn more about his work and the technology that makes everything come together.

Damon: Although born in Alabama, you grew up across the Atlantic in Bavaria which has a very different cultural history, but one that perhaps seems to neatly align with your work. With Munich being the birthplace of modernist movements such as Der Blaue Reiter, to whom both abstraction and colour were inherently important, do you think that your German childhood may have helped shape or influence your future creative visions?

Jason: Absolutely. Being raised in a different country, like Germany, has influenced me. My parents provided the foundation for my artistic development, the environment and culture of Munich nurtured my artistic evolution in unique ways.

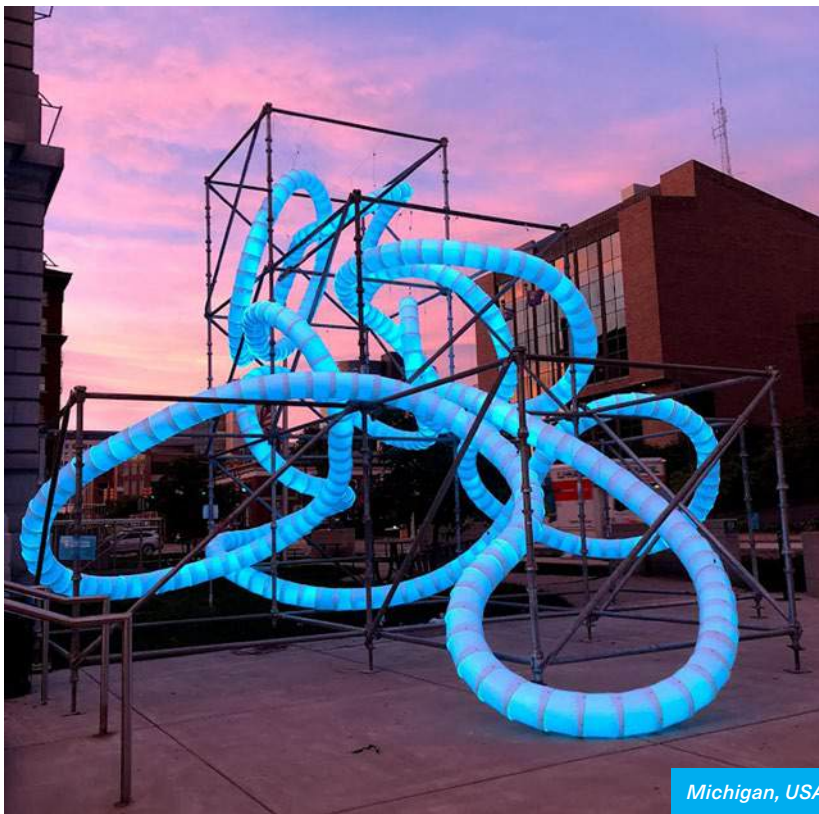
Munich has an abundance of museums available to the public, covering everything from art and technology to history. The architectural and natural landscape of the city also played a significant role. It's special to be so close to the Alps because of the quality of the light, and the constantly changing weather conditions are special.

As a child, I remember walking through boulder fields on the side of a mountain and feeling dwarfed by house-sized boulders that seemed tiny compared to the mountains themselves. I gained a deep appreciation for the scale and power of nature and its effect on our environment.

Additionally, the man-made spaces in Munich left a lasting impression on me. Many buildings were constructed without the advent of artificial light, which presented at the time ongoing challenges in terms of how to illuminate these spaces effectively. This challenge inspired me to study how space and light interact and shape our perceptions.

All of these experiences have shaped my creative vision, and I have learned how natural and artificial environments interact and how light and space can change an experience.

Damon: You've been an exhibiting sculptor for a couple of decades now. Was light a medium that interested you from the very start of your journey, or was it something you gradually explored and introduced into your art?



Michigan, USA

the elements of the sculpture, as well as how the positive and negative space around a piece would be affected by light.

We see the world as similar to black-and-white. The way the Earth is illuminated by the sun in the void of space inspired me to think about white on black. One day, while daydreaming on the NYC subway, I realized that blackening an interior space would make it disappear, while lighting it from within would show the structure. This realisation was critical.

Material selection is crucial to my work; whether it was found, recycled, or purchased, it became a building block. I used 300 buckets found in the countryside of New Mexico to create the sculptures you see today. My concept for these pieces was to draw in space and see form without being distracted by its surroundings, and this idea has driven my work for many years.

Damon: Proverbially, there's more than one way to skin a cat. There are so many different approaches you could utilise to add the element of light or movement into an artwork. Having decided to use LED pixels for your designs, in what ways do you think ENTTEC's Pixelator/PLink system has helped you get the most out of them?

Jason: I decided on using ENTTEC because their lighting and hardware solutions came bundled with licensing for ELM software for mapping, all in one package.

As I was new to this type of lighting, I appreciated the convenience of having a single point of contact for any technical or software issues, instead of dealing with multiple companies to debug problems.

Additionally, I wanted sturdy and well-built equipment and lights.

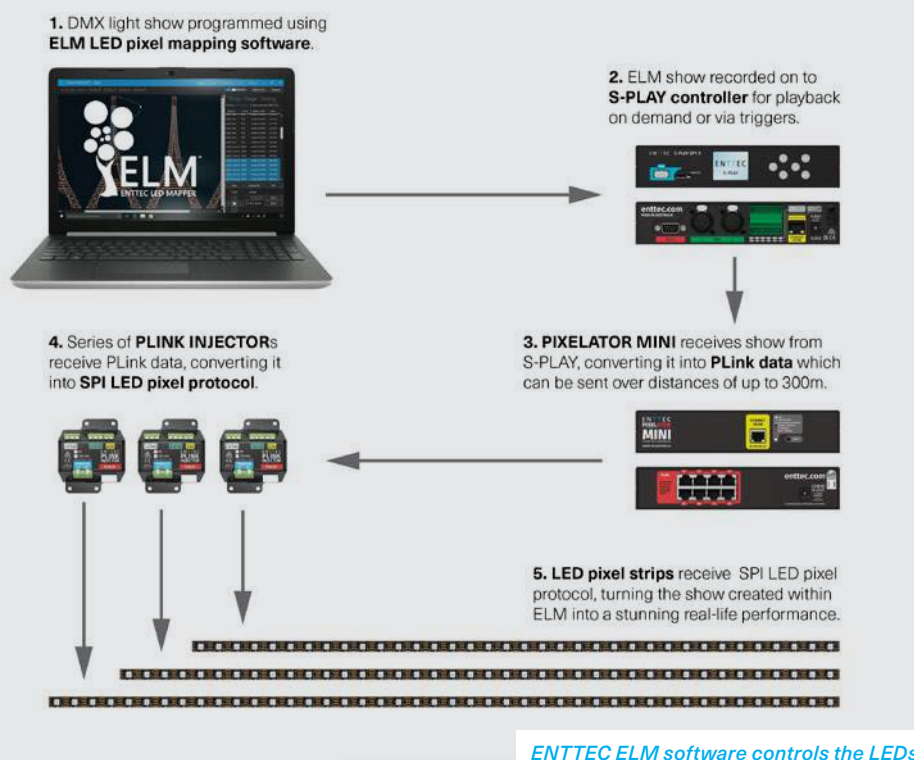
Jason: I mentioned that light is crucial to me since our existence would not exist without light. All we have achieved would not exist. Its power is capable of triggering, illuminating, guiding and creating all kinds of emotions and situations for us.

At first, I was interested in how natural light entered a room and occupied the space it was shown in. I then investigated artificial light in gallery settings, realising that a lack of light, such as shadows, can be very useful for creating illusions and effects. This

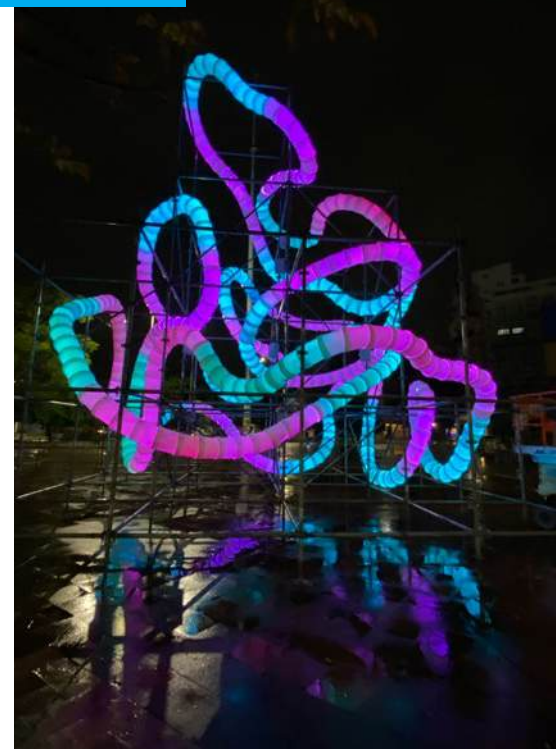
understanding led me to work with light, particularly the idea of being lit from within.

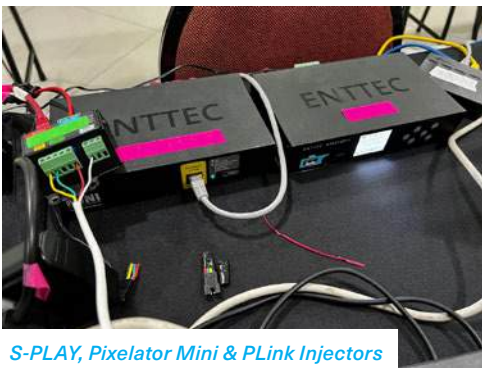
This shift occurred when I was asked to create a seminal installation for the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh, a space dedicated to site-specific work with an impressive roster of invited artists.

My initial ideas for this commission were complicated, so I simplified my approach by focusing on the essence of sculpture and the space it occupies. I was curious about how the interaction and alteration of space would affect



Sao Paulo, Brazil





S-PLAY, Pixelator Mini & PLink Injectors

ENTTEC's Pixelator system was a great addition, significantly boosting the functionality of the entire setup. It streamlined the process, making it easier to manage and optimize the performance of the LEDs. This integration allowed me to focus more on the creative aspects of my work, knowing that the technical aspects were well-supported.

Damon: And what about the S-PLAY show controller, which is rapidly becoming ENTTEC's flagship product? Presumably, you've been using that to play back shows that you've mapped and recorded via ELM, but have you had a chance to play around with triggers or events yet in order to potentially add a further interactive element to your installations?

Jason: The S-PLAY's versatility and utility have been a huge plus, along with the preset functions for timing and power management.

I am slowly exploring the ability to access the system remotely, which is slightly beyond my comfort zone in terms of technical knowledge. Not only that, I'm also starting to delve into the trigger functions. Although I am not a computer expert, I have found the program to be increasingly intuitive and fluid with time and effort.

I'm looking forward to collaborating with experts to implement these ideas more efficiently. I believe that incorporating music and various stages linked to trigger functions will add a wonderful, interactive dimension to the sculptures and enhance the overall experience.

Damon: Have you encountered any conceptual or technical challenges that you think ENTTEC products have helped you to overcome?

Jason: I've been using ENTTEC products for about two and a half years now, and they've been instrumental in overcoming various challenges.

It's great that ENTTEC keeps adding new things to their website, especially the tutorials that are very helpful. The more resources available, the deeper one can go into the ELM software. It would be fantastic to see a comprehensive course that people could engage with to better understand shortcuts and applications specific to the products.



Santa Catarina, Brazil

Having such targeted support has likewise made it easier to grasp the nuances of ENTTEC's offerings compared to others. This ongoing development and support have helped me use the products better, which has allowed me to focus more on the creative aspects of my work.

Damon: You've been in New York for quite some time now, which has perhaps one of the world's most vibrant art scenes. In your time here, you've been involved in all manner of projects, from large-scale public installations to more intimate gallery exhibitions. What brings you the most joy: working solo or as part of a collective show?

Jason: Being in New York has been incredible and priceless. Surviving here for 25 years says something about the resilience and opportunities this city offers. I've enjoyed working in both public spaces and gallery or museum settings. The greatest joy comes from realising an idea or project, which is both the most fun and the most challenging aspect of my work.

Big ideas, especially in the public sphere, cannot be executed alone. Collaboration is essential, involving everyone from park rangers and cleanup crews to the institutions managing the spaces. Flexibility is key to ensuring that everyone is on board and feels part of the project, which makes the entire process smoother and more enjoyable.

Working in public spaces is a particular honour and privilege. It allows me to interact with the fabric of the environment and be exposed to diverse situations that expand my perspective. This broader view enriches my work and my understanding of the world we live in. Ultimately, whether working solo or as part of a collective, the joy comes from seeing an idea come to life and knowing it resonates with others.

Damon: In taking stock of where you're at now, along with everything that has come before, how do you see your art evolving with current and future advancements in lighting and digital technologies?

Jason: When I think about the trajectory of my art in light in terms of future directions, I see a shift towards larger, more immersive installations. I'm excited to experiment with scale, aiming to craft experiences that envelop and engage larger crowds simultaneously.

The advancements in programmable LEDs, such as the current 24V systems and the upcoming 48V technologies, offer unparalleled flexibility. They enable me to showcase my work not only in the atmospheric darkness of night but also in the stark brightness of daylight, maintaining the desired impact and aesthetic quality.

I'm deeply drawn to the idea of integrating my sculptures with advanced lighting

designs or stages that enhance their programmability and interactivity. This synergy allows for dynamic, evolving visual narratives that respond to and interact with their environment and audience in real-time.

Moreover, my artistic vision extends to remote projects, where solar-powered and closed-system concepts play a crucial role. Nature has always been a profound inspiration for me, and I envision my creations harmoniously blending into untouched landscapes. These installations would serve as silent witnesses to the natural world, observed not only by human eyes but also by the unseen inhabitants of these wild places.

In essence, my journey in art is driven by a desire to combine technological innovation with the timeless beauty of nature, creating installations that captivate, inspire, and resonate with the deeper rhythms of our world.

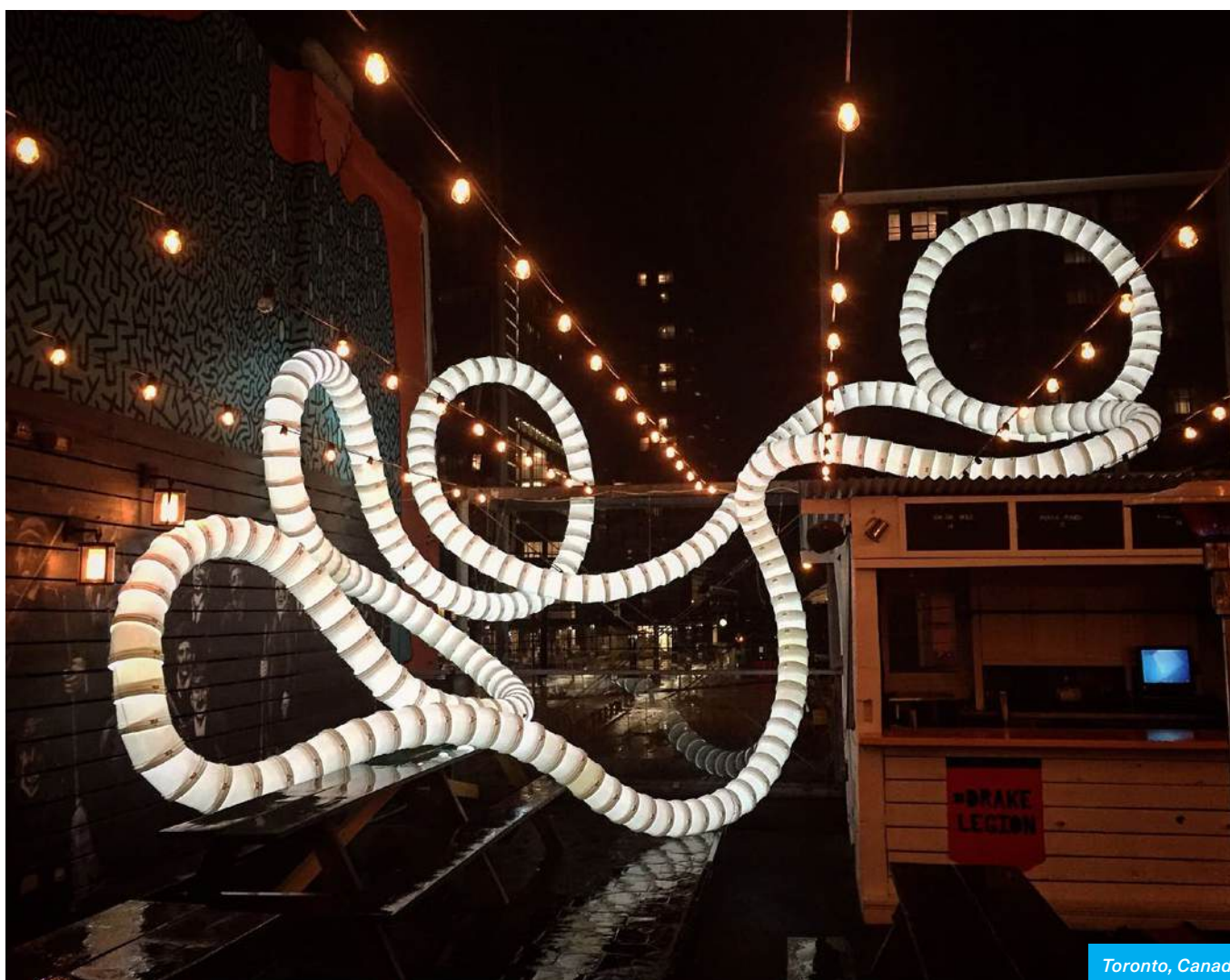
*Damon: Well, that they certainly do!
Thank you very much, Jason.*

www.instagram.com/jasonpetersart
www.jasonpeters.com
www.enttec.com



Maryland, USA

“In essence, my journey in art is driven by a desire to combine technological innovation with the timeless beauty of nature.”



Toronto, Canada



The Electric Canvas Brings Celebrated Artist's Work to Life

Architectural projection specialists, The Electric Canvas, combine both artistic and technical expertise under the one roof to deliver complete turnkey solutions for their client's projects. The company is well-known for blurring the lines between technical proficiency and creative flair.

TEC's creative scopes can range from designing a solitary but impactful static image for the Sydney Opera House sails to commemorate an official occasion, to producing a fully animated narrative son et lumière for the likes of Federation Square or Brisbane City Hall.

In addition to creating original content,

the company has had the pleasure of collaborating with commissioned artists, both established and emerging, from all genres and backgrounds, to help realise their vision onto some of our country's most iconic buildings. These artists have included such celebrated names as Yayoi Kusama, Reko Rennie, Lindy Lee, Poh Ling Yeow, Marie Clarke and Tony Albert. Most had no experience with projection mapping prior to working with The Electric Canvas.

TEC is often entrusted with adapting an artist's existing works for architectural projection, a process that must be carried out with great consideration and care. Massaging artistic assets from existing collections into rigid and sometimes unforgiving architectural canvasses requires a careful approach to the architectural form and how it interacts with the viewer. Great respect and understanding of the represented artwork must be maintained throughout the process. Although the art may be physically

influenced by the architecture onto which it will be projected, the original intent of the artist must always be preserved.

For this year's Enlighten Festival in Canberra, The Electric Canvas was engaged to create such a unique work for the façade of the National Gallery of Australia in collaboration with Archibald Prize winning artist, Vincent Namatjira OAM. Entitled 'Indigenous All Stars', the projection work coincided with and celebrated Namatjira's exhibition inside the gallery, 'Vincent Namatjira: Australia in Colour'.

The ambitious project, supported by TEC's ultra-high resolution technical installation, brought Namatjira's vision to life through light, movement and sound. TEC's creative team was tasked with transforming the artist's vibrant paintings into a projection work to illuminate the gallery's 60-metre brutalist style façade.

The artist himself was asked to create a



bespoke background painting using a special large-scale building template supplied by TEC. This background was then pathed, dissected and “healed” into separate complete layers of mountains, hills and trees that could then be animated to create depth and perspective.

From the outset, TEC’s artists knew that realising a project of such grand scale would require overcoming significant technical challenges. The assets provided were of enormous pixel dimensions, which was essential for maintaining clarity at such a large size. This resulted in significantly extended rendering times. To stay true to Namatjira’s original compositions, the backgrounds of the artworks needed to be extended and areas that were cropped or concealed in the original paintings had to be added. This process involved painstaking deep-etching, illustration and rigging, to ensure that each and every detail remained faithful to the source material. One such scene featured football players breaking out of their picture frames and joining a game of footy on the façade. This required the addition of limbs and features that were not part of the original art.

Arguably the most complex aspect of the project was the building itself. Far from a

simple, contiguous flat surface, the building’s sharp angles and negative space threatened to disrupt the flow of the animation. Ensuring a consistent and fluid visual experience required meticulous planning and execution to ensure it seamlessly navigated the gallery’s complex architectural features, taking into account wildly varying audience viewpoints. This was especially important in the football scene, which saw players running across several vertical columns, achieving the illusion of a continuous image while overcoming the obstacles of physical gaps, varying depths and architectural angles.

Throughout the project, TEC worked in close collaboration with Namatjira and his team to ensure the projection captured the essence of his work in a dynamic, larger-than-life format. The movement and colour palette were aligned with an evocative original score, composed by Namatjira and Jeremy Whiskey. Every decision, from the timing of animations to the interplay of colours, was made with the artist’s vision at the forefront.

Seeing ‘Indigenous All Stars’ come to life on the façade of the National Gallery was a moment of immense pride for The Electric Canvas’ team. The projection was more

than just a display – it was a living, breathing embodiment of Namatjira’s celebration of Indigenous leadership and excellence. Bringing these powerful portraits to life in such a public and impactful way was a testament to the exacting process and creative dedication that went into the project.

The artist was thrilled with the final result, so much so that he commissioned The Electric Canvas to adapt the architectural version of ‘Indigenous All Stars’ into a single-channel screen piece for display in an upcoming gallery exhibition. TEC was tasked with the challenge of condensing the NGA piece (some 12,000 wide by 4,000 pixels high) down to the size of a standard screen. Although it was impossible to keep each and every one of the subjects contained in the original work, it was vital that the integrity of the original show remained intact. Namatjira identified the characters and features he felt were essential to the work’s narrative and intent. Then TEC’s artists reworked the hundreds of assets and layers composited together for the NGA’s architecture to produce a new rendition of ‘Indigenous All Stars’ that the artist will be able to share with admirers of his work for years to come.



Monumental Live Event Launch for Robe iBOLTS in France

Robe's new iBOLT made its French debut in grand style at a recent 'Monumental' event at the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Laon Aisne in the Hauts-de-France.

Monumental is an interactive music and visual live experience concept imagined and presented by DJ, music producer and live experience innovator Michael Canitrot.

He has styled a series of these bespoke performances which are staged in and around some of France's most striking landmarks. Built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Laon Cathedral heritage site is one of the most important and stylistically unified examples of early French Gothic architecture.

The event's lighting was designed by Mikael (Mika) Trochu who specified the six iBOLTS, rented from Dushow, which were positioned in an arc around the DJ booth, so they were right at the epicentre of this special musical event.

Mikael worked alongside video mapping designer Jérémie Bellot from AV Extended and lighting and sound supplier Bendelight, plus the Monumental event technical directors, Martin Javouret and Enguerran de la Chevasnerie. They started with site surveys to establish what was possible, practical, and safe to install in terms of production.

Having previously used Robe fixtures – particularly MegaPointes – on other Monumental events, including another show here at this same venue in 2022, Mikael thought it was a perfect opportunity to experiment with the new iBOLT which was launched at Prolight+Sound in March this year.

Challenges included making a big impact with the event's lighting but also complementing the complex video being projected onto the 56-metre-high façade of the building. Tight, powerful beams were ideal to support this clearly defined graphical signature and Mikael thought iBOLT would be a perfect solution. He jumped at the chance to get his hands on them and integrate them into one of his designs.

"Working with new technology is always exciting," he commented, "and the iBOLTS didn't disappoint!"

He thought the fully focused beams would punch out into the night sky remaining tight and intact with no diffraction, projecting far away with its laser source, and sure enough, the definition and sharpness of the beam was

maintained even at a 200-metre distance, which he found impressive.

"This linear consistency is critical when lighting long or tall buildings and for wide-angle photos and video shoots where I can maintain a straight pencil-like effect combined with the video mapping which looks very cool, and it worked like a dream," he enthused.

He added that the iBOLT's 300mm fat lens size allows larger spaces to be filled with fewer fixtures which is handy for many scenarios. "It's a next-generation tracer light, free from the drawbacks of blurry beams, and I love it!" he declared.

While he would have liked more iBOLTS for this event to create more of a cage-like effect in front of the artist, the six fixtures achieved the effect "brilliantly – and exactly as I envisioned." He used them in conjunction with 14 MegaPointes, which were positioned on the ground and on a balcony approximately halfway up the Cathedral's façade.

During programming, he discovered a quirk that is also a positive feature which occurs

when the beam is fully defocused and opened – it spills around the internal optics creating a hot spot cone at the centre of the open beam, something that Mika found “remarkably appealing!” and incorporated into the show. “It’s an effect I will definitely be using again,” he stated. When discussing it with the Robe team, they acknowledged the idiosyncrasy and are equally intrigued, so it will be staying in the fixture for everyone’s creative benefit.

Mika also used the iBOLTS to create splintering beams shooting off in multiple directions as they interacted with concealed mirror balls, an effect that filled the lower parvis of the Cathedral façade with eye-popping shards of light radiating in every direction to ramp up the drama and energy.

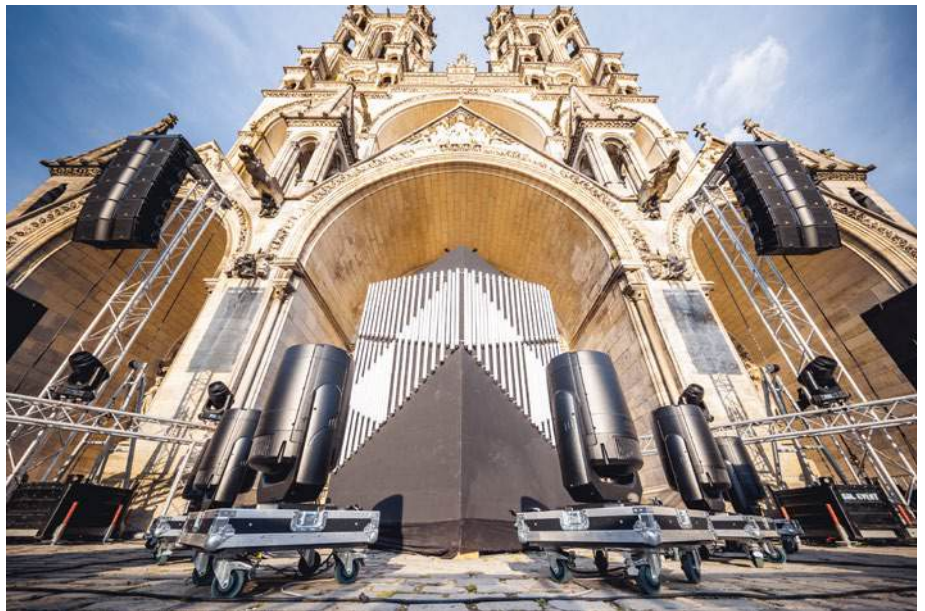
He thinks that the movement is quick, responsive, and remarkably quiet for a fixture of its scale and power.

The show was run partly from timecode and partly cued manually. Projectors were supplied by Leni (Leader des technologies de l'événementiel).

Mika also took time to ensure that the iBOLT's 500W laser light source would not be dipping below 45 degrees, scanning the audience, or getting in anyone's eyes, especially those sitting on people's shoulders.

With safety at the fore, Robe's patented, constantly scanning ScanGuard system instantly reduces the fixture's output if someone gets within an unsafe viewing distance.

The Monumental show was hugely successful and yet a unique musical and visual moment for Laon Cathedral, experienced live by over 3,000 spectators gathered on the square in front.



“Working with new technology is always exciting, and the iBOLTS didn't disappoint!”



Flexing Your Creativity

'Artistic' and 'creative' are not words you usually associate with the world of touch-enabled collaboration screens in the realm of corporate audio-visual installations. You're more likely to talk Teams certification and the screen's ability to email everyone meeting notes instead of its potential to unleash your inner Picasso.

For example, let's talk about the Newline Interactive FLEX 27" collaboration screen. It's got a 4K camera and an eight microphone array for video conferencing, two speakers and a sub, and a touch screen with its own Flex Pen that supports Windows Ink for document annotation. So far, so standard. What's a little out of the ordinary is that it was recently used by Jodene McKenzie of Brisbane AV integrator Macrosphere to create all the artworks you see pictured in this article.

Jodene is a Project Consultant, having started with AV company Direct National nine years ago, before it was absorbed as a division of Macrosphere at the end of 2023. With a degree in fine art from her native New Zealand, and an art teacher by trade, Jodene has found her place at the intersection of art and technology.

Jodene found herself on the Macrosphere stand at the recent School Business Manager Association QLD Conference on the Gold Coast (July 29 to August 1) with a Newline Interactive Flex screen to play with and decided to show people exactly what it could do.

"I wanted to show off the technical and artistic capacities of the screens we supply in a new and different way," explains Jodene. "A lot of people use them just as annotation tools; just big screens to put documents up on. I want to show people that you can take them much further in terms of applications and capacity. So, I did what I do best, which is drawing and colour. I used an application called Sketch, and just went in there and started drawing. I had the Flex connected to our larger screen as well, to make the set-up more like a typical collaborative space. People at the conference could actually watch the brush marks that I was making, the colours that I was using, and



the change of opacity. It was a demonstration on how far you can push the equipment and how far it's come."

With collaboration screens in the corporate world originally developed for nothing much more complicated than writing 'Yes' or 'No' over Word documents and pictures in digital red pen, it will surprise most to know that they are now capable of acting as sophisticated visual creation and manipulation tools.

"I've been creating on screens for the last four years, ever since the technology improved dramatically," outlines Jodene. "Touch screens for drawing and painting used to be clunkier and didn't cater to the creative realm, where you want it to feel like you're drawing on paper or painting on canvas. There was always a little bit of a lag; you'd do a brush mark with your hand, and then five seconds later, it would appear on the screen. The advancements in the technology have really helped the ability to create on the screens."

While collaboration screens haven't boasted the power to create fine art for long, tablets and touch screens aimed squarely at artists have been around for a while. "In my artistic career, I've used quite a few different drawing tablets," continues Jodene. "In particular, I used some of the earlier ones from Wacom and Huawei. The biggest difference between those and the Newline Flex is the fact that you can

have the Flex on an angle, so it can simulate drawing on a canvas on an easel, rather than paper on a table. Because it's got that beautiful tilt, I can have it in just the right position. The Newline Flex also has palm rejection, so I'm able to rest my palm on the screen to guide the brush marks I'm making. On other screens, you have to wear a little glove that will stop your palm from registering on the touch screen, but on the Newline Flex, your palm doesn't register as a brush mark; it doesn't register anything else but the Flex Pen or your finger. It's a small improvement that makes a huge difference. I think Newline have done really well creating a device that can be used not only as a conferencing or classroom device, but also as an artistic tablet."

Capacitive screens like the Newline Flex allow you to draw and annotate with your fingers, but many, including the Flex, come with their own dedicated drawing hardware. "Coming from an art background, it is nicer to have a drawing utensil," admits Jodene. "The biggest difference moving to the Flex is that the included Flex Pen has a pressure sensitive tip, so I'm able to control how much 'ink' is flowing into the digital canvas."

With the new graphics and interactive powers available in products like the Newline Flex, has Jodene seen Macrosphere's customers adopt the new workflows they enable? "Some of our larger school customers already have



Artist, Jodene McKenzie



this technology in their graphics and design classrooms,” observes Jodene. “As the Flex is quite a new product, there’s a lot of work to be done to introduce that creative workflow into the classroom. If you connect the Flex to another interactive panel that is up on the wall or on a trolley, you can collaborate with the people that are presenting creatively. It’s about encouraging schools and communities to be more creative with the technology that they are bringing on board, because they can push it to create astounding outcomes.”

www.macrosphere.com.au
newline-interactive.com
www.ambertech.com.au



Stefan Vinke as Siegfried and Lise Lindstrom as Brünnhilde

OPERA AUSTRALIA REIMAGINES THE RING CYCLE WITH BLACKTRAX

In 2023, Opera Australia (OA) brought Wagner's groundbreaking *The Ring Cycle* to life at Brisbane's Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC). Renowned as the pinnacle of opera, Wagner's *Ring Cycle* spans 15 epic hours performed over four nights, featuring a collective of 83 musicians and 102 voices performing some of the most transformative music ever written.

The visionary behind this epic was Chinese theatre director Chen Shi-Zheng, who challenged traditional opera boundaries by introducing the world's first digital *Ring* into the performance. The production was a fusion of futuristic storytelling and cutting-edge technology, featuring giant LED panels that spun, tracked, and flew to create an immersive, mesmerising virtual world for the audience.

At the heart of this technological marvel is John Llewelyn, Deputy Head of Lighting at Opera Australia, who, along with his team, skilfully harnessed the power of BlackTrax to bring Chen Shi-Zheng's ambitious vision to life.

Having worked at Opera Australia for nearly five years, John witnessed the transformative

journey OA has embarked on in terms of their productions and the technology utilised. In 2018, OA began modernising their repertory opera process by investing in their first moving light rig, which featured state-of-the-art fixtures including Mac Encore Performances, Encore Wash, Aura XBs, and Ayrton Wildsun S25s. BlackTrax, the real-time tracking solution from CAST Group of Companies, played a crucial role in this modernisation effort. It was used alongside followspots to illuminate performers and track people and props, sending live tracking data to the video server. This dual use of BlackTrax facilitated a seamless integration of lighting and video, enhancing the audience's immersive experience.

"The integration of BlackTrax was revolutionary for us as a creative department. Video elements, known as 'Notches,' could track performers around the stage, creating a seamless blend of lighting and video which was something we had never experienced before. Seeing the video integration come to life was extremely special, and the accuracy of the tracking from day one was impressive," explains John.

Since trialling BlackTrax in 2018 as part of their exploration of lighting automation, the system's flexibility and accuracy met the diverse needs of OA's productions, and it's a key reason it is still in use today. John further explains; "Unlike other systems tested, BlackTrax provided the



“This production of The Ring Cycle not only set a new standard for opera but also showcased the transformative potential of technology in live performances.”

Stefan Vinke as Siegfried



Stefan Vinke as Siegfried and aerialist Asher Bowen-Saunders

ability to be deployed across vastly different productions while maintaining the high level of accuracy required for an excellent show. The integration with WYSIWYG, a lighting design tool and visualiser, was a significant advantage, allowing the lighting team to progress further in the design process during the test build, even when all lights couldn't be hung."

A standout feature of BlackTrax was its ability to handle a large number of rehearsals with a limited number of beacons. "We could assign two sets of beacons to each performance and pair them together, so no matter which set we used, the tracking just worked. This feature eliminated the need to reassign beacons for each rehearsal, significantly reducing the risk of errors."

Opera Australia's aim to create something truly unique with The Ring Cycle resulted in the development of the first digital Ring. This innovative design used towering LED panels as the set's backbone, complemented by a few large physical set pieces.

Introducing new innovations and integrations, especially in theatre, can present logistical challenges. John and his team faced such challenges while assembling the complex setup. Despite the limited time available, they managed to overcome these obstacles. They had only four days to install everything at QPAC before rehearsals began, so to ensure a smooth process, the team conducted a test build at another venue before moving to QPAC, which allowed them to fine-tune the technical elements and plot out the lighting in advance.

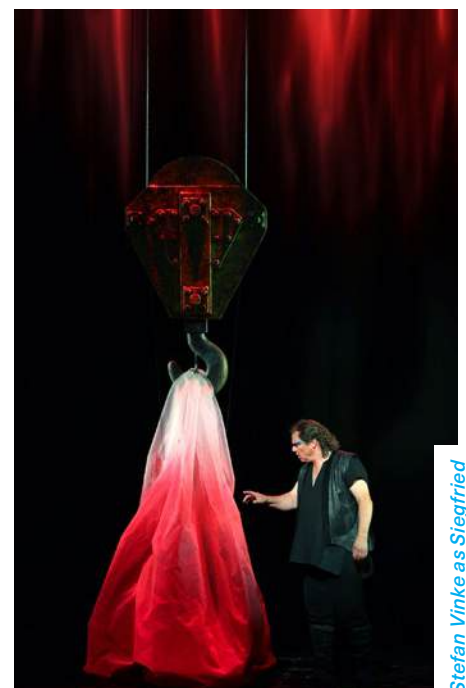
The ability to transform any moving light into a followspot through the use of BlackTrax was a game-changer for Opera Australia, especially on a complex production like The Ring Cycle. This capability eliminated the logistical challenges of setting up followspots in difficult locations and allowed creatives to achieve the perfect angle for their lighting design. In addition to lighting performers on stage with



Liane Keegan as Erda and Daniel Sumegi as Wotan

moving light automation, the system enabled the creation of interactive video content. John concludes; "The accuracy of BlackTrax has added an extra touch of magic to The Ring Cycle, making the tracking seamless and the visual effects stunning, an expectation set by the director and a continuous goal achieved by our lighting team."

"There's no denying that Opera Australia's The Ring Cycle was a testament to the power of innovation in the arts," says Dekkar Densham, Global Sales Director at CAST Group of Companies. "It's been encouraging to witness OA's journey with BlackTrax and see firsthand the results through the breathtaking immersive production John and his team have been able to create. This production of The Ring Cycle not only set a new standard for opera but also showcased the transformative potential of technology in live performances. Watch this space," adds Densham.



Stefan Vinke as Siegfried

PAINTE-ING GIGANT

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland



Simon Kemme (Gigant technical manager), Wim Stephanus (intern), and Kuno van Velzen (Controllux)

ROBE STYLE

Gigant is an arts and performance complex in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, comprising two theatre spaces, a movie house, recording studios, a music venue (popzaal) and a café, an invigorating creative space where people can soak up multiple types of performance, expression, live entertainment and storytelling.

The cosy 550-capacity popzaal is a well-known hang out for music fans and a fantastic showcase for catching rising stars, artists, and ones-to-watch as they build their fanbases, and the venue also has a history with Robe moving lights.

The latest Robe products to be installed are PAINTES, CUETES and LEDBeam 150s which arrived at the end of 2023.

Technical manager Simon Kemme has been working at Gigant for three and a half years and explains that it is one of a genre of multifunctional cultural buildings built throughout the Netherlands – in this case in 1994 – which has encouraged the arts to flourish.

Before taking up the post here, he was a freelance sound and lighting technician who has worked with, and appreciated, Robe products for a long time, especially for their reliability and versatility.

Gigant's popzaal, open Thursdays through Sunday each week, already had some Robe fixtures in the house when he arrived in 2021; VIVAs and ColorSpot 250 ATs, the latter still working after many years of service!

"It was time for new lights; it's as simple as that," he explained, adding that he was asked by superiors to propose an appropriate lighting upgrade. Searching for the best options, he immediately hit on the Robe combination.

"It was always going to be Robe," he stated, "My experience makes me very confident about the brand – it's reliable and flexible enough to cover the range of shows we stage here," and he also wanted good colour mixing, so reached out to Netherlands' distributor Controllux's Maikel Sackers who rocked up for a demo.

Even before seeing the PAINTES for real, going off the spec, he was convinced they were ideal for the venue. Then he saw how well they worked with the LEDBeam 150s and picked these for the bulk of the overhead rig. The four CUETES are part of the floor package, and were ordered the same way as the PAINTES, when Simon realised they would be a perfect complement to the other lights.

All these fixtures are well sized for their stage space which is compact, with 4.5 metres of headroom, and Simon underscores the viability and value elements of Robe product ranges with the fact that they are also rider friendly.

The 16 LEDBeam 150s, 12 PAINTES and the CUETES are now in action and helping to create fantastic light shows for the venue's busy live music programme which embraces an eclectic programme, with anything from jazz to death metal.

Simon comments that the CUETE and PAINTE'S TRANSFERABLE ENGINE (TE) technology make the fixtures extremely cost-effective and offers proper longevity through being able to easily replace the LED source.

"We were looking for an investment that would stay relevant for at least 5 years here, but we all know that with Robe, in reality, this will be considerably longer."

He mentioned that should they upgrade again in the music venue, any of these fixtures could also be transferred to one of the theatres and work in this environment as well, especially the PAINTES with the shuttering system.

The LEDBeam 150s are ideal as they can be a good beam and a wash light that fits well with the size and clearance of the stage.

Simon highlights the continuity between the colours of all three fixture types, and the compatibility of their colour mixing systems as "another big advantage of purchasing Robe."

Sometimes it all gets too much...



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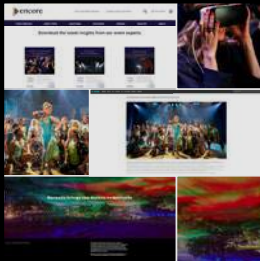
Sonic Sphere is an ever-evolving concert hall for the 21st Century. Conceived in the tradition of German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen’s Kugelauditorium, a nearly spherical concert hall built for the 1970 World Expo in Osaka, Sonic Sphere is the brainchild of Ed Cooke, a British cognitive science expert and entrepreneur, sound architect Merijn Royaards, and engineering director Nicholas Christie. Since 2021, Cooke and his team have built Sonic Spheres in France, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and the United States, including at the Burning Man festival. Each time, the hall has grown bigger; the sphere at The Shed in New York City is the 11th and most advanced sphere, after iterations of increasing size and technical sophistication.

The result is the first Sonic Sphere to be suspended in air, costing more than \$2 million. The infrastructure includes 1,178 steel struts, 3,500 yards of cloth, and 12 structural cables supporting the sphere from the roof. The vast, 65-foot-diameter spherical concert hall has a capacity of roughly 250 people, who

sit or lie in netted areas. This revolutionary new architectural space features immersive, 3-D sound and light explorations of music by boundary-pushing artists. Within the sphere, guests are surrounded by 124 meticulously arranged loudspeakers that move sound above, below, through, and around the

body. Sound and light waves are sculpted into spatialized, temporal architectures. Together, they create hyperreal and deeply multisensory, shared experiences. To power the immersive experience, the creative team behind the Sonic Sphere turned to the award-winning amplifiers from LEA Professional.

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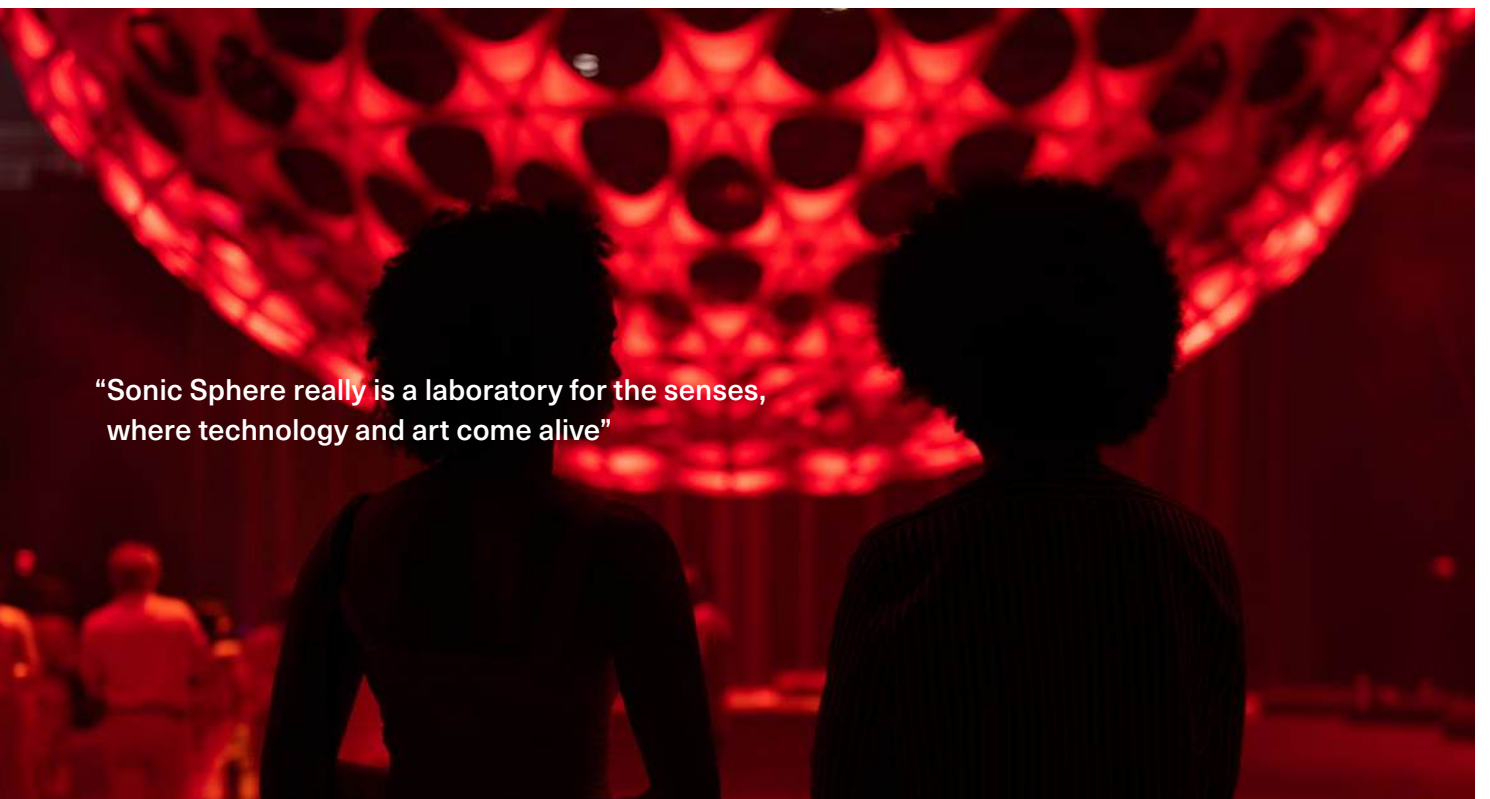


“We were amazed with the LEA Amplifiers,” said Merijn Royaards, Creative Director at Sonic Sphere. “The footprint of each amplifier was a lot smaller, they perform over and above what we were used to, and they’ve got a really helpful interface and an excellent way of tuning a system, which we were missing very much with our previous solution. And suddenly, many previously difficult or impossible things were easy for us to accomplish.”

Sonic Sphere installed 31 Connect Series 354D amplifiers to power the immersive audio experience. With 96kHz-capable Dante and AES67 connectivity options, the IoT-enabled 4-channel 354D provides 350 watts per channel into 2, 4, and 8 ohms, and 70Vrms and 100Vrms. The CS354D includes advanced DSP with 96kHz linear phase FIR crossover filters, acoustically transparent look ahead RMS and peak limiters, and 32-bit floating-point DSP with built-in sample rate converters. It also supports high-Z (70V or 100V) and low-Z selectable by channel and features two Smart Power Bridge channels.

The Connect Series delivers an industry-first professional amplifier family to feature cloud connectivity, a revolutionary advancement and a significant benefit for anyone maintaining the systems. With LEA Cloud, AV teams can remotely control and monitor the amplifiers regardless of the location or time of day. Whether from within the sphere or a different continent, controlling the Connect Series amplifiers from afar helps teams work more efficiently, reducing travel and saving time and money.

“Sonic Sphere really is a laboratory for the senses, where technology and art come alive,” said Brian Pickowitz, VP of Marketing at LEA Professional. “We’re very proud to have played a role in such a transcendental experience.”



“Sonic Sphere really is a laboratory for the senses, where technology and art come alive”

ELATION DELIVERS DYNAMIC PULSE FOR FIRST EVER LIVE BROADCAST FROM SPHERE

**LIGHTING DESIGNER
TOM KENNY DEBUTS
PULSE PANEL FX
FOR THE NHL DRAFT
IN LAS VEGAS**

When veteran lighting designer Tom Kenny was called on to light a reimagined NHL Draft at the incomparable Las Vegas Sphere – the first ever live TV broadcast from that extraordinary space – he knew he needed something special for the main frame television shot and chose multi-dynamic PULSE Panel FX lights from Elation to back the all-important look.

A 21st Century Spectacle

Evolving from a traditional convention-style draft to a 21st century show at arguably the most talked about venue in the U.S., the NHL dazzled players and fans recently with a visually striking broadcast that redefined what a sports draft can be.

“The NHL Draft at the Sphere was just amazing and out of this world,” Kenny enthused. “This was really an historical show, and we needed a modern look for this new way to hold a draft. I wanted something that was epic and futuristic looking in that main television shot, and even though you’re up against the biggest backlight in the world with its amazing content, the PULSE looked beautiful and won over a lot of hearts.” Indeed, Kenny reported widespread praise from NHL executives, teams, and the TV network for a job well done.

Acclaimed Designer

When the NHL decided to elevate the draft experience by hosting it at the Sphere, they sought a top-tier designer with extensive large broadcast TV and touring experience and tapped Kenny for the job. Already familiar with the venue from his early consulting work on the Sphere project, Kenny also has long-time associations with Willie Williams and the entire U2 crew (including Allen Branton and Felix Peralta), who opened the Sphere last fall, not to mention his own experienced crew, all of whom provided the designer with valuable venue insight.

PULSE PANEL FX

Featuring arrays of RGB and cool-white LEDs across its large face, the PULSE Panel FX is ideal for direct view applications like TV visuals, while zone control opens up myriad design possibilities. Panel rotation ensures flexible positioning, while continuous 360° pan/spin and 180° tilt add an extra level of dynamism.

Supplied for the NHL Draft by Fuse Technical Group, the fixtures generate a powerful 100,000 lumens, though Kenny only needed to use them at a fraction of that output. “We didn’t have the chance to show them off as much as we could have,” he said, referring to their multi-functional strobe/blinder/wash light/eye candy capability, “but with that amount of power, I can see it being used on big events, tours, and stadium/arena type shows.”

Highlighting New Technology

Kenny, who has a tradition of being the first to use new lighting technology in a real-world application, jumped at the chance to debut the PULSE Panel FX. “I have always enjoyed

Photo Credit: Brian Carico

INTERNATIONAL

moving forward with new technology and knowing that Elation has launched some beautiful, high-tech lights of late, I was eager to incorporate them into my design," he said.

"Especially in TV, the backgrounds are very important so I was happy to get a new and interesting product in that upstage position, right in the main frame where it can be seen and make an impact. And it worked! The PULSE has this very modern, high-tech look, like something out of Star Wars or a modern video game, and they have all the tricks that we've always liked and wanted. They just blew us all away."

Subtle to Energetic

Characterising the modernised NHL Draft as an "artistic and elegant show," Kenny placed 14 PULSE Panel FX fixtures upstage in a semi-circle, prominently displayed throughout the two-day event for "subtle eye-candy bling" in camera shots. Additionally, Kenny created more energetic looks for camera shots when players were drafted.

"Whenever there was a pick, programmers Scott Cunningham and Han Heinz gave us some great ballyhoo looks for the in-house audience," Kenny said, noting that it wasn't visible on camera as they cut away to the draft pick. "But it looked great in-house and cut through the heavy lumens of the giant screen, which is very difficult."

Kenny added that because the show was filmed in 360-degrees, the back of the PULSE fixture occasionally showed in the frame, but that didn't concern him. "The fixture has beautiful lines and even the back of it looks good, like sitting behind a beautiful car."

Due to the high demand for the Sphere, which runs a unique "Sphere Experience: Postcard from Earth" show multiple times a day, the crew had to load in and out twice daily. "You need lights that can handle constant movement and don't mind being recalibrated. Another great thing about the PULSE is that they worked every time," Kenny concluded.



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Robert Juliat Dalis 864 Footlights Join Justin Timberlake's Forget Tomorrow World Tour

Cory FitzGerald, the lighting designer for Justin Timberlake's ongoing The Forget Tomorrow World Tour, and senior partner at Burbank-based creative studio, Silent House, is using 30 Robert Juliat 864 LED asymmetric footlights featuring a four-colour mixing system to line the stage at the singer-songwriter's shows. ACT Entertainment is the exclusive North American distributor of Robert Juliat lighting.

The tour, which commenced in April and will continue until spring of next year, is Timberlake's seventh headlining concert tour and his first in five years. It's in support of his sixth studio album, Everything I Thought It Was, and has scheduled dates in North America through the rest of 2024.

FitzGerald had used RJ Dalis footlights on other productions, including shows for Kendrick Lamar. "I had the Dalis 862 all-white footlights on Justin's one-off shows this year before the tour launched," he says. "When the Dalis 864 colour version became available I decided to use them for the tour. They line the downstage edge of the main stage quite effectively, providing foot lighting and key light fill for Justin, the dancers and the band."

Solotech, Montreal is supplying the Dalis 864 footlights, having acquired a large

inventory of the fixtures to service the requirements of the tour.

"The Dalis 864s are very versatile and fill a gap in the market with a size and low profile that can easily tuck into places where lighting is needed," FitzGerald explains.

"The footlights are also bright, have good colour and offer one or four groups control mode. I particularly like the near and far focus feature, so they can be adjusted as the performer moves around the stage: you don't have to choose one focus and stick with it."

Looking ahead, FitzGerald sees the Dalis line as his go-to fixtures when he needs great footlights. "That's a very specific niche, but the Dalis are part of my toolkit now when the need arises for great footlights."



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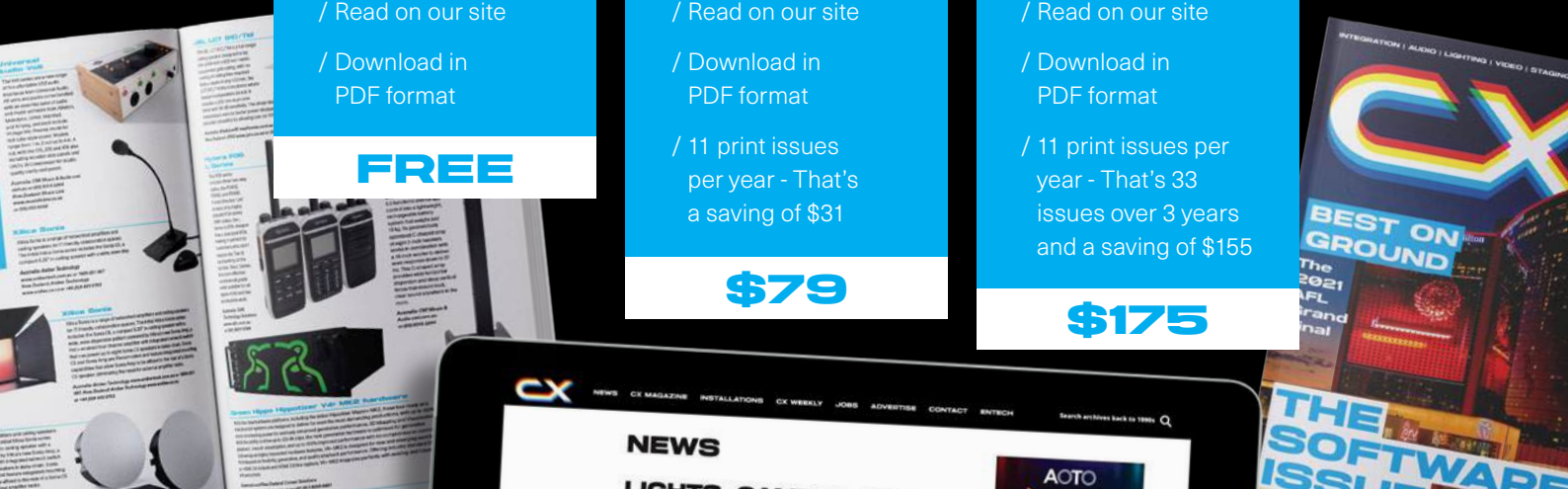
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Groundbreaking Spatial
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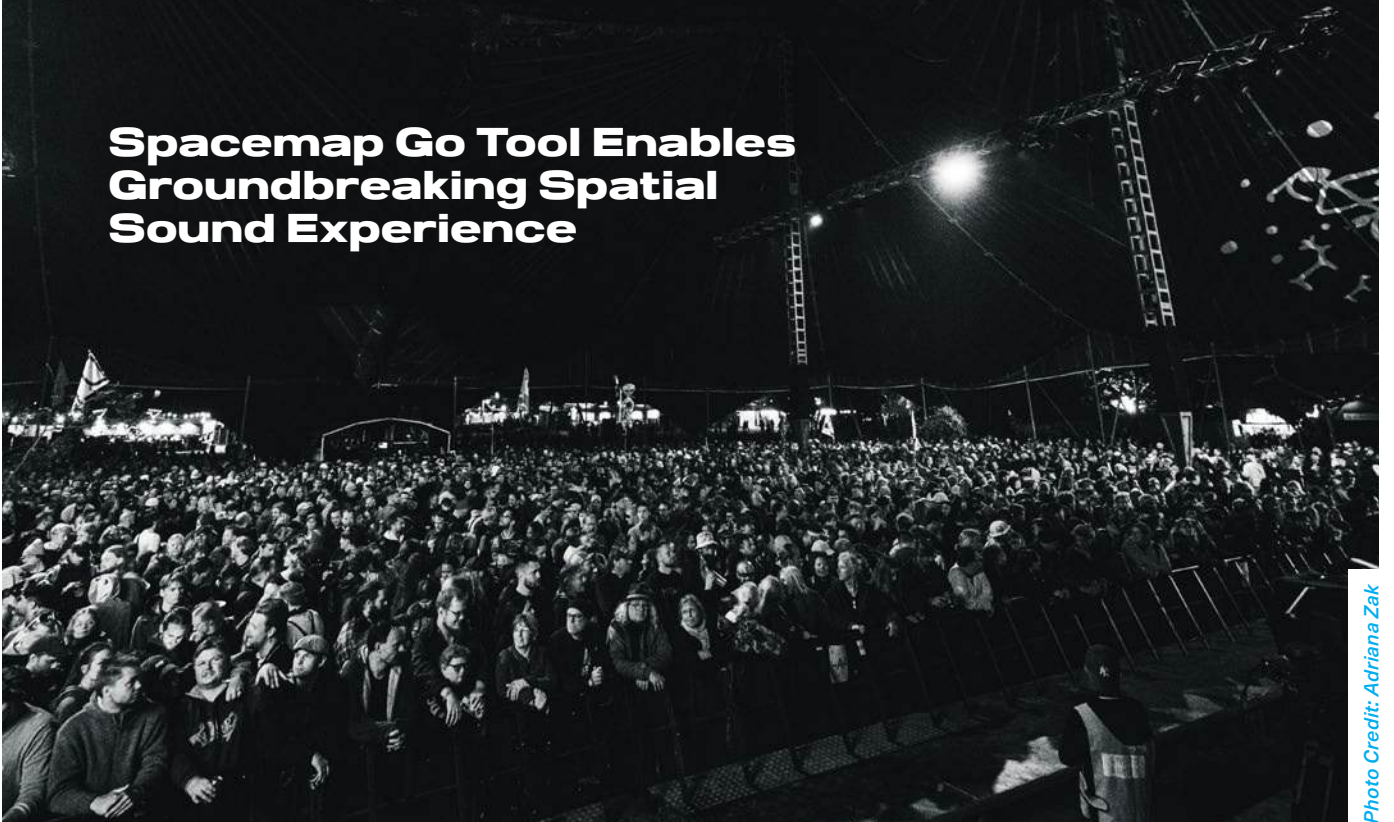


Photo Credit: Adriana Zak

Roskilde Festival, Europe's largest and longest-running music festival, is known for pushing creative boundaries and giving artists palettes to explore new sonic possibilities, made possible through collaboration with its exclusive sound provider, Meyer Sound.

In 2024, Roskilde's sonic experiments reached new heights with an immersive performance by Nordic experimental folk collective Heilung, powered by Meyer Sound's Spacemap Go spatial sound design and mixing tool.

Essentially a theatre production on a rock stage, Heilung draws from ancestral cultures

dating back to the Iron Age. Performances evoke ancient pagan rituals, combining throat singing, field recordings, and instruments crafted from stones, animal skins, and bones to create the otherworldly music the group describes as "Amplified History."

"Heilung is an immersive experience in terms of a sort of shamanistic ritual that already immerses the audience in a spiritual way," says bandleader Christopher Juul. "What we wanted to do here was to bring that into the audio-visual part of the performance. We also tried to figure out, what can we do with this technology. What are the physical limitations, and how do we bend them? And we got to some quite interesting things."

For two months, Heilung worked closely with Meyer Sound Technical Support Specialist Arve Gotfredsen in Denmark, learning

Spacemap Go, preparing sounds in the studio, and gradually scaling up production. "When we started out, Arve came and put up a much smaller system in our recording room, where we started to work out all of the ideas," says the band's long-time FOH engineer, Finn Jansen. On this 1:10 scale system, it was possible to simulate the full-scale system and experience the physical limitations of the large arena tent. "We moved from there to a small venue with a capacity of 400 people, and we scaled up the speaker system. That's where we were really convinced that this was going to be great. And then we got to the Arena stage, with 17,000 people."

Roskilde's Arena tent is a cavernous structure measuring 70 meters wide and 50 meters deep. Its Meyer Sound system centred around 46 Panther large-format linear array

loudspeakers paired with 24 2100-LFC low-frequency control elements, supported by 10 Leopard compact linear array loudspeakers; 36 Leopard loudspeakers and six 900-LFC low-frequency control elements served as delays. For the Heilung performance the existing system was augmented using ground stacks consisting of a single 2100-LFC plus 4 Panther and additional flown ULTRA-X40 loudspeakers. With the whole system controlled by Galileo Galaxy Network Platforms, connected via Milan, every loudspeaker location was available in Spacemap Go.

From the outset, Heilung's spatial approach was more about atmosphere than special effects. "On a creative level, I've been thinking a lot about it in the same way as when 3D imaging was coming into cinemas," says Juul. "Do we want this 3D thing to go directly into our face and shock us? It can be fun once in a while as a gimmick, but for a whole movie, that can be a little bit too much. We rather want to go deep."

This strategy also sidestepped latency issues inherent in synchronising rhythmic sounds across vast distances. "The Arena stage is a big stage, which presents an obstacle in terms of sound travel over time," Juul explains. "So we could not have, for instance, the drummer in one speaker and the singer in another. The solution we came up with was sounds that put you in specific locations. That could be nature sounds, or if it was a futuristic passage, that could be sci-fi sounds or city soundscapes, whatever."



Photo Credit: Uncle Allan

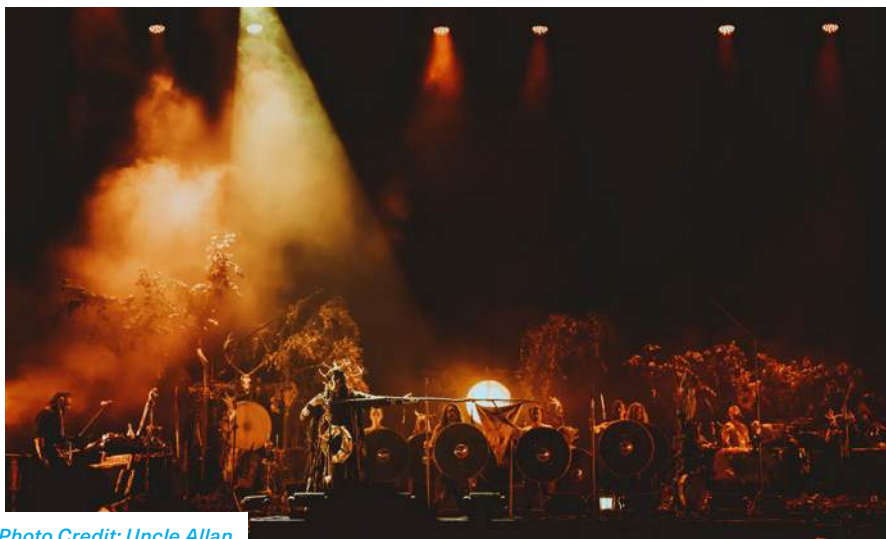


Photo Credit: Uncle Allan



Photo Credit: Uncle Allan



Photo Credit: Adriana Zak

“We fed the X40s with a matrix from the desk with different reverbs and sound effects,” Jansen explains. “Together with the acoustics of the tent, that creates the feeling of being in a cathedral or something more like that than a tent. I think the Galileo [Galaxy processor] is the heart of everything we are doing here, because it’s possible to create that good matrix, and we can still change it from time to time.”

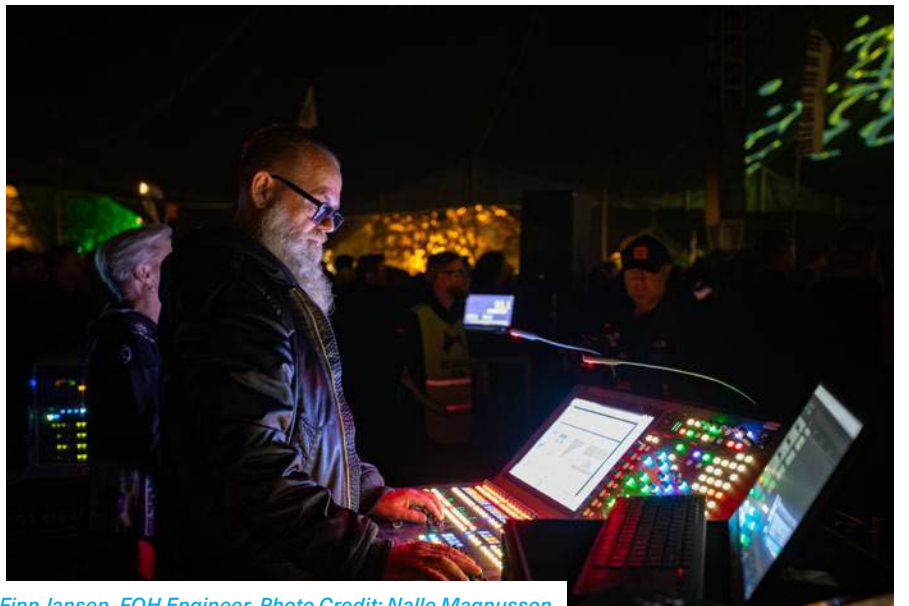
Heilung’s groundbreaking performance was one of the many ways Meyer Sound pushed the boundaries of immersive sound at Roskilde, including research into spatial system design at the Gloria stage and a spatial tent at the Artist Village, which offered engineers, artists, and producers a chance to get hands-on with spatial sound tools, in collaboration with Denmark’s Sonic College.

“My hope for a successful Roskilde Festival as far as spatial goes would be to come back next year and see the seeds that we planted this year blossom into spatial experiences for the audiences and new creative experiences for those making the art,” says Meyer Sound Technical Support Specialist Leonard Blanche, who collaborated with engineers onsite.

For Heilung, the Roskilde immersive performance was just the beginning. “We are just at the baby steps of something completely new, and it’s very exciting to talk about creatively,” says Juul. “I’m very proud that we have been part of this experiment and there’s so much heart in it from all of the people behind it, from Meyer and the Roskilde Festival and Sonic College - all these people coming together to make the best performance possible.”



Photo Credit: Nalle Magnusson



Finn Jansen, FOH Engineer. Photo Credit: Nalle Magnusson



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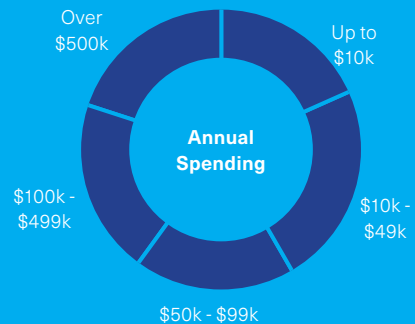
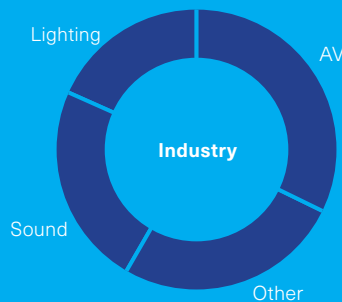
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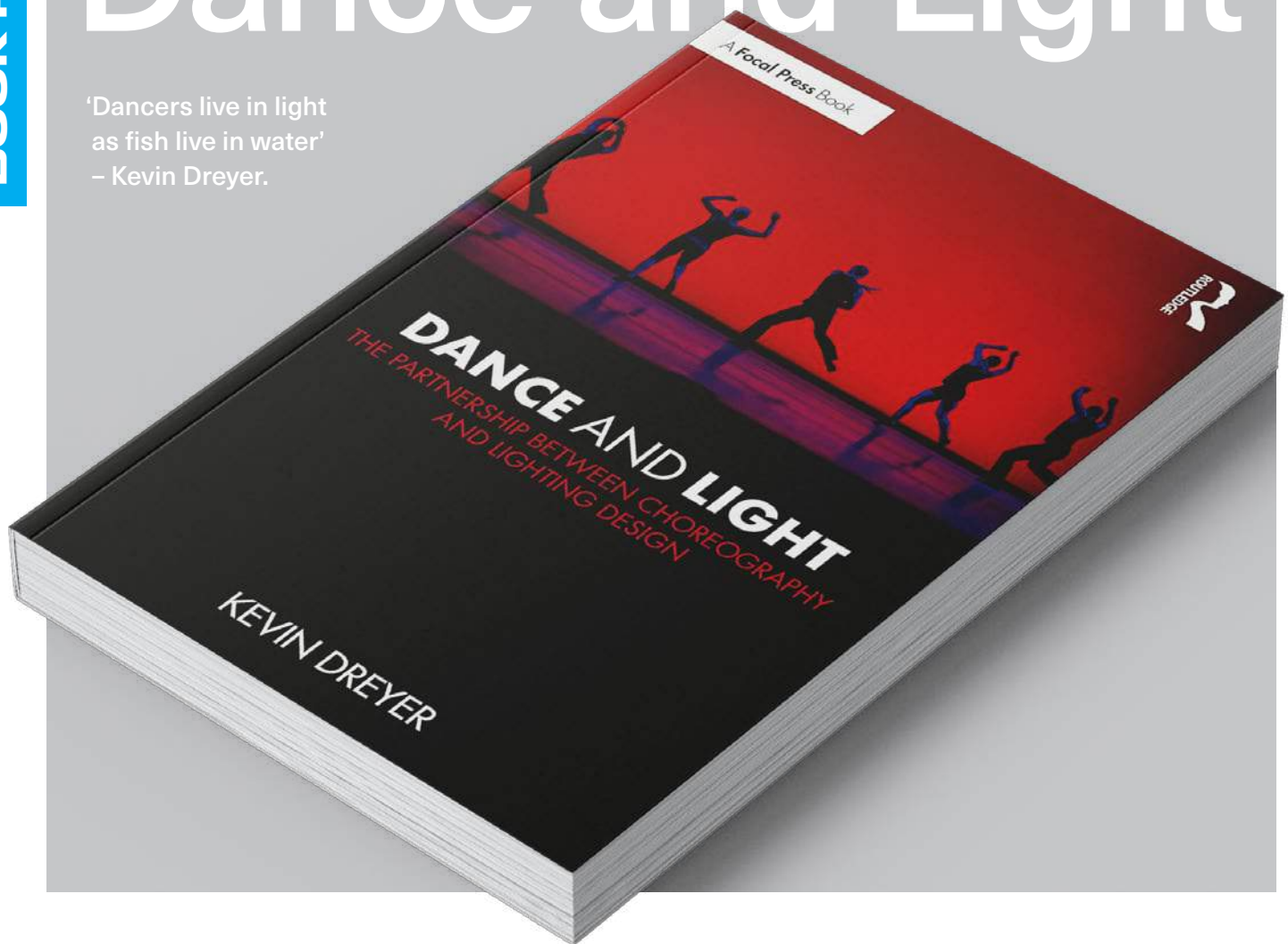
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Dance and Light

'Dancers live in light
as fish live in water'
– Kevin Dreyer.



The Partnership Between Choreography and Lighting Design, *by Kevin Dreyer*

Dance and Light: The Partnership Between Choreography and Lighting Design, is a book by Kevin Dreyer, freelance lighting designer and Professor of Theatre at the University of Notre Dame, and resident lighting designer for the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival – that examines the relationship between movement (dance) and design (light). The book provides an in-depth discourse about the partnership that exists between the two, and different approaches that designers can take to enhance dance performances through lighting design.

The author shares anecdotes and ideas from an almost 50-year career as a lighting designer, along with practical examples and insights. He also stresses the importance of clear communication between designers, choreographers, and dancers.

Dance and Light is an unconventional book. Although educational in nature, it's not written as a textbook but rather is laid out in short chapter form. Although it's a book about two visual artforms – dance and light – ironically, it features next to no pictures.

Who is the book for?

Dance and Light is a book aimed squarely at lighting designers and operators who might be considering either a move into dance lighting, or looking to light a particular dance

piece. It's also well suited to any student or teacher of lighting design that wishes to incorporate a dance component into their curriculum, or anyone involved (or looking to get involved) in the creative process for live dance: choreographers, set designers, even producers and directors.

The main takeaway that Kevin Dreyer asserts in his book is that good lighting designers always take great interest in what they're lighting. It stands to reason, of course, that if you're lighting a band you know about their story, their music and the genre to which they are associated. Similarly, if you're lighting a musical, you understand the play and the actors, or if you're doing a corporate event, you know about the company, its products and its people. Dreyer asserts that it is the accumulation of these small pieces of information that separates good lighting designers from the great ones, and from where many of the best lighting ideas emerge.

Dance and Light: The Partnership Between Choreography and Lighting Design is written for a very specific readership. It's a niche book that goes a mile deep on a topic an inch wide. Its 288 pages are not light reading by any means, so if you're not part of the creative process for live dance, or if you have no aspirations in the field, this book won't be for you.

What I liked (and didn't like) about the book

You always have to appreciate a book written by an expert in the field as opposed to an academic; it adds that much more credibility to the text. This is certainly the case here with Kevin Dreyer's book. What Dance and Light: The Partnership Between Choreography and Lighting Design offers is a first-hand look at how a highly credentialled dance lighting designer approaches his job. Dreyer's working methods are centred mainly around getting to know a dance piece

first, well before the lighting is imagined, and here he places great emphasis on effective communication rather than the technical aspects of lighting and lighting design.

For me personally, being a 'lighting guy', I wished there had been a bit more technical lighting information in the book; perhaps a few tips and tricks for using booms, best angles, colours and looks as they pertain to dance. This would have improved my impression of the book substantially. To that end, it was actually quite revealing to note just how far down the list of working priorities the technical nuances of lighting were to the author. But I suppose the book is titled 'Dance and Light' after all, not 'Light and Dance'.

Being a visual person, I would have loved to have seen more photos of the author's work scattered throughout the book. This seems like an obvious opportunity lost, given Dreyer's level of experience in the industry. There was even an author's note specifically addressing this omission – that it was a conscious choice. This is ultimately somewhat frustrating. The front cover has a very attractive photo, and to my mind more of this could have carried over into the book.

Verdict

Readability: 7/10

Dance and Light: The Partnership Between Choreography and Lighting Design, is an interesting read, no question. Although I'm outside the small niche of the book's ideal readership, I was still able to get through it comfortably, and found the book to be both well written and constructed; its shorter chapters helping in this regard.

Supporting materials: 3/10

There were next to no supporting materials in the book; and here, as mentioned, photos in particular would have been a nice addition

to both break things up a little, and offer examples of the topics being discussed to help support the text. More supporting materials would have made it a more interesting read and helped with the overall readability of the book.

Relevance: 9/10

For anyone interested in dance lighting, this book is the perfect fit. It's well written by an expert in the field, sharing his approach, stories and best practices for lighting of both classical and contemporary dance pieces. If you're looking to design lights for dance pieces and you're after an approach or perspective from someone who's been in the game for decades, this is the ideal book for you.

Usefulness: 5/10

Dance and Light: The Partnership Between Choreography and Lighting Design is a good read, although I'm not sure it's a tome you would come back to repeatedly, even if you considered yourself one of the book's target audience. It's not written as a reference text with specific information or guiding principles on how to light dance. What it offers are insights and approaches that could be tailored to suit any type of lighting.

Value for money: 7/10

The question of value for money is a very subjective concept anyway, but here it's perhaps almost impossible to gauge, given the nature of the book. Does it have educational value with concrete teaching points that can be drawn from, or is it more of a fun, storytelling read from an author whose experience in the field of dance lighting is well regarded? That is ultimately up to the reader to decide.

Total: 31/50: 4 Stars

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¹Passion, Pride, Pitfalls Dec 2014

AYRTON KYALAMI

The Ayrton Kyalami is one of the more unique looking lighting fixtures we have seen in quite some time; a moving light that almost looks like a dome camera. For those familiar, it is an upgrade from the Ayrton MagicDot, which was first released in 2015.



The fixture lays claim to a 1 degree beam, which could be considered to be its main selling point. It is IP65 rated and features infinite pan and tilt.

The Kyalami is a laser source moving head. It has a phosphor laser source, as opposed to the

typical RGB laser source (also known as direct laser) found more often in laser source lighting fixtures.

Construction

The Kyalami is bigger than I thought it was going to be. I only had stock photos to go off, but it's bigger than a MAC Aura, but not quite as big as a Sharpy. It's heavier than it looks. I

really like the way it looks, and I appreciate that Ayrton are trying to make a different looking light. It also has some functional advantages too, as you can place them right next to each other and they won't touch if they pan and tilt. They also go in and out of a roadcase easier than just about any light I've ever seen. The Kyalami is IP65 rated, which is becoming standard for most Ayrton fixtures; a smart move. Although heavier than I first thought, at 14.5kg it is still on the lighter side and a relatively simple one-person lift.

Direct/RGB Laser source vs Phosphor Laser source

RGB projectors consist of many red, green and blue lasers, which output at varying levels and mix to make different colours. The laser output is mixed, processed by the projector's DMD (Digital Micromirror Device) chips, and directed through the lens.

A phosphor laser source uses just one colour laser (typically blue for price and efficiency) which shines onto a spinning yellow phosphor wheel. The chemical compound phosphor absorbs the light, and radiates a bright, yellow light which is captured and split into primary colours.



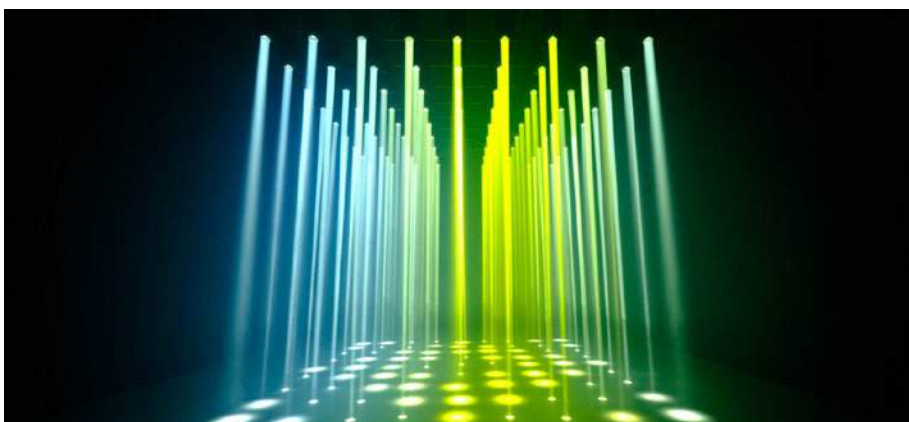
Optics, Colour, and Brightness

The Ayrton Kyalami features CMY/subtractive colour mixing. With the laser source, it delivers a very punchy, saturated colour palette which makes the beam very prominent. Even with the heavy frost dropped in, the colour is still very noticeable.

It delivers a luminous flux of 400,000 lux at 10m. It's worth noting how cool the beam is to touch at close range. Those of you familiar with using high output beam lights know they can heat up in a hurry.

The Kyalami boasts five corrective filters, and 17 complementary colour filters to give a wide range of colours. The 126mm front lens is a modest size given the size of the light itself.

With a lot of the stage lighting market moving towards LED lighting fixtures, the decision to keep developing laser source fixtures and technology as much as Ayrton has is interesting. It has the potential to pay massive dividends down the line should we see a shift towards laser-based lighting.



Applications and Features

Due to how punchy the beam is, it works well outside too. With such a narrow beam the light travels a good distance. The Kyalami isn't just limited to outdoors; it works equally well indoors. They would work anywhere you would typically put a beam type fixture.

It has 29 fixed metal gobos. The number becomes even more impressive when you realise they are all beam gobos. It also has two prisms and two frost filters to further enhance and manipulate the beam, and the Kyalami really is all about that beam.

Control and Programming

The Kyalami draws only 200W of power, which is not a lot. It is very, very efficient for what it outputs. Technically you could get a dozen to a circuit. The power draw is similar to that of a MAC Aura.

It has a 33 channel DMX footprint, and at time of printing, it has just the one DMX control mode. The onboard control panel is much like every other Ayrton light we have seen in the last few years. The Ayrton control panel is easy to use and follow, so to see that again is great. Familiarity is a good thing in this case.

Verdict

It feels like lighting fixtures just keep getting brighter and brighter. The Kyalami certainly accelerates this trend. Another trend is the need to have a moving light that can do everything and then some. In this sense, the Kyalami goes the other way. You could argue then, that in order to differentiate your offering, have your light do one thing better than any other light. Looks aside, I feel as though the Kyalami will be best known for one thing: its tight, bright beam, arguably one of the best on the market today. This should see it make an appearance in many events and installs.

The Kyalami is a really cool, futuristic looking light, and I do wonder if it is a look Ayrton will build on in the future. A LED-based wash or profile based on the same design would be awesome to see. Something else I would love to see would be a smaller version of this light that could be used en masse. Ayrton continues to push new products into every corner and niche of the entertainment lighting market. Its latest move with the Kyalami is yet another aggressive, and impressive step forward.

Product Info: www.ayrton.eu/produit/kyalami/
Distributor AU: www.showtech.com.au
Distributor NZ: www.showtech.com.au/homenz/

The Specs

Three element optic system

Beam aperture: 1°

Fast motorised linear focus

126mm frontal lens

Luminous flux: 400,000 lux at 10m

Colour temperature output: 9000K

CRI: greater than 70

Fixed colour wheel with five colour temperature correction and 17 complementary colours

Fixed gobo wheel with instant access to 29 metal gobos

Two frost filters: one light, one heavy

Two combinable rotating and indexable prisms: one 32-facet circular, one 5-facet linear

Integrated wireless CRMX TiMoTM RDM receiver from LumenRadio

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

Weight: 14.5kg



Art For Art's Sake

Quality of art is entirely subjective. Except when it is not.

Daily I rail against the cultural desertification of art in general, and contemporary design in particular. I detest the blanding out of every interior decor or fashion choice to greige merging into off white "with just a pop of colour" (i.e. one faded print or cushion that has a vague pastel or two in it).

Whatever happened to the bold psychedelic riot of the 60s/90s/2010s? Where is the adventurous spirit inherent in art nouveau and art deco or the bedlam of cubism or surrealism of Dali?

Art has been reduced to an investment and the 'safe choice' always seems to get a financial return. Design even more so. Unfortunately, this then results in the lowest common denominator of non-offensive, bland, repetitive meh.

Screw boring. Forget house flipping. No more safe choices.

Go out on limb and take a chance. Live a little. Hell, live a lot.

Mirka Mora was always smiling.

Frida Kahlo and Diego Riviera were never bored by reduction to the commonplace. They never took the weightless option.

Kip Williams didn't take the easy path with his staging of the cine-theatre trilogy, but theatre goers are far richer for his willingness to be bold and take risks.

From Bauhaus to my house, great architecture takes both vision and resolute steadfastness. There are few regrets for me in whittling an ancient tree into the window seats I now lounge in.

Le Corbusier was safe with the palette but radical in terms of addressing his contemporary zeitgeist.

The work of Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid will remain exciting for centuries. Rinse and repeat spec homes will fade and fall over long before then. Fashion is fleeting; style is eternal.

I have great respect and admiration for artists who can both remain true to pushing artistic boundaries while simultaneously making a fiscal success of it (especially while they are still alive). Props to Lady Gaga, Banksy, Tracey Emin, and all-time favourites Frank Zappa and Hunter S. Thompson. They compromised little and still made a living from Art. Other contemporary boundary pushers I'm watching in this space include Celeste Mountjoy (aka Filthy Ratbag), Minna Leunig, Louis Cole, Sam Wilkes, Rai Thistlethwayte, Vincent Namatjira, Brooke Didonato, and Tamara Dean.

Just last week, I attended another brilliant performance by Tenzin Choegyal at a local hall. Fresh from working with luminaries like Phillip Glass and Laurie Anderson on the biggest of world stages, he is just at home doing little regional gigs for a handful of

people. He's even cooler than Iggy Pop and his voice transports me to another plane.

David Walsh and Kira Kerschelle are likely rarely bored. On face value, their artistic choices are often less bankable than wankable, but they continually seem to make a buck anyway. I had the pleasure of working in their Melbourne apartment nearly 20 years ago and it was an inspiring mayhem of colour and form. Located in a Nonda Katsilidis minor masterpiece - the Republic Tower building overlooking Vic Markets - both the building and apartment were far more interesting and exciting than 200 identikit soulless McMansions or gauche gilded millionaire fakeries.

The singular approach to pure art can sometimes result in the artist becoming increasingly selfish. But there is no excuse for being an arsehole just to hang your work in the Louvre. Toulouse Lautrec was a real shit by all accounts but I bet he got more (meaningful) coupling and uncoupling than Gwyneth of the Goop.

History is evermore unkind to the unkind. Seeya Rolf. Should have tied your tendencies down, sport.

Give me a world where Mr Bungle gets more traction than Ed Sheeran. Where Fugazi outplays Tay Tay. Where flash and crash are more important than cold hard cash.

When I first started lighting stages, I went over the top with every scene, using every available colour and five million cues per second. The acts that I was illuminating reflected and needed that zest. Later, as safer, more middle of the road artistes became my paymaster,



my stage light evolved to more refined but ultimately blander palettes and cue choices. Variants of a hue rather than clashes of primaries; soft easy fades over crash-n-bash solo buttons; I'd become as safe and boring as the talent onstage. I better understood the art of stagecraft but was less in touch with the art inherent in illumination.

Subtlety (safety) had overtaken brashness for me. This was part commercial and part artistic choice. By design, I let cleverness eclipse immediate and more visceral impact. In retrospect, this made sense, as I transitioned to corporate theatre not long after and these decisions became clear in that context. They also allowed me to put down a deposit on some dirt and nearly enough coin to build a house. Which we have decorated with colour.

The desire to go all-out has been tempered by age, honed down by past rejections and only surfaces when I am truly enraged by a topic that makes my blood boil or emboldened via a carefree flow state.

Ego boosts from admirers never hurt either.

My writing and photography now oscillate between these extremes. The former is often commercially constrained (though this column gives some degree of license towards exercising the exciting.) The latter has no such boundaries and I feel comfortable breaking rules and exploring the margins with my pictographs. It matters not if they never turn a dollar. It does matter if they inspire me and even more so if they inspire others.

Salutations to artists able to combine pure heartfelt ART with filling of the fridge and fancy accoutrements. You are rare.



Jake Mason (L) and Eric McCusker. Photo Courtesy of Jenae McCusker

WORDS AND MUSIC

The McCusker and Mason Tapes

Snippets from the archives of a bygone era

Eric McCusker and Jake Mason are songwriters, musicians, and producers who, individually and as a songwriting team, have written a number of highly acclaimed songs. McCusker joined Ross Wilson's Mondo Rock in 1980 and penned the group's first major hit, 'State of the Heart', followed by 'Chemistry', 'Summer of '81', and 'Come Said the Boy'. Mason, who heads the group Cookin' On 3 Burners and also the Jake Mason Trio, is a prolific songwriter, and his song *This Girl*, co-written by Lance Ferguson (former CO3B guitarist) and Ivan Khatchoyan (drummer), became an international hit when French producer Kungs released a remixed version in 2016.

Both Eric McCusker and Jake Mason have worked with and recorded an enormous wealth of talent, including Kate Ceberano, Renée Geyer, Kylie Auldist, Stella Angelico, Ross Wilson, and Richard Clapton; their songs have been covered by leading artists including Paul Rodgers, John Farnham, Lucy Durack, and Rick Springfield. I recently caught up with McCusker and Mason while they were working in Mason's studio in Glen Iris, Melbourne.

Mason's studio is equipped with an array of analogue and digital equipment, including MCI 500 channel strip modules and a Crane Song Spider 8-Channel Mic Pre Mixer that has an eight-channel output with A/D conversion to interface to a DAW. There are also some 1980s Neve modules. "The studio has some digital things, but it's definitely built with the idea of coming from an analogue place with lots of instruments and real things that make sounds instead of stuff that's made inside a computer. This is definitely an analogue approach, but we try to embrace technology as well and have all the bells and whistles that we can to make everything work how we want it," says Mason.

Mason emphasises the discipline of getting a spontaneous performance onto tape without the luxury of limitless digital tracks and multiple takes. "When we're recording Cookin'

On 3 Burners tracks, a lot of the time we track directly to tape. It gives us the fact that we've only got thirty minutes of tape, and we have to be a bit ruthless with how we do things. There is also the beautiful sound and the buttery flavour that tape gives, especially with a Hammond trio where we want a bit of grunge (tape saturation) in the sound," says Mason.

The current line-up of Mason's group Cookin' On 3 Burners is Jake Mason (Hammond organ), Dan West (guitar), and Ivan Khatchoyan (drums). At first glance, you may wonder where the bass line is coming from, and this has also been queried by audience members at live performances. The reality is that Mason plays the bass line with his left hand on his Viscount Legend Hammond organ. "In Hammond trios, you have this wonderful thing about playing the bass; you're part of the rhythm section, but you're also part of the frontline," says Mason.

Cookin' On 3 Burners performs as a trio in some gigs and with guest singers in others. "We quite often have a guest singer, but also do trio gigs, which are mostly instrumental, but we often have a guest singer, and we've been working with Stella Angelico for the last eight years or so. She's been a wonderful addition to our regular guests, and before that, we had Kylie Auldist, who had been working with us

for 15 years. When we record, we have new guests, which gives us a nice springboard to be creative in a new way and to try and stretch the boundaries of what is a very traditional Hammond sound. In Melbourne, we have this funk and soul family, and we're always working on other people's projects, and it's a nice friendly atmosphere," says Mason.

Eric McCusker was born in Dublin and came to Australia when he was four years old. "I grew up in Sydney; I was a medical student for a while, and then I played with Ross Ryan, Stevie Wright, John English, and Jeff St John. I started out at high school playing with Renée Geyer, but everyone talks about the 'Matchbox' thing after I moved to Melbourne at the beginning of 1979 and played for a year with the Captain Matchbox Whoopee Band. I was the seventeenth and last guitar player in that band," says McCusker.

McCusker's next venture was Ross Wilson's Mondo Rock. When I interviewed Ross Wilson in 2012, he said, "I did a lot of auditioning, and one of the reasons I got Eric on guitar was because he could write songs; I had listened to some of his demos." McCusker points out, "Most of the songs I wrote in Mondo Rock, I wrote words and music."

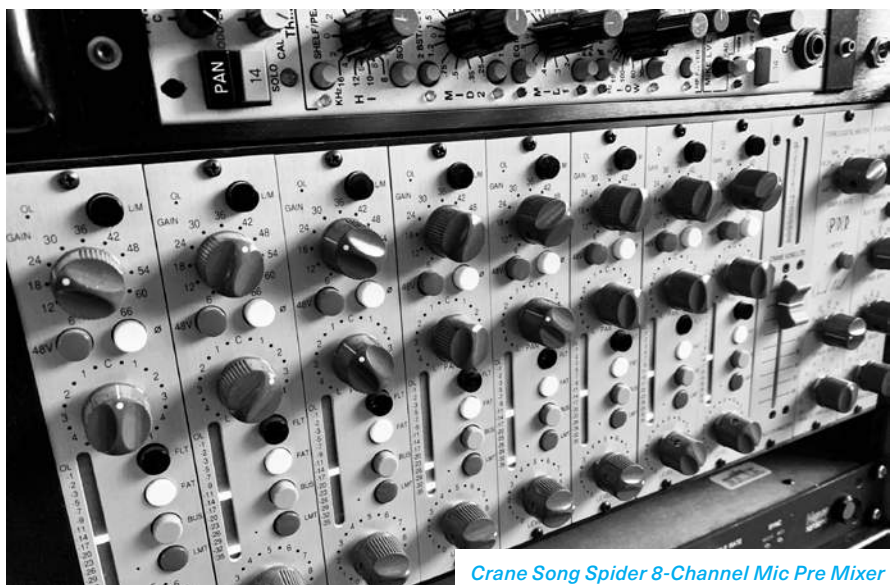
McCusker met Mason some 20 years ago during a band project he was involved in called Tout de Suite. "We needed a keyboard player on some recordings we were doing, and Joe (Joe Creighton) brought Jake along. Jake and I got on really well, and we have a complimentary skill set. He's much more involved in the production, and I'm much more involved in the lyrics, but in the songwriting, we both contribute musically, and we critique each other," says McCusker.

McCusker emphasises that the fundamental elements of a good song are blending the verses, the bridge, and the chorus together. "It's surprisingly hard to do; you might do a verse, a pre-chorus, and a chorus, but when you go back to the verse, you don't want it to

"Most of the songs I wrote in Mondo Rock, I wrote words and music."



Eric McCusker (L) with Ross Wilson, Mondo Rock 1985




Crane Song Spider 8-Channel Mic Pre Mixer

feel like it's dropped down. It's like one of those M.C. Escher things where the stairs keep going up even though they join up together; it's quite a tricky structural problem. 'State of the Heart' took fifteen minutes to write; that was partly because of youth and partly being immersed

in pop culture, which I was at the time. But the last song that I had in the 1980s was a song I had on the John Farnham album, Whispering Jack. That was a song called 'No One Comes Close', and I remember that took six months to write," says McCusker.

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McCusker's musical, AVA (At the End of the World), deals with Ava Gardner's 1959 visit to Melbourne for her role in *On the Beach*, an apocalyptic film about the nuclear fallout from a war in the Northern Hemisphere drifting towards the Victorian capital. Gardner made headlines when she was wrongly said to have made the derogatory comment that Melbourne was "the perfect place to make a film about the end of the world," when in fact it was the invention of journalist Neil Jillett. The musical deals with rumours that Gardner, who was later joined in Melbourne by her former husband Frank Sinatra, had a fling with jazz singer Joe Lane. "It's a musical that I've been working up for something like 20 years, and Jake has co-written four or five of those songs. It's been in various incarnations; just trying to get it off the ground is quite difficult, but it's been very interesting, and I'm enjoying the process," says McCusker. One of the standout songs from the musical is the McCusker and Mason song 'Stop Searching for Love', which was recorded by Lucy Durack in 2012.

Cookin' on 3 Burners will be playing at the Wangaratta Jazz Festival on Monday, November 4, 2024. The group's second single, 'This Girl', sung by Kylie Auldlist, was released in 2008, and the 2016 remix by Kungs held the number one spot on the French and German charts, along with charting at number one on Shazam worldwide and on iTunes in eight countries. To date, This Girl has clocked up one billion streams. "The modern remix version of that song had this great way of mixing the organic with the sampled music. The modern meets the organic thing really resonated with a lot of people, and it's taken the little Hammond trio from Melbourne world-wide," says Mason.

In a world where metaphors have become tropes and clichés have become memes, it is worthy to note that Kung's remix of the Cookin' on 3 Burners song 'This Girl' has also become a 'Shot on iPhone' meme. For those who are still emerging from my era of cathode-ray tubes and incandescent light bulbs, the meme consists of uploads by Tik Tokers and YouTubers using their own images and Kung's remix to parody Apple's official 'Shot on iPhone' promotion.



Cookin' on 3 Burners with Kylie Auldlist



Cookin' on 3 Burners. (L-R) Jake Mason, Stella Angelico, Dan West, Ivan Khatchoyan



Ava Gardner arriving in Melbourne 1959



Jake Mason



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