

INTEGRATION / AUDIO / LIGHTING / VIDEO / STAGING

PRODUCTION

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DOWN UNDER

HTH PRODUCTIONS'
BRIGHT LIGHTS,
BIG MOVES

CELEBRATING
AUSTAGE AND
MELBOURNE
FASHION WEEK

BACKSTAGE

*There's No Parents
Like Show Parents*

**The 2026
Rental and
Production
Directory**

Check out our 19-page
directory featuring
the best of Australian
rental and production
companies

News

- / The HELM delivers for Outcast Assembly
- / L-Acoustics Opens APAC HQ, Singapore
- / The P.A. People, Two Systems in Two Cities
- / AI-Media and AVE Power Accessibility for AU's Live Events
- / LSC appoints new marketing manager
- / Australia is Outlined

THEATRE

**THE KING
OF POP**

MJ the Musical has arrived in Australia and when making a musical about the King of Pop, sound design is its crowning glory

Regulars

- / Jenny Barrett in NZ
- / Andy Stewart's Listen Here
- / Backstage with John O'Brien
- / Brian Coleman: The Gaffa Tapes

RoadTest

- / Allen & Heath's New Qu Digital Console Range
- / ACME NEOZONE
- / ETC Tour Hog



New firmware update! Did you know Atmosphere™ is now a control system?

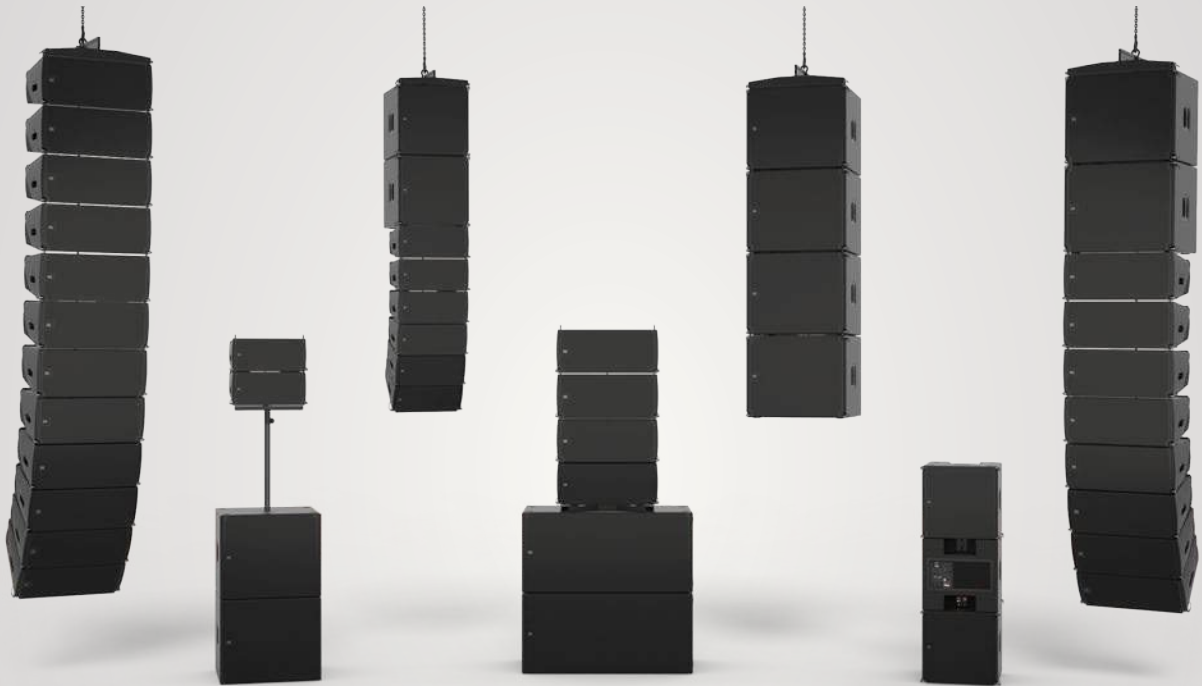
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CONTENTS

News

The HELM delivers cinematic livestream for global media giant's Outcast Assembly	4
L-Acoustics Opens Expanded APAC Headquarters in Singapore, Featuring New L-Acoustics Creative Studio	6
The P.A. People Deliver Two Arena Systems in Two Cities Over Basketball Long Weekend	10
AI-Media and AVE Announce Exclusive Partnership to Power Accessibility Across Australia's Live Events	12
LSC Control Systems appoints new marketing manager for next phase of growth	14
Australia is Outlined	14

New Gear

16

Features

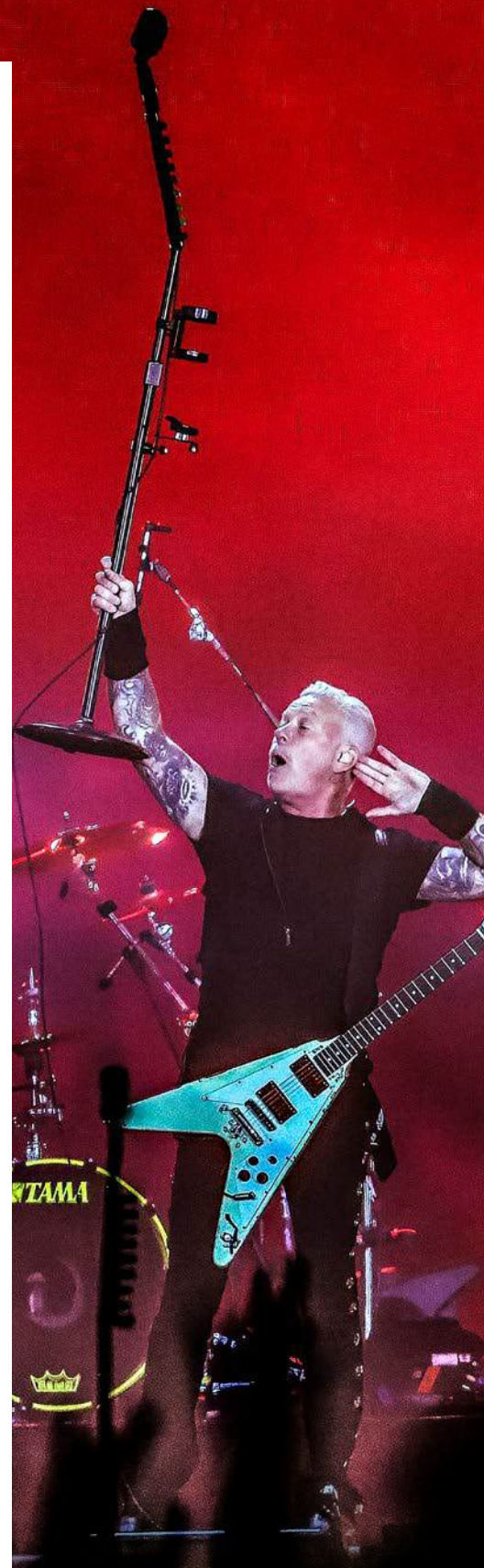
Theatre: MJ the Musical <i>by Allee Richards</i>	24
Production: Metallica's M72 End-On Down Under <i>by Jason Allen</i>	28
Production: HTH Productions' Bright Lights, Big Moves <i>by Marcus 'PooDawG' Pugh</i>	32
Production: Austage Events and Melbourne Fashion Week – Celebrating 20 Years of Audio Visual Excellence	36
The 2026 CX Rental and Production Directory <i>by Jason Allen</i>	41
Backstage: There's No Parents Like Show Parents <i>by Allee Richards</i>	60

Regulars

New Zealand: Lessons from the Frontline of Festival Survival <i>by Jenny Barrett</i>	18
Listen Here: Be The Master Of Your Mix <i>by Andy Stewart</i>	22
Backstage: Adding value to production <i>by John O'Brien</i>	70
The Gaffa Tapes: Death of a Radio Station <i>by Brian Coleman</i>	72

Road Test

Allen & Heath's New Qu Digital Console Range <i>by Andy Stewart</i>	64
ACME NEOZONE <i>by Kurtis Hammer</i>	66
ETC Tour Hog <i>by Daniel-Joseph 'Gordo' Gordon</i>	68



Cover Photo – MJ The Musical, Illario Grant. Photo Credit: Daniel Boud
Contents Photo – Metallica's M72 Tour. Photo Credit: Paul Rovere

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The HELM delivers cinematic livestream for global media giant's Outcast Assembly

The HELM, an international expert in cinematic broadcast solutions for live productions, partnered with the leading subscription entertainment platform behind television series Wednesday, to deliver a cinematic live broadcast of its Outcast Assembly press conference, held on Sydney's Cockatoo Island. As part of the show's worldwide Global Doom Tour, the activation built anticipation for the second season of this acclaimed supernatural mystery comedy, which, aptly premiered on Wednesday, 6 August with more than 50 million views.

Working to a tight turnaround, The HELM designed and deployed a high-end cinematic broadcast flypack centred around the ARRI ALEXA 35 LIVE camera system. The setup seamlessly merged the cinematic storytelling power of ARRI cameras, used to shoot the Wednesday series itself, with the robust reliability of broadcast workflows. The result was a live production pipeline capable of capturing the signature gothic aesthetic with breathtaking precision for this press activation. From exceptional dynamic range capturing the theatrical lighting, to its true-to-life skin tones and superior colour fidelity, the system delivered visuals as hauntingly beautiful and atmospherically rich as the show itself.

To ensure uninterrupted global distribution, The HELM engineered a mission-critical streaming workflow with enterprise-grade redundancy. A dual-pipeline solution bonding 4G/5G with Starlink connectivity provided fully independent transmission

paths into The HELM's cloud-based MCR, enabling secure, ultra-low latency delivery to the social platforms worldwide. Integrated end-to-end, networking kept crews and producers connected in real time, ensuring flawless coordination throughout the complex production.

In the highly anticipated dramatic reveal, actress Gwendoline Christie emerged from behind a suspended moon to reveal that her character, Larissa Weems, will return in the second instalment of Season 2. This world-exclusive announcement was captured with cinematic depth and streamed live to a global audience.

"On a tight timeline, with major international stakeholders watching, The HELM didn't just deliver, they set a new bar," says Rosie Pike, Senior Producer at Two Palms Media. "From visually stunning camera technology to a flawless live stream, they transformed a pivotal moment for our market-leading client into an even bigger triumph. We're excited to build on this momentum and create more work together in the years ahead."

"The HELM once again proved its ability to simplify complexity, scale at speed, and deliver flawless productions for the world's most anticipated entertainment events," concludes Josh Moffat, Co-Founder and CEO at The HELM. "Outcast Assembly was a perfect example of how cinematic craft and broadcast precision can come together to amplify storytelling on a global stage."





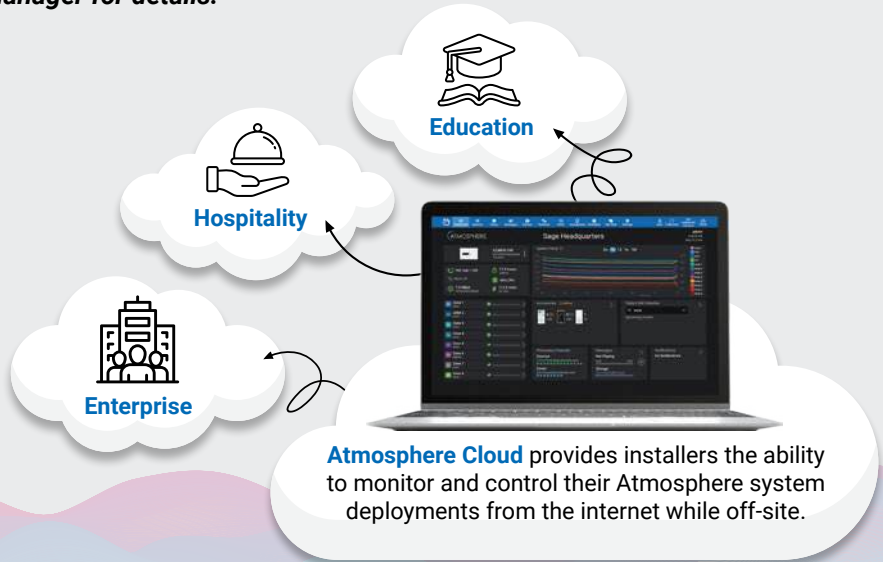
New firmware update! Did you know Atmosphere™ is now a control system?



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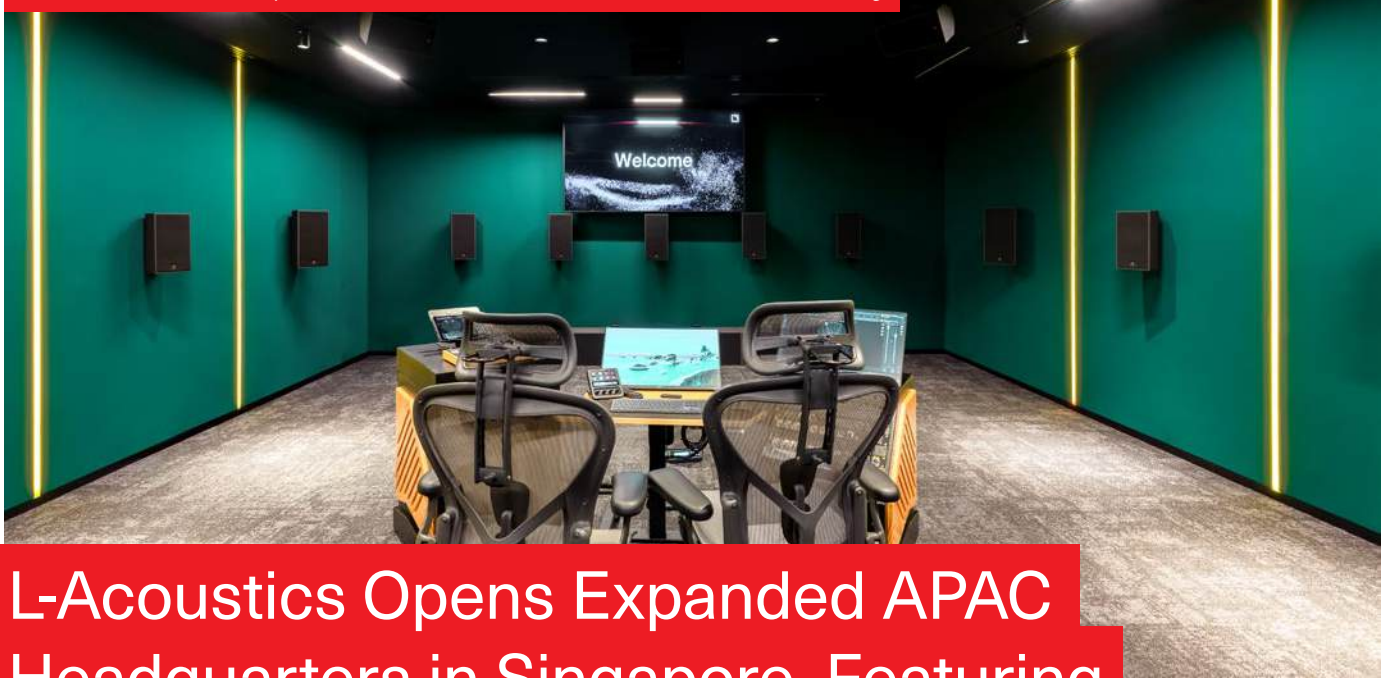
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Atmosphere Cloud provides installers the ability to monitor and control their Atmosphere system deployments from the internet while off-site.



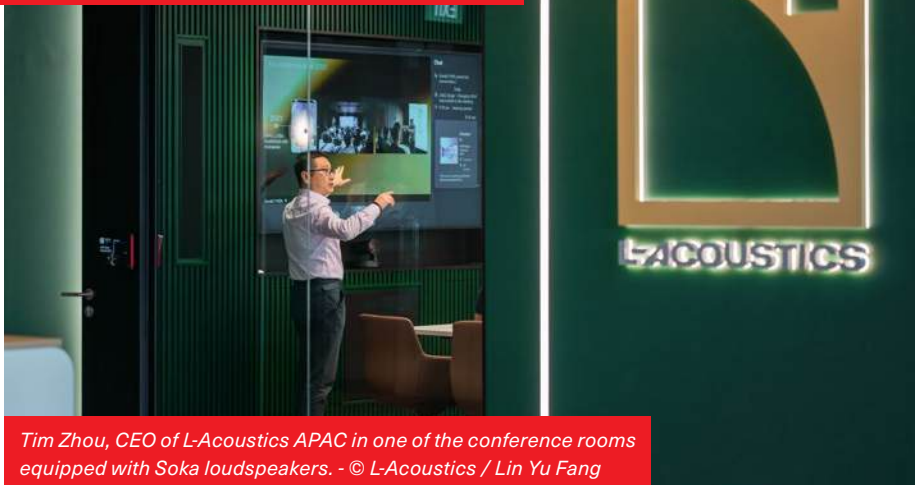
The new, purpose-built L-ISA Creative Studio equipped with 23 L-Acoustics speakers for the creation and refinement of spatial audio mixes and L-Acoustics DJ - © L-Acoustics / Lin Yu Fang



L-Acoustics Opens Expanded APAC Headquarters in Singapore, Featuring New L-Acoustics Creative Studio



Reception area © L-Acoustics / Lin Yu Fang



Tim Zhou, CEO of L-Acoustics APAC in one of the conference rooms equipped with Soka loudspeakers. - © L-Acoustics / Lin Yu Fang

L-Acoustics have announced the opening of its expanded Asia-Pacific regional headquarters in Singapore. The new facility includes a dedicated L-Acoustics Creative Studio where artists, content creators, and partners can discover, experiment with, and create spatial audio mixes using L-Acoustics groundbreaking immersive sound technology.

The opening was attended by Laurent Vaissié and Hervé Guillaume, co-CEOs of L-Acoustics, and Anne Hamlett, Chief People Officer, underscoring the strategic importance of the APAC region to the company's global operations.

"The Asia-Pacific region represents one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing markets for live entertainment and immersive audio experiences," said Tim Zhou, CEO APAC at L-Acoustics. "This expansion gives us the infrastructure to better serve our growing community of clients and partners while providing artists and creators with a dedicated space to explore spatial audio. Our L-Acoustics Creative Studio is designed to be a collaborative hub where creativity meets innovation."

Since establishing L-Acoustics Pte Ltd in Singapore in 2019, the company has experienced exponential growth in the region, expanding from its initial operations to 28 team members today, 19 based in Singapore and nine remote employees throughout APAC, who regularly work from the regional headquarters. The new 9,000-square-foot facility represents a major step up from the company's initial co-working space, providing the operational

capacity needed to support continued expansion across the region.

A Creative Hub for Spatial Audio Innovation

The new headquarters features the L-Acoustics Creative Studio, a state-of-the-art 47-square-meter immersive audio studio equipped with 23 L-Acoustics speakers arranged in a three-dimensional configuration, including frontal, surround, and overhead arrays. The space is also equipped with L-Acoustics DJ technology, the latest immersive innovation for club and festival environments, enabling DJs and electronic music artists to learn the technology and prepare spatial sets.

This purpose-built environment enables artists, mixing engineers, sound designers, DJs, and content creators to experience L-ISA Immersive Hyperreal Sound technology



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Informal collaboration space at the new headquarters, strategically located to facilitate client visits and project discussions - © L-Acoustics / Lin Yu Fang



Tim Zhou, CEO of L-Acoustics APAC - © L-Acoustics / Benjamin Decoin

firsthand, create and refine spatial audio mixes of their creative content, collaborate with L-Acoustics application specialists on projects, and explore new creative possibilities in immersive audio production.

"We're not just providing a demonstration space, we're offering a creative production environment where artists can bring their spatial audio visions to life," Zhou added. "Whether it's a touring artist preparing immersive mixes for their live show, a DJ crafting a spatial set for club performances, a sound designer developing content for an installation, or partners wanting to understand how L-ISA can transform their venue, this centre is designed to facilitate that creative process."

The Creative Studio will serve as a regional resource for L-Acoustics' extensive network of clients and certified partners throughout APAC, including touring productions, festivals, theatres, clubs, houses of worship, theme parks, and premium hospitality venues.

Strategic Growth to Serve the Region

Situated in Singapore's creative district, the new headquarters positions L-Acoustics to more effectively collaborate with clients and partners across the region. The facility's proximity to Singapore's Changi Airport facilitates client visits and project collaboration, while its connection to the company's regional warehouse ensures efficient service delivery.

"This expansion reflects our long-term commitment to the Asia-Pacific market," said Laurent Vaissie, co-CEO of L-Acoustics. "As the region's creative and entertainment industries continue to evolve, we're investing in the infrastructure and resources needed to support our partners' ambitions and deliver the exceptional sound experiences that audiences have come to expect from L-Acoustics."

The Singapore headquarters joins L-Acoustics' major operational hubs in Paris, Los Angeles, and London, creating a truly global support network.



L-Acoustics executive team members celebrate the grand opening of the L-Acoustics Regional Headquarters with a traditional lion dance ceremony - © L-Acoustics / Chris Lau



DJ FVDER demonstrates L-Acoustics DJ - © L-Acoustics / Chris Lau

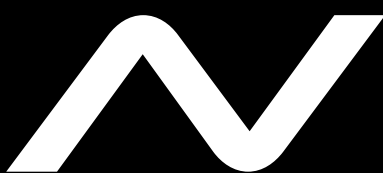
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Pelicans v United



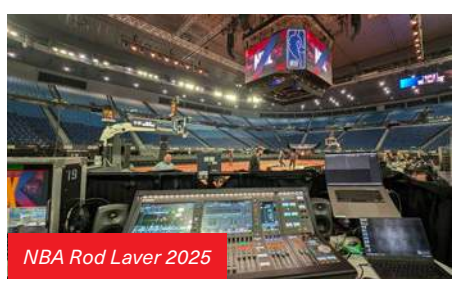
NBA Rod Laver 2025



Pelicans v United



Pelicans v Phoenix



NBA Rod Laver 2025

The P.A. People Deliver Two Arena Systems in Two Cities Over Basketball Long Weekend

The P.A. People supported a massive weekend of basketball production, supplying full audio and comms systems across two major arena venues - Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne and Qudos Bank Arena, Sydney - for both NBA and NBL events held over the October long weekend.

In Melbourne, the venue hosted a four-day program including the NBA Fan Day with entertainment from Bliss n Eso, followed by the New Orleans Pelicans vs Melbourne United match on Friday 3 October, a Fan Night on Saturday - featuring Tones & I for both events, and the Pelicans vs Southeast Melbourne Phoenix on Sunday.

To meet the scale and quality expectations of the NBA showcase, The P.A. People deployed a Yamaha DM7 digital mixing console and a Bose Professional ShowMatch line array system, supplemented by additional rigging infrastructure purchased specifically for the event. Production communications were handled via a Clear-Com FreeSpeak II wireless system utilising IPT transceivers, providing reliable, venue-wide coverage and clear communication between technical and event management teams.

In Sydney, the Sydney Kings vs New Zealand Breakers game at Qudos Bank Arena saw The P.A. People continue their long-term partnership with the Kings and the venue, delivering both a season long PA install and event-day production support. The system featured a second Bose Professional ShowMatch line array system, along with

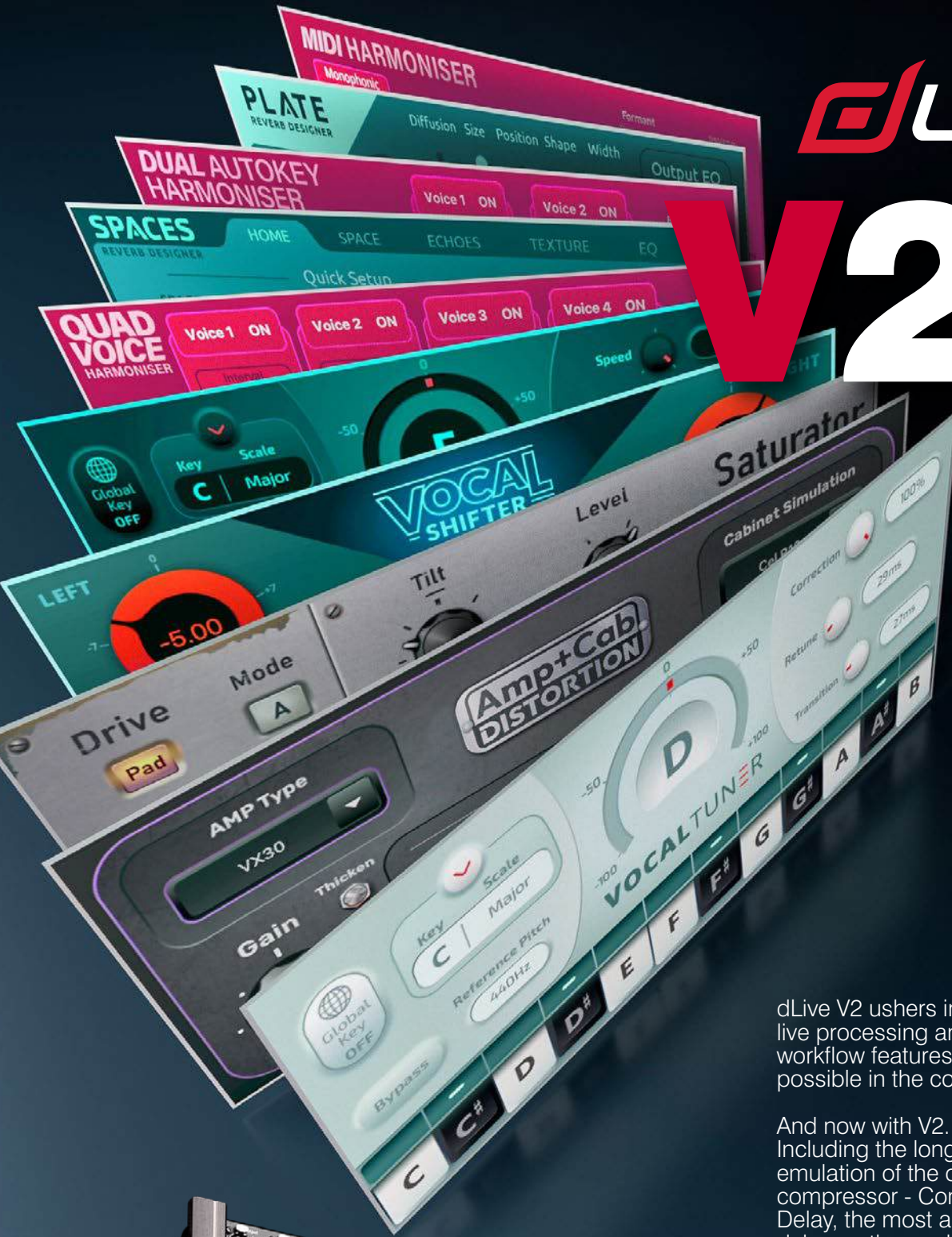
a Clear-Com FreeSpeak II and HelixNet hybrid comms solution, ensuring seamless coordination for officials, court crew, and production staff.

"This weekend was a great example of our team's capacity to support multiple large-scale events simultaneously," said Nicky Dodds, Event Communications Manager for The P.A. People. "The combination of the ShowMatch for audio quality and coverage, and FreeSpeak II for flexible communications, continues to be a reliable and proven solution for large-format sports and entertainment events."

The dual deployments underline The P.A. People's reputation as a leader in arena-scale audio and communications, capable of delivering consistent performance and reliability across complex, multi-venue schedules.

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ALLEN & HEATH





Declan Gallagher, VP Sales – APAC, AI-Media, Mark Shepherd, Head of Production, AVE

AI-Media and AVE Announce Exclusive Partnership to Power Accessibility Across Australia's Live Events

AI-Media, a global leader in AI-powered live captioning and accessibility solutions, has appointed Audio Visual Events (AVE) as its exclusive rental partner for the live events market in Australia.

This strategic partnership combines AI-Media's LEXI platform - a complete ecosystem of professional-grade hardware and SaaS solutions that deliver real-time, low-latency captioning and translation - with AVE's trusted dry-hire AV equipment and technical production expertise. The collaboration enables Australian event organisers to enhance accessibility, engagement, and compliance across live and hybrid events, while driving mutual growth for both organisations.

Through this partnership, event planners and production teams can rent AVE's industry-standard AV gear - such as displays, racks, and integration systems - pre-configured for seamless deployment of AI-Media's LEXI platform, including the LEXI Viewer.

The LEXI Viewer is AI-Media's purpose-built caption display hardware designed for professional live event environments. It connects directly with AI-Media's LEXI Text (AI-powered live captions) and LEXI Translate (real-time multilingual translation) services to deliver clear, synchronized captions and translations on LED walls, projection screens, and digital displays.

This new rental model allows event producers

to access advanced captioning and translation technology on a per-event basis, particularly in situations where event variability makes purchasing dedicated equipment less economical. It ensures accessibility can be easily added to any event - large or small - while complementing AI-Media's direct sales model for customers who require ongoing or integrated solutions.

Key strengths include:

- AVE's 20+ years of flawless event delivery across Australia, supporting venues, agencies, and major corporate events
- AI-Media's LEXI solution, combining enterprise-grade captioning hardware and AI-powered SaaS for unmatched reliability
- Combined: Stress-free, scalable captioning and translation for events ranging from conferences and corporate meetings to large-scale festivals

"By teaming with AVE as our exclusive rental partner in Australia, we're making it significantly easier for event professionals to deliver accessible, multilingual, and high-engagement experiences," said Tony Abrahams, CEO of AI-Media. "Together, we're bringing a world-

class captioning and translation solution to the Australian market."

Market Opportunity

Australia's live events industry continues to expand as demand rebounds post-pandemic and accessibility expectations increase.

According to IMARC Group, the Australian event management market was valued at approximately AUD \$25 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow to AUD \$70 billion by 2033, at a compound annual growth rate of 11.2%.

With accessibility and multilingual communication now central to audience engagement, corporate inclusion goals, and compliance standards, this partnership positions AVE and AI-Media to meet a critical and fast-growing need within the Australian live events market.

"We're thrilled to partner with AI-Media," said Paul Keating, Head of Sales & Marketing, Audio Visual Events. "AI-Media's LEXI platform represents the global benchmark for live captioning and translation. Combined with AVE's proven dry-hire expertise, we're giving event producers an easier, smarter way to integrate accessibility into their productions."

EAGLESTRIKE LT

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EagleStrike was born from a bespoke request for a signature luminaire. It stands as the first LED-source followspot in Ayrton's range, engineered for intensive outdoor use across long distances where precision is paramount. To create this uncompromising and unmatched extreme-luminaire, Ayrton developed an oversized 270 mm front lens that delivers a record-breaking illuminance of over 100,000 lux at 10 metres, with the beam narrowed to just 2.9°.

Illuminance at 10m
> 100,000 lx

Native CRI
> 70

IP Rating
IP65

Zoom Aperture
2.9° to 43°

Front Lens
270 mm

Weight
54.7 kg



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Ash Douglas

LSC Control Systems appoints new marketing manager for next phase of growth

LSC Control Systems, the Australia-based manufacturer of advanced power and control system technologies, has announced the appointment of a new Marketing Manager, Ash Douglas, to be based at the company's Melbourne headquarters.

With 10 years' experience in digital marketing, working with complex industrial and manufacturing businesses, Ash has a track record of assisting rapid growth through the execution of data-driven marketing strategies.

At LSC Control Systems, he will again be dealing with a fast-growing operation. After being acquired by Robe Lighting in early 2024, the company has seen significant expansion, not just in terms of manufacturing, but in its international sales network and its regional representation for stablemate brands, Avolites and Robe.

Commenting on his appointment, Ash says "LSC has a proud heritage – a rare example of Australian engineering excellence on the global stage. I'm excited to build on that legacy by working closely with our customers to understand their evolving needs, and to strengthen how we communicate LSC's value both regionally and internationally."

He adds, "With more than 45 years of experience and deep insight into how our systems perform in the field, we have an incredible foundation to innovate from – and I'm looking forward to using that knowledge to create new value for our customers."

Welcoming Ash to the team, LSC's General Manager Greg Lowe says, "Ash has a strong technical background and a history of building successful marketing strategies for a number of commercial clients. That experience will help us with the complexity of today's marketing needs and develop an effective market presence for the LSC brand, as well as for our work with the Robe and Avolites brands within the Australia and New Zealand market. He's also a fun guy to work with and has already settled into the team. We are excited to have him on board!"



L-R: Thomas Burge, Fernando Rey Méndez, Archie Kamakaris, Rob Szabo, Afnan Rahman and Zac Barrett

Australia is Outlined

Outline has announced the appointment of Audio Visual Engineering (AVECorp) as its new exclusive distributor for Australia. With more than two decades of experience in the professional sound and lighting industry, AVECorp has established itself as one of the country's most respected names, combining technical expertise with a nationwide support network.

Founded in the early 2000s, AVECorp began as a manufacturer, a background that provided the company with a hands-on understanding of audio engineering and product quality. "That experience continues to drive our mission to source and wholesale products that deliver exceptional value for money," explains Robert Szabo, Owner/Director of AVE. "We've grown into a trusted name by being relentless in finding high-quality, reliable, and accessible gear for our professional clients."

"AVECorp's team immediately stood out for their deep technical insight and genuine passion for sound," comments Fernando Rey Méndez, Sales & Marketing Director at Outline. "They understand the difference between moving boxes and delivering an engineered solution, exactly the mindset that built Outline's reputation worldwide. We're confident that with AVECorp, Australian professionals will experience what truly sets Outline apart."

With offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth and representatives across all states, AVECorp's national footprint provides fast, local support and demonstration facilities throughout Australia. "In a country as vast as ours, that local presence is vital," adds Szabo. "It

allows us to be a true partner rather than just a supplier."

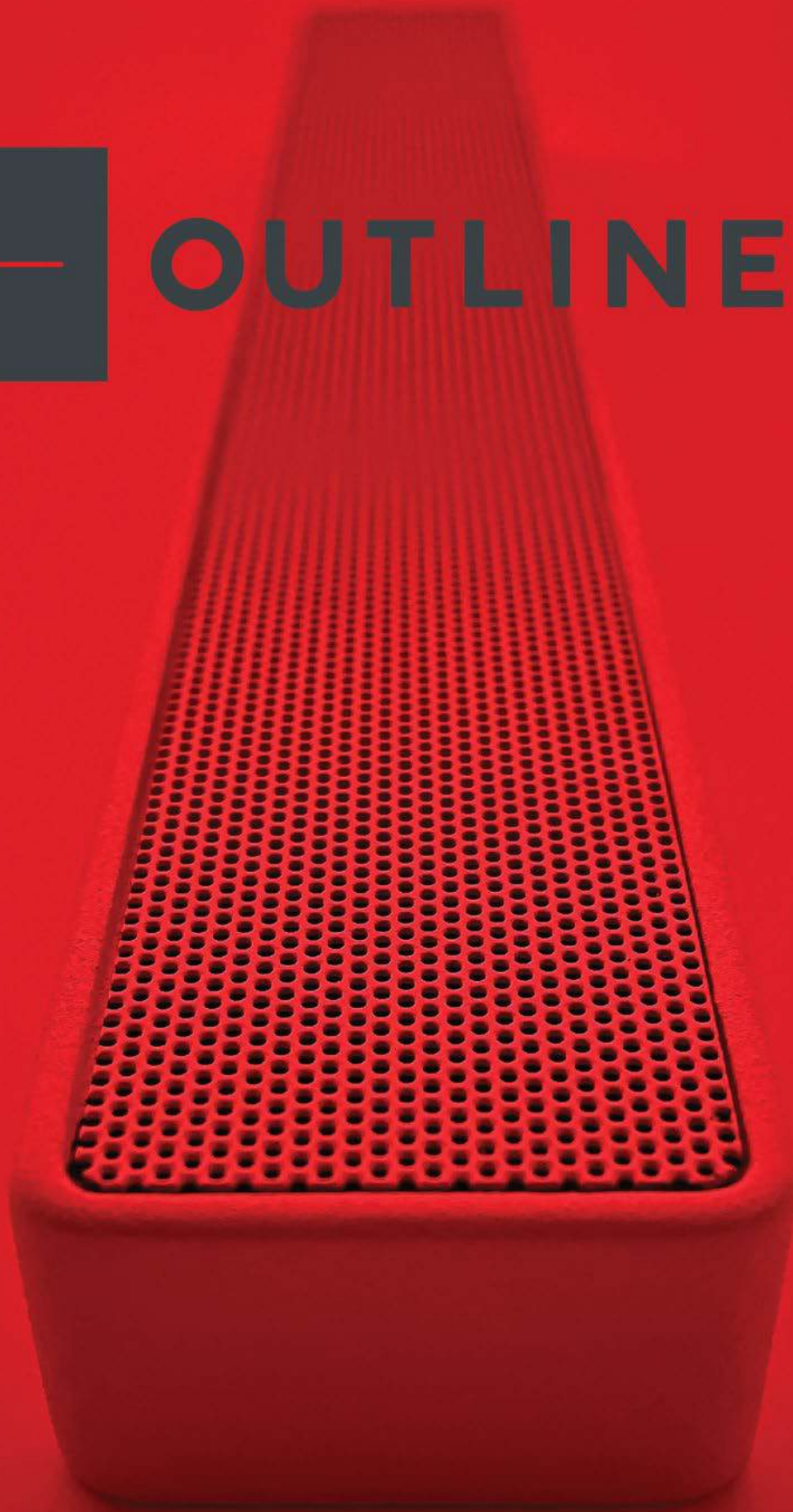
Beyond distribution, AVECorp's engineering team offers comprehensive technical support for Outline users, including customised sound system design and acoustic modelling. "We don't just move boxes; we provide complete project support," continues Rob. "Our expertise ensures clients achieve perfect coverage and superior audio quality for any application, maximising the value of their Outline investment."

The company's decision to partner with Outline came after a striking first-hand experience with the brand's systems. "The impact was immediate and undeniable, especially in the low end," recalls Szabo. "We heard a rig with just four double 18-inch subwoofers, and our team genuinely searched for four additional hidden subs, that's how much sheer power and efficiency they delivered. That overwhelming demonstration of quality, combined with a remarkable performance-to-value ratio, made partnering with Outline an easy one."

Looking ahead, AVECorp believes that Outline is positioned to make a significant impact across the Australian market. "Outline fills a crucial gap by delivering uncompromising quality with tangible value," concludes Rob. "From high-end bars and clubs to large-scale performance venues and stadiums, these systems are perfectly suited for every application. Based on the initial reaction of our engineers, we're confident that Outline will quickly become a preferred choice among Australian audio professionals."



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tarm VANQUISH Laser Moving Head

VANQUISH from tarm uses a 500W RGB Direct Diode Laser Engine to output 2.4 million lux at 20 meters. Direct RGB source modulation allows up to 16.5 million colour hues without colour wheels or CTO filters. Zoom range goes from 0.29° to 45°. Unit has unlimited pan rotation and 270° tilt. Magnalium housing and IP66 rating make it robust for outdoors. VANQUISH includes 25 static and 12 rotating gobos (with gobo-shake functionality), two stackable, bi-directionally rotatable prism wheels with three radial and four linear prisms and integrated frost filters. Control via DMX512, Art-Net, RDM, sACN, and W-DMX.

Australia: AVE vecorp.com.au 03 9706 5325

Ayrton MagicDot Neo

Ayrton's MagicDot Neo is a moving head luminaire with a unique design. Cylindrical, with a footprint of only 35cm, these fixtures can be packed closely together. They have continuous double rotation on pan and tilt axes, 120W RGB-L multi-chip LED source and a 100mm optic. 10:1 zoom ratio allows a beam angle from 3° to 30°. Total power consumption of 160W outputs 3,000 lumen. Ayrton's LiquidEffect engine adds 60 RGB LEDs around the beam's periphery for FX. MagicDot Neo is IP65 rated and has a cooling solution based on phase-change heat pipe technology.

*Australia: Show Technology
showtech.com.au 02 9748 1122
New Zealand: Show Technology
showtech.com.au 09 869 3293*



Austrian Audio CC8-SC pencil mic

The CC8-SC is a pencil mic from Austrian Audio that uses a OCC7 true condenser capsule. Unlike the CC8's cardioid pattern, the CC8-SC features a supercardioid polar pattern. They are designed as spot-microphones in ensembles or for other applications where a high degree of focus on the sound source is desired. They are transformerless and have switchable high-pass filter and pads.

*Australia: Group Technologies grouptechnologies.com.au 03 9354 9133
New Zealand: Jansen Pro Audio jansen.nz 09-377 3663*



ETC Response Mk2 8-Port DMX Gateway

ETC's Response Mk2 8-Port DMX Gateway has two 8-port options: a full-width Gateway with (8) XLR connections, and a half-width Gateway with (8) terminal connections. The Terminal version can use an existing rack-mount kit to get 16 ports of DMX output into a 1U rack space by mounting two 8-port gateways side-by-side.

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

ETC MegaPix and GigaPix

High End Systems MegaPix and GigaPix are pixel wash fixtures from the ETC family. Both units use an integrated Fresnel lens to shape the beams. A custom RGLB LED engine, and 2000-10,000K CT channel provide the light and shade. MegaPix weighs 9.2kg and has a 10,000 lumen output with a 4.5°-50° zoom range. GigaPix weighs 15kg and has a 17,000 lumen output with a 4.5°-55° zoom range. Both are IP54 rated and controlled via Art-Net or sACN.

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



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Lessons from the Frontline of Festival Survival



John Rostron. Photo Credit: Jody Hartley

John Rostron, CEO of the UK's Association of Independent Festivals, on cost pressures, cancelled events, and what the UK experience offers Aotearoa.

John Rostron is the Chief Executive of the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF), the UK's trade body dedicated to independent festivals. He took up the role in November 2022. Prior to this John co-founded the Sŵn Festival in Cardiff, and the Welsh Music Prize, held leadership roles in the independent promoter sector, and has deep roots in festival and music industry advocacy. Based in North Wales, John is now working with UK festival operators to steer the sector through an era of unprecedented cost pressures, shifting audience behaviour and supply chain disruption.

Q: You came into the AIF role in late 2022. What were the big pressures then – and what are they now?

A: "In 2022 many festivals were just starting to deliver their first events post COVID. At the same time, the UK was dealing with the impacts of Brexit. Combined, those two disruptions caused enormous upheaval. Costs had soared due to broken supply chains, and there was increased friction importing gear and talent from Europe. Audience behaviour had also changed dramatically. People were hesitant to commit, even after buying tickets. I heard about a 1,500 capacity event that sold out, yet a third of the crowd didn't turn up.

Now, most of those behavioural quirks have flatlined. But the costs remain high and margins are tight. What's really changed is that independent festivals now have to pay for almost everything up front, from staging to artists to toilets. And that's without the cushion of pre-pandemic cash flow or ticketing

advances. The big corporate players can shoulder those costs; independents can't. So it's not just a matter of higher costs, but the timing of cashflow that's killing events."

Q: Can you expand on how audience behaviour has shifted? What surprised you most?

A: "The most curious thing was this rise in ticket holders not turning up. Not just for a few shows, but at scale. It became clear that people had lost the habit of going out regularly and there was a newfound hesitancy. One case that stuck with me involved a mother telling me her daughter refused to go to a festival at 19 because she'd first attended it at 16 and now saw it as a 'younger person's' thing. That kind of brand perception gap wouldn't have emerged if those in between years hadn't been wiped out by COVID. The social rituals of festival going were broken."

Q: How many cancellations have you seen this year and what happens when a festival folds in the UK? Who loses out?

A: "This Summer was healthy, but even so, we had 43 cancellations, still higher than 2023. As for the impact, it really depends on the setup. We try to encourage 'good closures' – ones where ticket money is protected and key suppliers are paid something. Eldorado Festival last year was a textbook example of how to shut down well: clear communication, respectful timelines, transparency.

Usually, ticket holders are well protected. Suppliers and artists are often okay too, as deposits are now standard. But freelancers? They're the ones most at risk. They often work without contracts, and when a festival collapses, they're left with nothing. It's not malicious; it's just that in the rush, no one sorted the paperwork. We've seen freelancers burned because they were at the bottom of the food chain when liquidation hit."

Q: What kind of changes are you trying to drive around that?

A: "One of my personal missions has been connecting more deeply with the freelance community. It wasn't easy at first, freelancers don't have a central body like festival organisers do. There are a few Facebook groups, a couple of unions, but no unified voice. We've started working with a core group now, and we're trying to build consensus around two things: contract templates and rate transparency. Everyone wants to do the right thing, but they're time poor. If we can provide easy tools, it's more likely to happen.

Freelancers often don't know what to charge. Festivals often don't know what to pay. There's no benchmark. We want to change that with tools that make it easy for everyone to do the right thing. We're also pushing festivals to formalise contracts earlier. Because the truth is, cancellations and postponements aren't going away. And the only way to protect the people holding the show together is through proper paperwork."

Q: You've spoken about a "credit squeeze" for suppliers. What does that look like on the ground?

A: "It's difficult. Before, suppliers might have delivered services and invoiced later. Now, credit is hard to get so using a loan to buy equipment or warehousing is often off the table. They have been asking for 50-100% upfront and that shifts the risk entirely onto festivals.

We have noticed recently that companies who have 'skin in the festival game' are softening their terms. I think they are realising if they play hard ball it's actually no good for anybody. It's about rebuilding trust and giving festival organisers better margins because that's what they need to get to show day."

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Q: You mentioned AIF is looking at new ideas around volunteers – what's that about?

A: "We're trying to pilot something with volunteers that we've been wanting to do for ages. Right now, if you want to volunteer at a festival, you usually have to pay a deposit. So, say you're going to five different independent festivals, that's five separate deposits. And that can be a real barrier for some people.

What we're exploring is a system where, if all five festivals are AIF members, you'd only need to pay one deposit. You'd go to your first event, check in, do the work, and then that deposit would transfer to the next one, and so on.

It also has a secondary benefit. If you sign up to volunteer for one event and then see a network of others through the same system, you might go, 'Oh, I'd like to go to those too.' It could support both volunteer retention and festival discovery across the independent scene."

Q: Beyond supporting festivals in crisis, what kind of policy or advocacy work is AIF focused on right now?

A: "We're focusing on a proposal for something we're calling Music Festival Tax Relief. There are already creative industry tax reliefs in the UK, for theatre and orchestras and the like. The government recognise that putting on a show involves big upfront costs before you sell a single ticket. You're hiring actors, rehearsing, building sets. Those models get tax relief on that early-stage investment. But music festivals don't have anything like that, and we think they should.

So we're asking for something similar: a 45% relief on 80% of eligible spend, aimed at grassroots festivals under 30,000 capacity. It could help mitigate closures and allow smaller festivals to grow. We've written a paper and it's already been in to government a few times. We're preparing a big campaign around that for next year."

Q: Anything else on the horizon?

A: "We're also slowly developing a proposal that every 18-year-old should get a £300 festival voucher. It exists in other forms across Europe. France, Spain, Italy, Germany all have some version of a cultural pass. But the issue with broad cultural passes is that the money often goes offshore. People spend it on Spotify, Amazon, Kindle – the platforms, not the creators. Whereas with festivals, especially independent ones, the money largely stays local; local crew, UK production, UK artists. Even when international artists headline, the leakage is far less than with tech platforms.

And when someone goes to a festival, they're not just hearing music, there's literature, comedy, wellness, visual arts. It's a holistic cultural exposure. That's how we're framing the argument. It's not just a good experience, it's economically sensible and artist-supportive. We've got a roadmap to get there, and now it's a matter of time and persistence."

Q: Have there been any unexpected upsides or innovations emerging in the UK scene – particularly around hybrid models or new ways of operating?

A: "Yeah, definitely. One thing that's really taken off post-pandemic is payment plans for tickets. That used to be a fringe option; now it's the norm. It spreads risk, helps affordability, and gives festivals more forward visibility.

If people are setting up new events, they are much more likely to be single day city-based festivals. They are logistically easier and you are not competing with established greenfield festivals, just with other weekend options such as watching football or staying at home gaming. Clubs are also in decline. Today the social media aspiration for audiences wanting to dance to electronic music is an outdoor show so we are seeing a rise in the one-day format and electronic music. Britain is becoming a nation of ravers again.

We're also starting to see some really interesting experiments from the independent scene. For example, there's a group called the Chai Wallahs. They usually operate a tent at festivals that's known for 24-hour music, chai, and great vibes. But because budgets have been tightening, they were getting cut from line-ups. So what have they done? They've decided to start their own festival. It's called 'Where It All Began', and they're launching it as a kind of community trust, not-for-profit model. They've just kicked off a crowdfunding campaign to raise £100,000. Last I checked, they'd raised £28,000 in a week. It's not ticket sales, it's a crowd-powered pre-investment in something people already care about. That's a big shift.

Another one coming is 'Show of Hands'. It's led by someone who was involved in Truck Festival, and it's built around the idea of democratising the festival. It's literally giving people a say in the running of the event. That's baked into the structure.

And we're seeing a more general shift too. The biggest takeaway this season is that festivals rooted in a community, where people feel they belong, and their feedback matters, are doing really well. They're the ones selling out early, growing next year, building resilience. If your festival is just artist-led, like you're hoping the line-up sells the tickets, you're in trouble. But if your community is saying, 'we want more showers, or a run club, or a 24-hour tent,' and you listen to that? You're gold. That's the real pivot. It's not about booking bigger names. It's about deepening the experience."

Q: What advice would you give to production companies, suppliers, and the technical crews who are trying to keep festivals alive?

A: "I think production and supply companies are in a really tough spot. On one hand, Live Nation or other big players might be their biggest client, they can offer volume, consistent work, big paydays. But here's the threat: once those companies hit scale, they often just buy the infrastructure outright.

We've already seen it – Live Nation buys an accreditation software firm, suddenly the

independents in that space are done. Last year, they bought a load of toilets and the toilet supplier was out. The next could be fencing, staging, AV gear. So if you're fully dependent on them, your days are probably numbered.

My advice is: build a mixed portfolio. Sure, take the big jobs, you need the cashflow, but don't put all your weight behind them. Keep working with independents. Because if independent festivals collapse, your market diversity disappears. If you've only got one customer left, you don't have a business, you've got a countdown clock."

Q: What can suppliers actually do to support the independents?

A: "Some suppliers in the UK came together and did something brilliant. They helped set up a Fallow Festival Fund. Basically, if a festival had to take a year off, suppliers would come in and say, 'We'll give you this software for free,' or, 'We'll offer staging at a steep discount for your comeback year.'

They couldn't do it forever, of course. But for that one crucial season? It helped festivals return. That's smart business. You're protecting your future pipeline, and you're helping maintain a counterbalance to the major corporates.

It's not just altruism, it's strategic. If independents go, the whole supply ecosystem gets swallowed. So the challenge is to earn a living while actively helping that independent layer survive."

Q: Despite all the challenges, what gives you hope for the future, especially when it comes to independent festivals?

A: "Oh, I've got loads of hope. For one, sales have been strong. Even though margins are tough, we're not seeing a dip in demand and that's huge. Early bird tickets are selling at record levels. People want festivals. They're booking early. So it's not a case of declining interest; it's just about making the maths work. And that's a much better problem to have.

But what really gives me hope is the experience itself. I went to a load of festivals this year, and every time I'm reminded: there's nothing like a weekend camping festival. Nothing. You forget how special it is until you're back in it. It's not just a break from routine, it's stepping into another world. No screen time. No TV. Just people, music, connection.

The experience is better than it's ever been, creatively, technically, atmospherically. I used to think showers didn't belong at festivals. But now I think, 'Yeah, showers are great.' You can be clean, eat amazing food, go to a gong bath while Kae Tempest is playing. That's a real thing that happened. It was glorious.

There's so much range and possibility now. You can lose yourself completely or find yourself doing something unexpected. I genuinely believe it's one of the best experiences you can have. And here's the kicker, in a world where everyone's watching Netflix, the best way to save the planet might be going to a festival. Low-carbon, high-impact. I love that. That gives me joy."

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It's hard to nail a mix sometimes, but often problems arise when you lean too heavily on chance. We all appreciate it when, as luck would have it, we pick the perfect mic or that awesome reverb at the first attempt. But did we really fluke it, or were we simply too lazy to notice that we'd been influenced by convenience?

Here's a familiar scenario: you're working on a mix and you decide that the main vocal needs some sort of delay on it to work in alongside the reverb that's already in the mix. In this particular case you have a semi-specific thought that the delay in your mind's eye should be smokey, long and probably fairly invisible to the untrained ear. This idea has been prompted by the pace of the song and the structure of the vocal, which is creating a hole after each line where this delay would naturally land.

So you quickly establish an aux send, feed the vocal into it and dive into your plug-in list, looking for a favourite delay unit (or, if you have a hardware equivalent, you patch that in – assuming it still works!). You plonk this into your insert point and away you go.

But before you can think a little more specifically about the type of delay you're wanting to build, the vocal triggers the default setting inside the unit and something else pops up in your mix that immediately attracts your attention. This new delay – the one you've just

chanced upon – sounds cool. It's a 1/8 ping-pong delay sync'd to your session's tempo map and somehow it works!

Feeling inspired now, and trusting that this 'chance encounter' with an entirely different delay was somehow 'meant to be' – maybe it was the stars aligning – you run with this random sound, and the long, smokey delay idea that 'fitted nicely into the vocal structure' is sidelined or unconsciously abandoned.

Do you see what just happened here? The idea for the delay that your mind first conceived has been replaced by a chance encounter with a random patch. The original idea was based on a viable, musical thought, the other is a delay plucked from a database onto which you've overlayed two concepts: serendipity and mysticism.

When you allow this to happen repeatedly during a mix, you can eventually find yourself boxed into a corner from which you have no ability to escape, and all because you allowed a random collection of ill-considered sonic add-ons to become part of your well-crafted, finely tuned mix.

Luck and craft don't always go together at all in this caper, despite what you hear in interviews! In most instances, this 'serendipitous' approach to effects is simply lazy engineering – the stars have nothing to do with it. Occasionally, luck has favoured mixes, like Cher's famous pitch-correction win, often cited in the mix community as an example of a hit made almost by chance. But for every one of these famous wins, there are a million failures that no-one hears about – they're certainly not written about in magazines or discussed during interviews, that's for sure!

So to believe that luck always plays a massive role in any great mix is a fundamental distortion of statistics – nonsense, in short.

Now Let's Add A Reverb

Let's imagine now that the same type of logic is deployed one hour later during your well-crafted mix when you decide to add a new reverb to the drums, keeping in mind that, at this point, you're still blissfully unaware of your first abdication of responsibility over the delay choice.

Here you make the same mistake. Though you may have something in mind for the drums – a fairly short but strong room sound perhaps, that might include a gated element to prevent the drums from washing out too much – you instead let the initial reverb patch play immediately on the drum track.

"Wow, that sounds rad!" you once again muse to yourself, and before you know it, the sound you originally conceived in your head has been supplanted with Patch 01 – Large Hall. The new sound is only 'cool' during this first encounter because it's unexpected. Unexpected sounds naturally catch your ear. It makes no artistic or engineering sense to call this patch 'magical' simply because it grabbed your attention. A bomb going off in the street would have the same effect. Should you include that, too?

This style of mix engineering isn't making good choices. It's simply your mind being pulled off course by a shiny new object.

So, now your drums are in the mix sporting a big hall reverb that sounded awesome when you first encountered it, and while you may have adjusted the length a bit since to make

it fit the song, you've nevertheless chosen a reverb based on the same elements of chance, mistaking what is clearly poor mix methodology for serendipity.

More Reverb And Grit

The next thought you have sometime soon after all this bad engineering has gone down is to add more reverb to the voice, because now that's getting a little lost, thanks to the masking effect of the drum reverb. Surprise, surprise.

You also decide at this point to turn the vocal up a bit to lift it above the cloud of effects, and initially this too seems like a good plan.

The next thing you decide to do is add some more grit to the two electric rhythm guitars that frame the left and right of your stereo image. These core elements were really well recorded at the time, and during the rough mixes these were the standout feature.

But now they seem a little flat – a bit soft and mellow; somehow lacking the natural focus they once had.

So you decide to reamp them just a smidge, to bring them 'back into focus'. They're already on a group bus, so you decide to add a plug-in insert here mostly out of convenience, and when you first add Tubes-R-U's (or some such amp modeller) to that group the guitars are transformed!

"Wow, that sounds crazy!" you once again muse in astonishment.

The two guitars sound nothing like they used to, but wow – they're definitely dramatic now!

So again you praise the night sky for delivering you this magical encounter with Amp-01, and before making any adjustments to the mix percentage on the plug-in's UI or investigate the thousands of options it can provide, you put the new guitars back into the mix.

Now your mix has a distinctly different flavour to it, and it's all feeling a bit aggressive. So you wind back the mix percentage on the Tubes-R-U's plug-in that's strapped across the group and this has the effect of settling the guitars back down.

But although there's some disquiet in your mind still about how the guitars now sound, you don't address this problem immediately because you want to give the 'chance encounter' with Amp-01 some time to settle in.

Instead, you now add some Decapitator distortion to the snare, because the drive of the drums now seems a little insipid, and the snare in particular seems to be getting a little lost – its grace notes becoming invisible and that's making the rhythm of the drums sound a little more like a plodding 2 and 4 beat than a funky groove.

Hijacked and Hoodwinked

By now you can see where this mix illustration is heading, and why. Instead of the engineer being in control of decisions that materially influence the mix, the lazy encounters, the

falsely ascribed serendipitous moments, and the disproportionate (some would say, fanciful) value placed on chance essentially hijack the mix process via a series of insidious wrongs perpetrated on the recording.

These are hard to rectify later, particularly if the engineer is convinced that the problems of the mix lie elsewhere, and not with the decisions made earlier. Indeed, without realising it, these earlier 'choices' were not engineering decisions at all. They were simply lazy engineering – 'Tarot Card Technique', I call it.

Too many mixes follow this same path. Everything starts well – the recordings sound strong, performances epic – but as soon as the first effects are added in this fanciful manner the track can lose its way, washing out like footprints in the sand.

So the next time you're adding an effect to a mix, think clearly about what you want that effect to achieve before you dive into it – if it's a reverb or delay in particular, ask things like: what size space should this be, and would that be a place I would have picked to record it? And while you're establishing the auxiliary send/return chain, mute the output!

Whatever you do, don't start conflating lazy engineering practices with miraculous encounters. Craft your effects carefully; don't have them inadvertently handed to you on a platter or you will eventually find yourself in a cloud of unknowing, wondering how your mix ever got so messed up.

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MJ

The Musical



Originating on Broadway and still running on the West End, MJ the Musical has arrived in Australia. Currently showing in Melbourne at Her Majesty's Theatre, the Australian leg of the production began in Sydney and is set to tour to Brisbane and Perth in 2026.

When making a musical about the King of Pop the sound design is its crowning glory. A crucial step to get right when audiences are already familiar with Michael Jackson's music. British sound designer, Gareth Owen, described the job as "perhaps the most daunting prospect of my professional life." Given this, he decided to delve into his "go-to" toolbox: Avid mixing desks, d&b audiotechnik speakers, Shure radio mics and – what Owen describes as the "Swiss Army Knife of pro audio" – the Fourier transform engine. "I'm unashamedly 'cut and paste' when it comes to the tools I use," he says. "Since I didn't get sacked, they paid off once again."

Technical Director of the Australian production, Cameron Flint, certainly agrees Owen's toolkit paid off. "In well over 30 years

in the industry, the sound design is as good as I've ever heard on a musical." The show features a band that is mobile throughout the production, as opposed to positioned in an orchestra pit or on set rostra. The arrangements of MJ's classics have not been 'theatre-ised' to better suit the stage, nor has the cast's vocal delivery, as is sometimes the case with jukebox musicals. "Even though the show is a musical, it really does feel like a pop concert much of the time," Flint says.

The story follows MJ's career from his rise to fame in the Jackson 5 in the '60s through to his solo superstardom all through the '80s. The set is comprised mostly of flying pieces allowing for diverse locations and eras. It's a testament to the design that the show manages to evoke the feeling of its different time periods given

how modern its gear is. The only incandescent lighting fixtures found in the rig are a small number of globes on some set electrics. Otherwise, the rig of over 100 lighting fixtures is all LED. Onstage and front of house lighting is made up of 89 MAC Viper Performances and 20 MAC Viper Wash DX units. The Vipers manage to achieve the punchy deep orange and dark purples of Natasha Katz's lighting design, while still emitting enough light to highlight the performers. Upstage the rig also features three runs of GLP impression FR10 bars.

The most spectacular feature of the lighting is approximately 500 metres of City Theatrical QolorFLEX NuNeon RGB. A LED strip inside a silicon extrusion that is designed to evoke the look of traditional neon lighting. Most of the

strip is rigged in vertical and horizontal lines on flown prosceniums and set pieces, although it is flexible enough to create curves and lettering. The set electrics installation was so huge it constituted thousands of manhours of work, most of which took place before anything was bumped in to a theatre.

OPTO Projects in Melbourne supplied and installed the majority of the set electrics. The NuNeon came in cut lengths with six LEDs per 100mm. The sectioned pieces of set needed to join together seamlessly, but each part didn't always neatly add up to 100mm increments. This meant the OPTO team had to slice the backside of the product, fold the LED over and block it out to create the desired length. "It's quite challenging because of how fragile the LED strip is and if you bend it over itself, it doesn't really like it," said Simon Toomer, Director of OPTO. The team's hard work paid off in that all parts of the set were eventually able to meet and be lit in one continuous line.

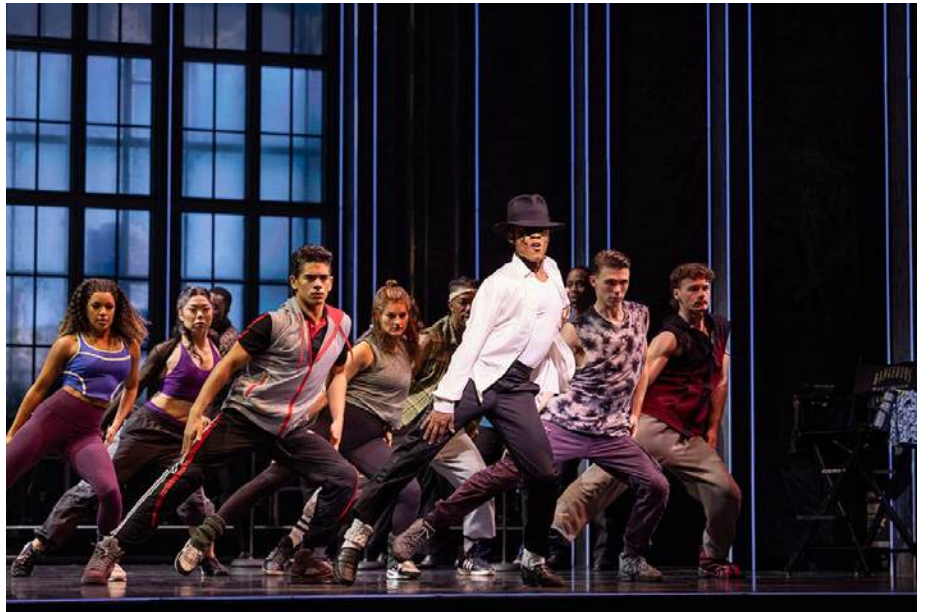
While the NuNeon is spectacular in its brightness and vivid colour, there were particular set pieces that the design team wanted to closer emulate a traditional glass neon look. In order to evoke the '70s, the Apollo Theatre and Soul Train signage was created using OPTO's own LED RGBVW strip encased in clear tubing which was then filled with a light tinted product to emulate the look of formed neon glass.





Joining the OPTO projects team were production electrician Dale Mounsey and the set builders at Form Imagination (based in Ballarat). All the scenery was drawn up in 3D in the most minute detail before fabrication, right down to the smallest nuts and bolts. This allowed for the lighting elements, dimmers, cable pass throughs, and recesses to be created in the virtual space so the team had minimal surprises once it came time for the construction phase. Pre-planning meant that all the control equipment was able to fit within its designated real estate, while allowing custom breaks so scenery could be more readily assembled and disassembled for transport without the need to strip the set LX between each bump-in.

Given the complexity of the job, OPTO were prepared to make adjustments when the set pieces were remounted in Melbourne after the initial Sydney season, but were pleased





to find that everything travelled flawlessly. This was no doubt thanks in part to the team's work ensuring the set electrics were durable. For instance, each incandescent globe was individually dip-coated in Plasti Dip, a multi-purpose flexible rubber coating commonly used in automation to prevent rust. Using a clear version of the product, the team applied several thin, diluted coats until the globes could be dropped and would bounce rather than break.

"We are lucky to have so many excellent technical suppliers in this country, across all departments," says Cameron Flint. MJ the Musical came together with gear and assistance from JPJ Audio, PRG Lighting, Big Picture, OPTO Projects and Form Imagination. "It is a pleasure to work with them, as well as the MJ crew on the whole."

A thread running through the production is a desire of the fictional MJ to "appear from nowhere" at the top of his show. It's a carrot



dangled for the audience throughout the performance. The technical department (understandably) weren't able to share with me

the secrets to this particular bit of stage magic. What I can say is, that as an audience member, it most certainly paid off.



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METALLICA'S M72 END-ON



DOWN UNDER

After a long wait, the Metallica M72 tour finally made it to the Antipodes, taking in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney, before crossing the ditch to Auckland. The M72 Tour has been stalking the globe since April 2023, when it kicked off in Amsterdam. The shows are often performed in the round, but for this leg, which saw the band playing to audiences of about 60,000, Metallica's Creative Director Dan Braun and Meyer Sound's Director of System Optimization Bob McCarthy redesigned the show's PA for the end-on performances of the southern run.

I had the pleasure of catching Metallica at Melbourne's Marvel Stadium show, and Bob himself was on-hand to walk guests of Meyer Sound through his PA design, generously showing us the system plots and predictions in Meyer Sound's MAPP 3D system design and prediction tool.

I sat down with Bob after the show to discuss how they had translated the in-the-round show to end-on, and just how he got the imaging so good at a stadium show. Turns out, I was listening to a type of PA deployment I have never experienced before.

"Dan Braun is the visionary for Metallica's show designs," explains Bob. "He wanted to do the show in the round to create a more intimate experience in stadia. That really started to come to life after we had done shows with the San Francisco Symphony in 2019 and the 40th anniversary shows in 2021. They were the proving grounds for the aspects that became incorporated into M72, which I call a 'more stereo' approach. We built the show in Belgium; it went through several iterations of concepts over about a nine-month period, and that became M72."

Bob's been collaborating with Dan on Metallica's tour sound design since 2017. "One of Dan's guiding principles for M72 was he wanted everybody in the audience to feel like they're listening to the show on a pair of Meyer Sound's top-end Amie studio monitors," relates Bob. For the Australia and New Zealand shows, the design builds on concepts from the 2018-2019 tour. Here, we added something that we first did at the Power Trip festival in Indio, California, which was to add extra sets of PA hangs across the front to bring a full stereo experience down onto the floor of the stadium. That's the big difference between this and other end-on stage stadium shows: there are actually six hangs across the front alternating between left and right channels."

"James's guitar is hard panned left, and Kirk's guitar is hard panned right. The drums are also hard panned," Bob explains. "The show 'mixes itself' in the air. It's delivering stereo to most of the audience."

The main front hangs each comprise 18 Meyer Sound PANTHER line array elements and nine 2100-LFC low-frequency control elements. The outer hangs comprise 22 PANTHER

loudspeakers each. Eight ULTRA-X80 point source loudspeakers serve as front fills along the front of the stage. Then there's what Bob refers to as "a farm" of subwoofers ground-stacked on each side of the stage, consisting of 12 2100-LFCs along with 12 VLFCs (Very Low Frequency Control Element) per side, which provide subsonic low-end support. Three delay hangs, each consisting of 16 PANTHER plus six 2100-LFC on the ground, sit behind the FoH mix position.

"One subtle thing that makes the drums sound more realistic is the use of VLFCs to extend the low-frequency range down to 13Hz," divulges Bob. "When you listen to a natural kick drum, its range extends much lower than what a typical subwoofer reproduces, so the VLFC offers a more realistic representation. It also puts the kick drum, the bottom of the bass guitar, and the toms in a 'lane' of their own, so to speak. You can reveal those instruments in the mix without having to put on a bunch of extra high end in to make them punch through. Metallica's FoH engineer, Greg Price, is a tremendously musical mixer who focuses on keeping sounds true to themselves instead of manufacturing them in the mix."



Bob McCarthy





With the roof closed at Marvel due to the inclement weather forecast and the stadium's less-than-ideal acoustics, Bob and Metallica's system engineer Chris Rushin had their work cut out keeping acoustic energy away from where it shouldn't be. "The most concerning thing to me was how terrible it sounded when the room was empty," he admits. "I had spent a day and a half in there. I knew it was going to have big reflections, but it had the most unmusical-sounding reflections I've ever heard. Between the stadium itself, the plastic floor covering the turf, and the plastic chairs, every drum hit produced reflections that sounded like somebody shuffling a deck of cards or crunching a pile of aluminium foil. When the show started, we exhaled with relief; the audience fixed it!"

With multiple generations of loyal fans, Metallica continues to sell out massive stadia. "The most important thing that they ask of the sound is that the whole audience is fully included," observes Bob. "The thing that strikes me over and over again about Metallica is that they want everybody to have a great experience, and they are willing to invest in that and to give our team the time we need to get it right. They always make sure that it happens."

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HTH Productions Hits the Touring Scene

When Harry the Hirer Productions (HTH) acquired the equipment assets of Creative Productions in late 2024, it wasn't just another gear sale. It marked a shift - a deliberate decision to expand its lighting and video offering while stepping firmly into the touring space.

The result was HTH Touring - a division built on a solid knowledge base, passionate people, now backed by the muscle of one of Australia's biggest moving light, video and LED screen inventories.

New Culture, Building the Future

HTH has always known the best way to deliver quality is to invest in great people and put the best equipment in their hands.

Chris Dalton, former Operations Manager at Creative, joined HTH in the touring business on the client side as Touring Account Manager, while Shannon Barreau, previously Head of Video, steps in as Touring Operations Manager. Between them sits an experienced crew that know touring lighting and video inside out - the kind who can load in, problem solve on the fly, load out, and still have time to share a laugh in the loading dock.

"We moved an entire factory, set up a new home, and still prepped a massive national tour - all in two weeks," recalls Barreau. "It came down to the dedication and passion of our crew. That's what keeps us delivering."



That “massive national tour” was The Kid Laroi’s THE FIRST TIME TOUR - the team’s first big test. Two weeks from planning to rollout, all while physically relocating their operation. If they could survive that, the rest would be easy.

Heavy Investment, Light Touch

Since its launch, the team has poured serious investment into new gear. The focus is future-proofing the fleet for the hybrid demands of arena touring and large-scale production events market.

A full container of Robe iFortes joined the inventory - fixtures that have quickly become a global LD favourite - alongside ACME Tornados, over 200sqm of VuePix Infiled Black Widow LED, and a complete refresh of cabling and power distribution systems.

“We wanted fixtures that give us flexibility across all show scales,” says Dalton. “The iFortes have fast become an international touring go-to fixture, and securing the first batch of VuePix Infiled Black Widow panels in Australia was a huge win (think – a new improved Vanish screen). The LED team worked directly with the factory and ULA Group to take the US version of Black Widow and make the screen more versatile for the Australian market.”

Video Department Head, Archie Landsberg explains, “The US has much bigger volumes than Australia, so they can afford to have different products for different purposes, but in Australia it’s important to have a screen that will work on festivals, major events, corporate and arena gigs. All these sectors have different needs, but with our new Black Widow, we’ve nailed it to work across all sectors.” Head of Touring Video, Sotheara ‘Tee’ Mam, couldn’t agree more, and joined the touring team as the product was nearing its development, so was able to bring his touring knowledge to its final development and rollout.

The iFortes, Tornados and Black Widow are just a few of the new gear coming online for HTH Touring.

Word Spreads Fast

The results are easy to spot on stage. The team’s work has been seen across productions for The Kid Laroi, AEW Grand Slam, Tash Sultana, Nelly, The Rudimentals, Human Nature, and Porter Robinson. Their trademark consistency backed by a crew with a refreshingly no-ego attitude has quickly caught international attention.

So, when UK act New Order mapped out their latest Australian tour, their production team turned to HTH Touring for LX and VX systems. The run took over some of the country’s most iconic venues - Brisbane Riverstage, the Sydney Opera House Forecourt, and Melbourne’s Sidney Myer Music Bowl, each brought to life by a significant lighting and video package.

More than 150 fixtures made up the rig, including Ayrton Eurus, Robe BMFL Wash Beams, Robe MegaPointes, GLP X4 Bar 20s and 10s, and GLP JDC-1s, paired with a 12-metre-wide VuePix Infiled LED screen at 3.9mm pitch. The result was a clean, powerful touring setup that matched the precision and heritage of the band itself.

Fast-forward six months and the team has just wrapped Yeat’s Australian tour, a smooth, tightly executed run that left the artist’s team more than impressed. The package included a full lighting and video setup featuring ACME Pixel Lines, Robe MegaPointes, GLP JDC-1s, Chauvet Strike Ms, Ayrton Magic Blades, and a 12-metre-wide 3.9mm VuePix Infiled LED screen with a full camera control system.

Once again, the approach proved its worth - seamless delivery, world-class experiences for artists, management, and crew alike.

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HTH Touring in a short period has amassed an experienced crew who have worked in the touring industry both internationally and locally for many years. The real difference lies in how the company blends its corporate and event production DNA into the touring world.

A great example is how HTH employ key crew full-time rather than on a freelance basis, so they have legitimate consistency of crew from show to show. This is not the standard in touring businesses, but HTH have runs on the board with full-time tech crews. Full-time crew have more knowledge of the gear, more consistent understanding of the venues, and are used to working with each other, working better as a team on the broader show.

This is unusual in Australian touring, coupled with reliable new gear, and a genuine love for the craft, and we can only watch as they scale bigger, and the investment in gear continues.

At the end of the day, it's still about the people who make the show - the road dogs, techs, and dreamers who make the impossible look routine.

www.hthtouring.com.au



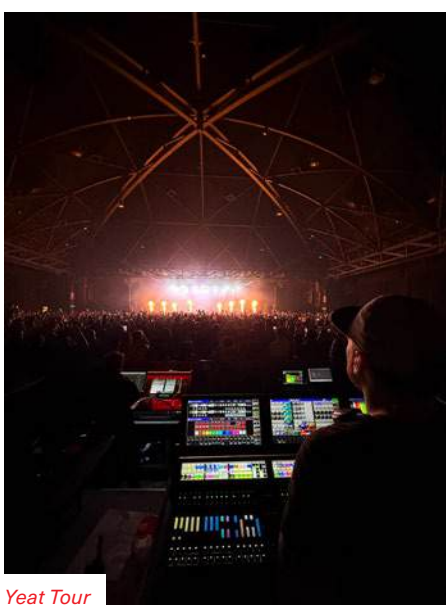
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Austage Events and Melbourne Fashion Week

Closing Runway 2025 101 Collins show



– Celebrating 20 Years of Audio Visual Excellence

For two decades, Austage Events has been the quiet force behind the glamour of Melbourne Fashion Week, delivering the audio-visual production, management and technical direction that helps transform creative concepts into unforgettable runway moments.

2025 marked Austage's 20th year working with the City of Melbourne to deliver Melbourne Fashion Week. They've taken some time to reflect on their evolution from AV supplier to trusted collaborator, and recount the incredible team efforts that have helped shape the city's most stylish week of the year.

Where It All Began

When Austage Events launched its Melbourne office in 2005, Rod Morrison, Matt Wilson and Nick Ellul played key roles in establishing a local presence. The trio have grown with the company from founding members to their current roles as General Manager - Austage Events, Senior Production Manager and General Manager - Austage Venues, respectively.

Austage's involvement with Melbourne Fashion Week also began in that same year, initially supplying the audio visual requirements to Arts Events, the production company overseeing the week.

Matt started at Austage as a technician and now serves as the Project Lead for M/FW, working closely with the City of Melbourne event producers and production partners such as Resolution X.

"When the City of Melbourne brought things in-house, we were lucky enough to win the tender," he says. "That relationship has continued ever since."

In the early years, the event was staged entirely within the Melbourne Town Hall, a visually magnificent but technically challenging venue.

"It's heritage-listed, with timber beams and no official weight rating in the roof," recalls Rod. "Every year we'd have to get it re-engineered almost and the sets were massive."

Yet the complexity became an advantage and those challenges built Austage's reputation as a valued production partner.

"We got really good at working in the Town Hall," says Matt. "We knew how to manage the AV requirements to budget and work within the rigging limitations to deliver a high-end show. That set us ahead of other companies."

The Power of Partnership

20 years on, the longevity of Austage's partnership with the City of Melbourne is much more than technical know-how, it's a case study in how solid relationships underpin event success.

Their involvement extends beyond lighting and sound, encompassing everything from logistics and seating layouts to technical problem-solving. With a wealth of fashion experience, Austage also brings the power of foresight, pre-empting technical or logistical issues and reading between the lines to ensure the creative vision and budget work in harmony.

"We're a crucial piece of the puzzle," says Matt. "The City of Melbourne producers lean on us when it comes to venues because we do 200 other gigs a year and have that industry knowledge around the spaces and how it comes together in terms of technical design."

The strong foundation of trust built over the years allows both sides to navigate challenges with openness and mutual respect. Rod and Matt emphasise that Austage's positive approach and the ability to stay flexible have helped cement their affable client relationship.

Rod highlights that empathy and understanding are key. "It's important to be

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project-focused and receptive to what the client is trying to achieve and provide the best you can within the scope."

"It's about being able to roll with the punches," adds Matt. "Just being friendly, being helpful. Like in life, being a good human being gets you a long way."

Part of that collaborative process is having Austage involved in planning from the very beginning. Matt and fellow Senior Production Manager, Mike Rankin (who oversees technical direction and pre-visualisation) attend site visits and contribute to discussions around venue selection and seating layouts.

"Originally we were brought in quite late in the game, whereas now it's almost a year-round project," says Matt.

He notes having technical production engaged from the outset helps prevent common pitfalls later on, such as equipment not fitting, insufficient power supply, or access limitations during setup. Refined over the years, it has created an efficient process when it comes to designing spaces for a runway show.

"Now it starts with, 'okay, we want to try and achieve 750 seats in this venue' and Mike can plot that out and allow for the zones," explains Matt.

"We might not know the creative yet, but we know we'll have lighting, audio, and video. Mike evenly distributes all that, then places the seating around it so everything works cohesively before the design even goes out. The creative might change later, but the groundwork is already there."



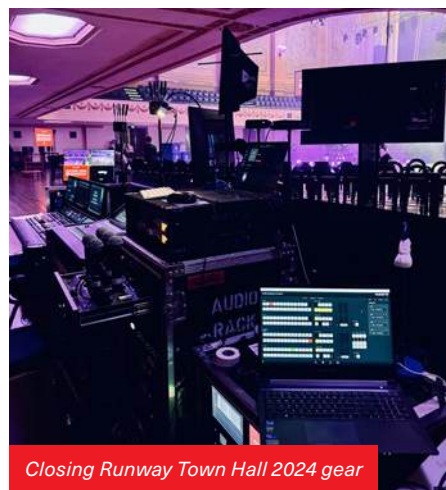
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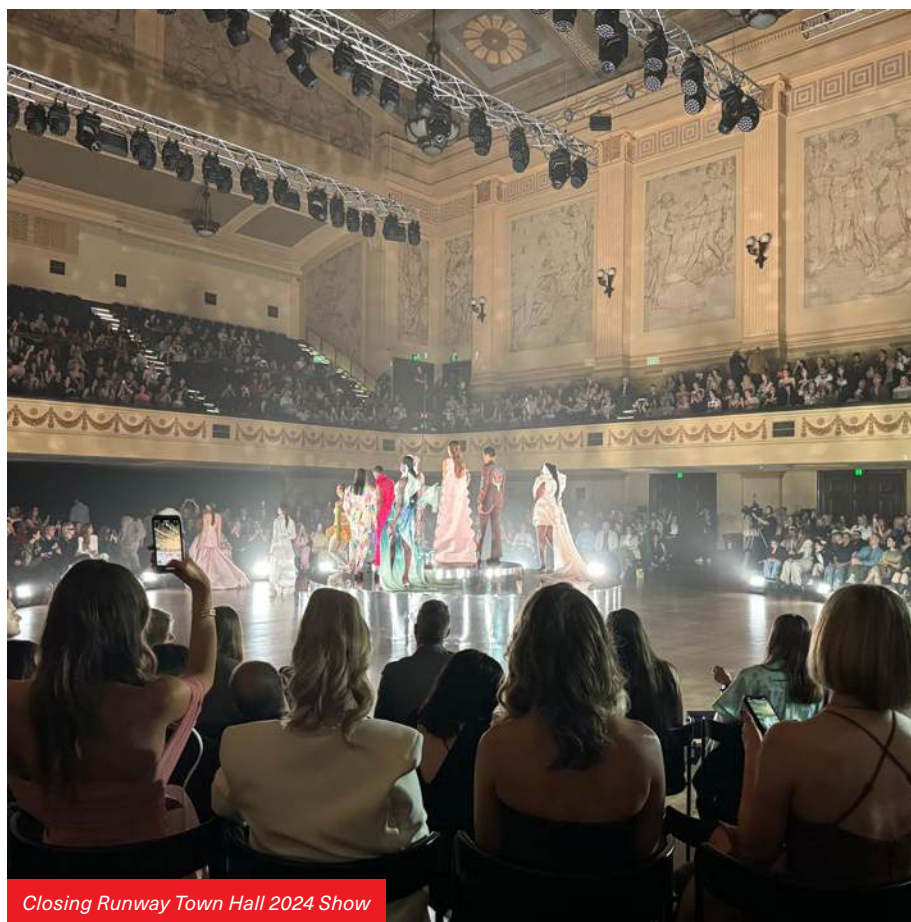
Dockside Runway 2022



Closing Runway Town Hall 2024 G Flip



Closing Runway Town Hall 2024 gear



Closing Runway Town Hall 2024 Show

Adapting Through Change

Few moments tested the events industry more than the pandemic, yet it also marked a turning point for M/FW's creative evolution.

"The City of Melbourne was one of our most supportive clients during covid" recalls Rod. "They were determined to keep things going and it kept hundreds of people working at a time when there was very little happening in the industry."

In 2020, M/FW was staged as a pre-recorded event with Austage transforming Meat Market in North Melbourne into a three-studio set where fashion parades were filmed and then premiered online at key times over the week. The pandemic years also inspired long-term shifts for M/FW including a new format across multiple venues to showcase Melbourne landmarks and a focus on immersive runway experiences that tell a story.

While some AV companies were heavily investing in their virtual event capabilities during this time, Rod and Matt note they were strategic about new equipment purchases and that futureproofing was a key consideration.

"We built a streaming computer during covid," recalls Matt. "But the idea was it could always be used as a high end video playback machine once live events came back."



Austage crew little bourke runway 2025 (L-R Matt Wilson, Tony Brennan, Nico Jongejan)



Little Bourke Runway 2024 bump in

Evolving Technology, Evolving Shows

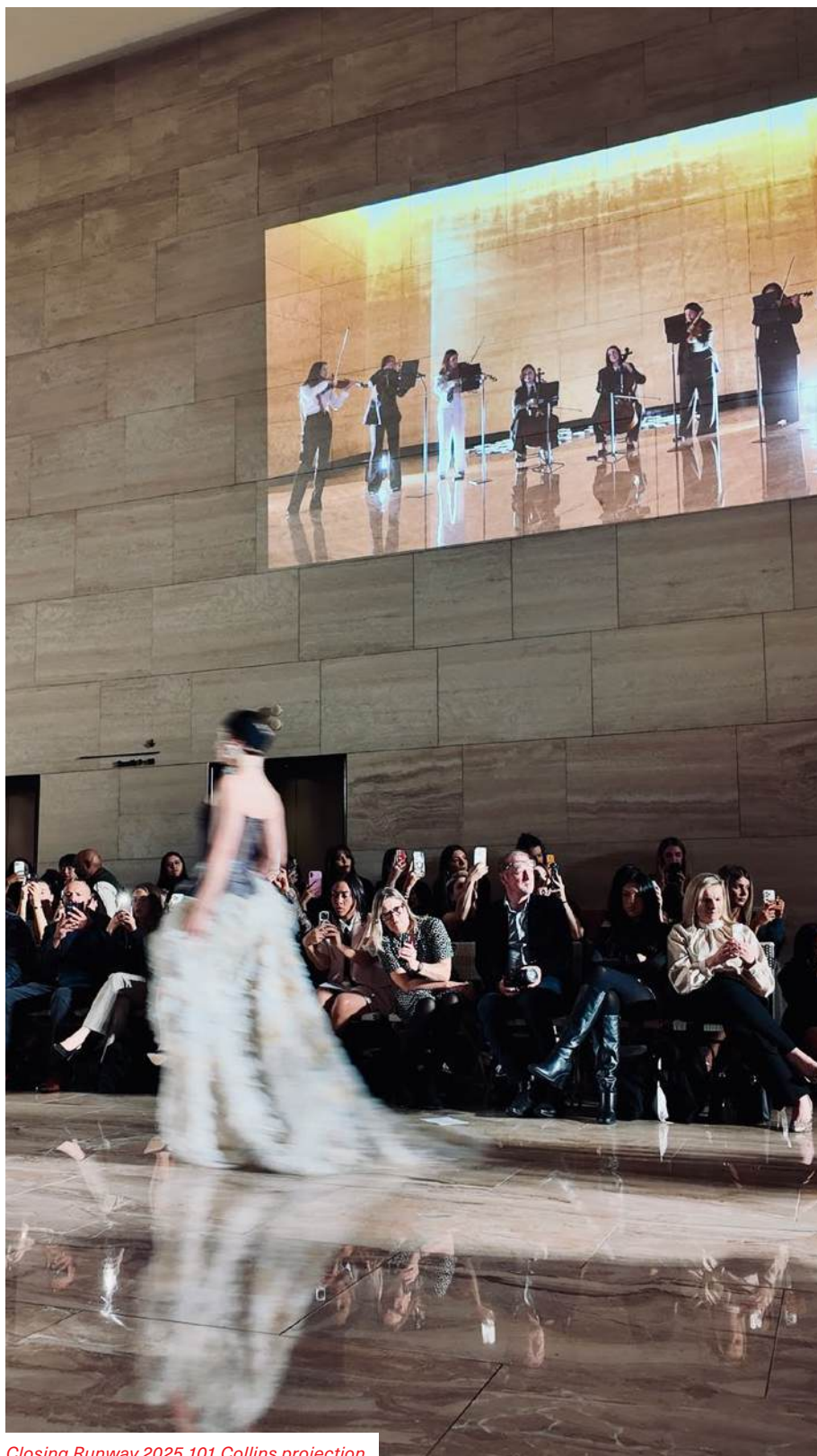
From the beta cam decks and DVD players of the early years to LED, simplified cabling and battery-powered lighting rigs, it's not just the venues that have changed over the past 20 years but the event technology too.

"The mid 2010 years in the Town Hall, it was all complex multiblend projection and big sets," Rod says. "That was before the E2 vision mixers, so you'd have blends going here, blends going there with multiple systems and operators working to make one cohesive design."

"What we used to do as small or rear-projected screens can now be an 85 or 100 inch TV."

"Video and audio playback have definitely become easier too," Matt adds. "Some content would be 4:3, some would be 16:9 so you'd have all these DVD players. Switching was clunky, you'd always have to switch through black."

While from a technical perspective there has been a shift toward creating ambiance with AV rather than a spectacle, the move to



Closing Runway 2025 101 Collins projection

multiple venues adds its own layer of logistical complexity. From cactus gardens to basement carparks, the embrace of unconventional spaces has kept the Austage team on its toes.

When it comes to a show that really sums up Austage's capabilities, both Rod and Matt call back to the Little Bourke Street Runway which made a return to the program in 2024 after a seven year break and was also part of M/FW 2025. Unique and quintessentially Melbourne, the show literally stops traffic with the runway staged right on the road.

With a very tight bump-in time, trucks rolling

into a one-way street and pedestrians to navigate, Rod describes the show as one that requires "military precision".

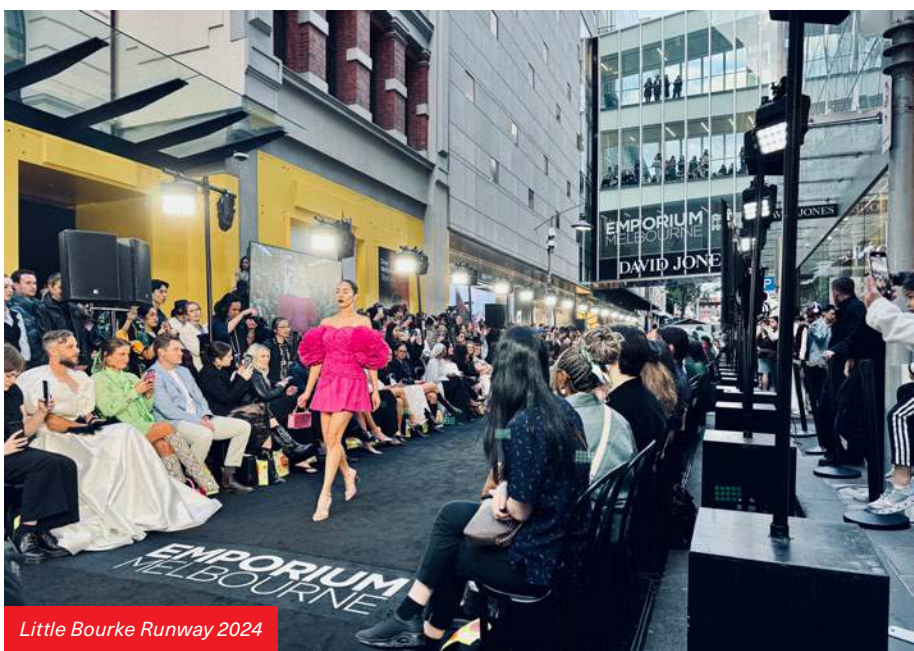
"It just gives you a sense of accomplishment with the sheer timeframe. You're there at 2 pm, done by 10 pm, this whole massive show has been and gone."

Matt adds, "those complex projects really define the one team, one dream aspect."

"I think that's really our wheelhouse, how we find a way to make it work. To make a big, weird space look cool...yeah, that's what we do."



Arid Gardens Runway Botanical Gardens 2020



Little Bourke Runway 2024



Austage team



Closing Runway 2025 101 Collins Austage crew

Rod & Matt's Top Five M/FW Moments

- **Arid Garden Runway 2020** - an outdoor runway at the Royal Botanical Gardens, this one felt special as it marked a return to in-person events after a long time, and a funky backdrop to boot
- **Little Bourke Street Runway 2024** - it was fun to bring this one back to celebrate 30 years of M/FW. It's a serious hustle but the end result is amazing and a chance for the general public to catch some of the runway action
- **Volvo Electric Runway** - featuring 30 Volvo EX30s parked along the runway, we created a bespoke vision mix streamed onto the car's centre console screen so audience members in the cars could catch all the action from the front seat
- **Town Hall 2013** - there was a cut out in the set with the DJs in the back. That was pretty cool!
- **Student Collections Runway 2025** - staged in former woolstore Younghusband, we designed a 10 projector blend onto a 12x12m cube to showcase the live runway visuals and back of house action

Looking Ahead

As Melbourne Fashion Week continues to evolve, so does Austage's role in shaping its success with a focus on staying adaptable and forward-thinking. The team treats every show as an opportunity to learn while also drawing on their 20 years of experience in executing runway shows.

"Fashion Week is one of those events that pushes everyone to be at their best," says Rod.

"It's a challenge, getting out and about into different spaces but everyone mucks in and ultimately has a good time. It's a great team exercise that builds camaraderie."

Matt credits Austage's success to the strength of its people and tight-knit culture. "A lot of the core crew and even some freelancers have been with us since the start. Clients know us, trust us, and enjoy working with us, and that makes all the difference."

See Austage in action at M/FW 2024 in the documentary 'First In, Last Out - Behind the Runway' - www.austageevents.com.au/portfolio/behindtherunway/



THE 2026 CX RENTAL AND PRODUCTION DIRECTORY

Each December, we compile and publish this Australia-wide guide to rental and production companies. Its printed in this edition for you to keep year-round as a reference, and is also published on our website, with entries searchable by product category and location – you can find it online at www.cxnetwork.com.au/rental-directory/

If your company missed the cutoff listing in this printed edition, we can still add your details to the online directory – just email us at jason@vcscreative.com

And as this is the December edition, we're about to take a break until the February 2026 issue. Thanks to all our subscribers and supporters for a great 2025, and we'll see you again next year!

- Jason Allen, editor and publisher

STATE/TERRITORY	PAGE
AUST CAPITAL TERRITORY	42
NEW SOUTH WALES	42-48
NORTHERN TERRITORY	49
QUEENSLAND	49-52
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	52-53
VICTORIA	54-58
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	59



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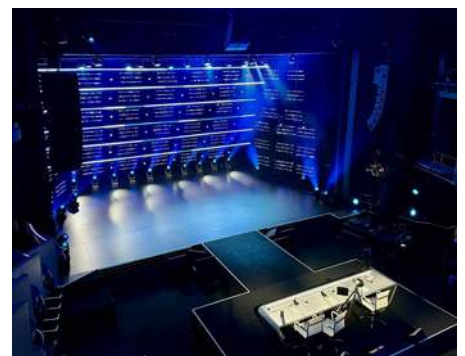
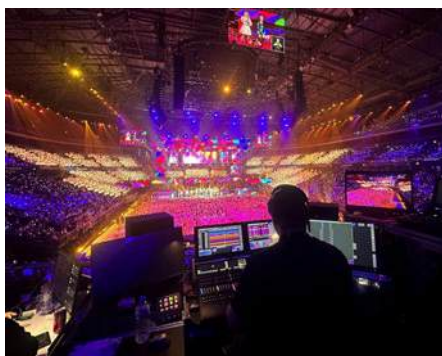
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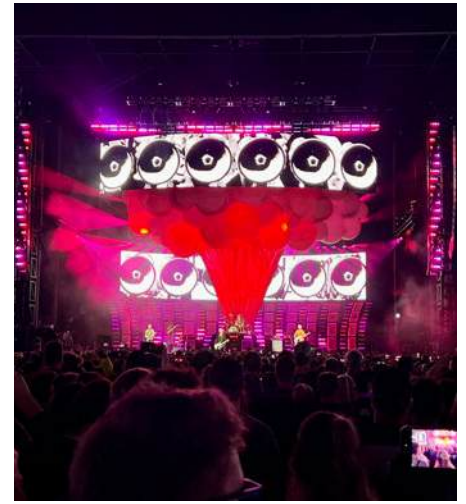
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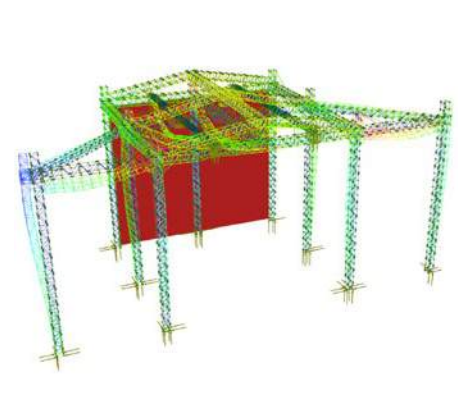
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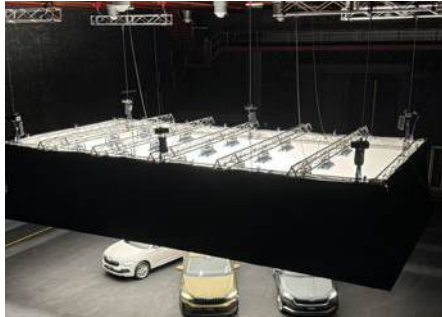
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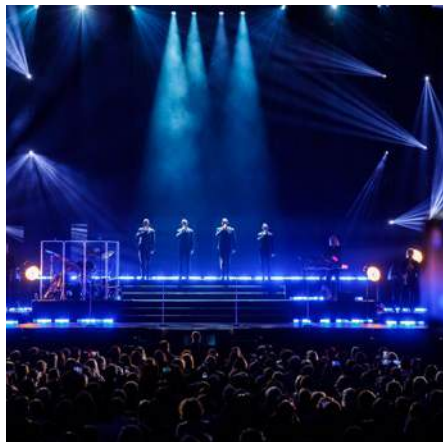
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Kolour by Kaz

Shop 5/6-14 Oxford Street,
Darlinghurst, NSW, 2010

T: 0466 581 886

E: kaz@kolourbykaz.com.au

W: www.kolourbykaz.com.au



You think it, we print it!! Award winning custom printing and branding business covering a large range of items from T-Shirts, polos, business shirts, Hi Vis workwear, trucker caps, drink bottles, tote bags, name tags and much more. Fast turnaround with no minimum order. From a single item to hundreds or more, we've got you covered. Get the team event ready with Kolour by Kaz. Bit of background: LX chicky for 20 years pre-Covid and now owner of an award winning business on Oxford Street taking out Entrepreneur of the Year Award at Australian Ladies in Business Awards 2025. My Covid baby.



NSW

QLD

SA

VIC

*See QLD, SA and VIC for more location details.

NW Group

Building Q, 10-16 South Street,
Rydalmere, NSW, 2116

T: (02) 9061 7300

E: ask@nwgroupp.com.au

W: www.nwgroupp.com.au



NW Group is one of the top suppliers of full-service live event production in Australasia. We have extensive experience working across all sectors of the event market, including corporate, arts and entertainment, special projects, and venues. Our team of experts is equipped with cutting-edge equipment and technologies to ensure flawless production for any type of event. Our comprehensive range of services includes audio reinforcement, visual projection, intelligent lighting, staging, rigging, and more. Whether you need assistance with event planning, equipment rental, or on-site technical support, NW Group is here to help. Contact us today to discuss your upcoming event and discover how we can take it to the next level with our unparalleled production services.



NSW

Pro Sound and Lighting

49 Auburn Street,
Wollongong, NSW, 2500

T: (02) 4226 1177

E: info@prosoundlighting.com.au

W: www.prosoundlighting.com.au



Our services include: • Sales of both party and professional lighting equipment, audio gear, studio products, lighting control solutions, effects machines and all related accessories • Short-term hire of lighting, audio, DJ gear, PA equipment, production gear and more for any party or corporate event • Customised event solutions including party theming and lighting to set the mood • Installations of lighting and audio gear for venues, schools, clubs, churches and other entertainment venues • Full retail showroom • Delivery and operation for larger events • Long-term hire of lighting and audio equipment for venues and clubs • Servicing and repairs of lighting and audio equipment • Consultation for lighting and audio venue solutions • Trailer stage hire with d&b audiotechnik or FBT line array PA system, and DiGiCo or Allen & Heath mixing consoles



NSW

Scene Change Sydney

3/2 George Place Artarmon NSW

T: (02) 9906 8909

E: sydney@scenechange.com.au

W: www.scenechange.com.au



Scene Change Sydney is a full-service technical supplier offering a wide range of solutions in audio, video, lighting and staging. They boast an extensive inventory of world-class LED panels, including outdoor, lightweight, transparent, corner, and true curving options, designed to suit various applications without compromise. With a team of expert project managers and technicians, Scene Change provides competitive, high-quality solutions tailored to meet diverse event needs.



NSW

Sydney PA Hire

Artarmon, NSW, 2064

T: 0408 239 161

E: julius@sydneypahire.com.au

W: www.sydneypahire.com.au



Established in 2010 with a lineage going all the way back to valves, this AV company prides itself on customer service, evidenced by hundreds of five-star Google reviews. Operating across greater Sydney, we have affiliations beyond, so if you need superb audio, lighting, staging, drapes, screens or miscellaneous AV, try us first!



NSW VIC

*See VIC for more location details.

TDC – Technical Direction Company

2-33 Bowden Street,
Alexandria, NSW, 2015

T: (02) 8332 2100

E: Hello@tdc.com.au

W: www.tdc.com.au



Technical Direction Company (TDC) is Australia's next-generation entertainment technology partner, providing industry-leading solutions for LED, projection, media servers, control, and broadcast camera systems. With one of the country's most advanced and diverse inventories, we support productions of every scale: from live events and broadcast to corporate, theatre and experiential installations. Backed by a highly skilled team of experts, we combine deep engineering expertise, precise preparation and seamless onsite delivery to ensure every project is executed to the highest technical standard. Whether you need a single component or a fully integrated video system, TDC offers reliable, innovative and end-to-end solutions that bring creative visions to life.



NSW VIC

*See VIC for more location details.

The Electric Canvas

Unit 4, 19-21 Gibbes Street,
Chatswood NSW 2067

T: (02) 9417 2077

E: info@theelectriccanvas.com.au

W: www.theelectriccanvas.com.au



The Electric Canvas is an award-winning Australian company, recognised around the world as a leader in large-scale and architectural projection. Established in 1997, with locations in Sydney and Melbourne, the company is a complete solution provider with a multi-discipline in-house creative content department and specialist technical staff, entirely dedicated to providing focused support for complex projection and mixed media productions. Our unique business model in the Australian projection mapping market allows us to provide complete turnkey projection solutions incorporating creative services, technical design, projection mapping, equipment and infrastructure supply – all from our extensive in-house resources.



NSW

The P.A. People

8-12 Ford St, Greenacre NSW 2190

T: (02) 8755 8700

E: eventcomms@papeople.com.au,

sales@papeople.com.au

W: papeople.com.au



The P.A. People is a leading independent supplier of medium to large scale event communications systems and equipment. In Australia, we work with leading stadiums and sporting bodies in venue partnerships and with major city, regional and local events, to provide presentation support and technical expertise to enhance their patron experience. We also engage with a range of events – sporting, music, civic, celebration and cultural activities including larger experiences such as Sydney New Year's Eve, City to Surf, Vivid Sydney, The Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix and MotoGP. The P.A. People stock a full range of distributed audio systems and control equipment, CCTV and (SPL) sound pressure level monitoring, and full audio systems and consoles. We boast one of the largest independent Clear-Com rental fleets globally, with our comprehensive inventory including FreeSpeak II wireless full-duplex systems, Helixnet partyline systems and Agent IC. We also hold an extensive range of Motorola two-way radios, Yamaha consoles including the M7, Rivage PM5s, QL1s and QL5s. This complements a comprehensive range of speakers from Bose Professional - including ShowMatch Array System – as well as Community and JBL Professional. Our systems are capable, scalable and can be supported by an experienced service team. The P.A. People operate Australia-wide.



NT

Total Event Services and Territory Events Hire

107 Coonawarra Road,
Winnellie, NT, 0820

T: (08) 8980 8222

E: hires@tes.com.au,

tph@territoryeventshire.com.au

W: www.tes.com.au,

www.territoryeventshire.com.au



From humble beginnings as Top End Sounds in 1981, we grew from a small sound and lighting company and expanded to become Total Event Services, offering complete audio visual production services, and Territory Events Hire offering party hire, event infrastructure, and event structures. We have Darwin's largest inventory of pavilions and shade, including the awesome Saddlespan stage covers and our new range of POP-UP marquees. We can supply you with furniture, theming, staging, big screens, lighting... and that's just the beginning! Whether your event is a festival or sporting event for 30,000 people, or an intimate wedding for 10... we cater for them all. Awards nights, community events, markets, conferences, festivals, shows, fetes, sporting events, weddings and parties... From our Darwin-based warehouses we service the entire NT, northern WA, and north QLD.



QLD

Brisbane Sound Group (BSG)

73 Toombul Road, Northgate, QLD, 4013

T: (07) 3257 1040

E: Hire@brisbanesound.com.au

W: brisound.com.au/pages/hire



In 2026, BSG celebrates 40 years in business. Since its inception in 1986, BSG has been a mainstay in Brisbane's vibrant music and live events scene. Our commitment and passion for delivering exceptional audio-visual experiences have made us a trusted name in the industry. Our Hire department boasts an extensive inventory of sound, vision and lighting equipment, featuring renowned brands such as L-Acoustics, DiGiCo, Allen & Heath, Yamaha, Avid, Shure, Sennheiser, RCF, EV, MA Lighting, Ayrton, Martin Professional, Robe, Unilumin, VuePix and many more. Beyond dry hire, BSG offers comprehensive production services and full staging solutions tailored to events of all sizes. Whether you're organising a small community choir performance or a large-scale festival, we have you covered. Our experienced team delivers complete production packages, meticulously designed to elevate the impact of your event and ensure everything runs seamlessly.



QLD NSW

*See NSW for more location details.

Chameleon Touring Systems

233 Lavarack Avenue, Eagle Farm, QLD, 4009

T: (07) 3260 2663

E: hire@chameleon-touring.com.au

W: www.chameleon-touring.com.au



Chameleon Touring Systems is proudly Australian owned and operated. Since 1988 we have been supplying equipment and personnel for indoor and outdoor live entertainment, concerts, film, television, theatre, architectural design, installation and consultation as well as special events all over the country. We carry the largest and most diverse lighting and rigging equipment inventory in Australia, which has been carefully selected from leading international manufacturers (including ACME, Astera, Ayrton, Chauvet, Claypaky, Elation, ELC, ETC, GLP, Kinesys, LumenRadio, Luminex, Macula, MA, Martin, MDG, PROLiGHTS and Robe) to ensure we are providing safe, reliable and quality solutions that meet the needs of the most discerning designers from all over the world. Whatever it may be, however big or small, simple or specialised, we look forward to working with you on your next project.



QLD

Events Fantastic Australia

3b/45 Leda Drive,
Burleigh Heads, QLD, 4220

T: (07) 5520 4648
E: hire@eventsfantastic.com.au
W: www.eventsfantastic.com.au



Events Fantastic offers an extensive range of event decor and inventory for hire, making us the go-to choice for event managers, event producers, venues, and audio visual professionals in the Australian corporate event production industry. Our diverse decor selection includes everything from bespoke hand-painted backdrops to conference and gala modular sets, staging, draping, DMX kinetic lights, lasers, inflatables, illuminated furniture, light-up letters, dance floors, props, linens, and centrepieces. With our extensive inventory, you can save time and effort by sourcing all your event decor needs in one place. We are based on the Gold Coast and ship our event decor Australia-wide daily.



QLD

NSW

VIC

*See NSW and VIC for more location details.

Harry the Hirer Productions

24 Motorway Circuit,
Ormeau, Queensland 4208

T: 0425 781 145
E: Productions@harrythehirer.com.au
W: www.harrythehirer.com.au/expertise/av-production



Harry the hirer Productions are a full-service production rental supplier with large stock levels of lighting, video, rigging, staging, and good quality audio product. Harry the hirer will happily supply a single component to support any production or event requirement, and also have extensive experience in full turn-key technical equipment support. Call us to get to know our fulltime team of tech experts, or just to chat about latest kit.



QLD

NSW

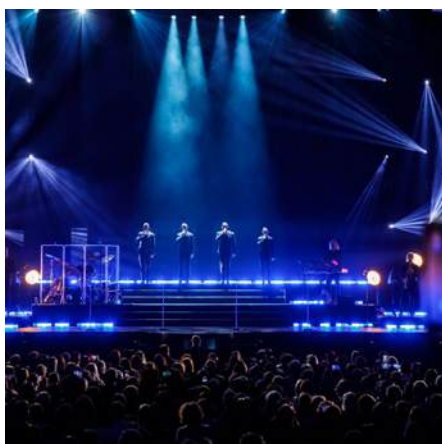
VIC

*See NSW and VIC for more location details.

HTH Touring

24 Motorway Circuit,
Ormeau, Queensland 4208

T: 0476 994 275
E: info@hthtouring.com.au
W: www.hthtouring.com.au



HTH Touring is an Australian-owned and operated company specialising in providing lighting, video, and rigging solutions for concerts, touring productions, and live events across the country. Our expanding inventory features equipment from leading global manufacturers including Avolites, MA, ACME, Ayrton, Chauvet, GLP, Martin, Robe, VuePix Infilid and Dicolor, ensuring every system we supply is reliable, versatile, and tour-ready. Backed by a team of experienced professionals, HTH Touring is committed to supporting artists, designers, and production crews with the technology and expertise to deliver world-class shows - from club tours to major festivals.



QLD

Krank'd Productions

52/8 Distribution Ct, Arundel, QLD, 4214

T: 0410 273 606, 0408 832 746
E: Wes@krankd.com.au,
Ryan@krankd.com.au
W: krankd.com.au



Krank'd Productions has swiftly established itself as a prominent presence in Australia's theatrical and live performance venues. Renowned for its exceptional lighting solutions, Krank'd utilises industry-leading fixtures and employs a highly skilled crew. Headquartered in the Gold Coast, Krank'd extends its services nationally, catering to the demands of the world's leading lighting designers.



QLD

NSW

SA

VIC

*See NSW, SA and VIC for more location details.

NW Group

39 Fulcrum Street,
Richlands, QLD, 4077

T: (07) 3073 2800
E: ask@nwgroup.com.au
W: www.nwgroup.com.au



NW Group is one of the top suppliers of full-service live event production in Australasia. We have extensive experience working across all sectors of the event market, including corporate, arts and entertainment, special projects, and venues. Our team of experts is equipped with cutting-edge equipment and technologies to ensure flawless production for any type of event. Our comprehensive range of services includes audio reinforcement, visual projection, intelligent lighting, staging, rigging, and more. Whether you need assistance with event planning, equipment rental, or on-site technical support, NW Group is here to help. Contact us today to discuss your upcoming event and discover how we can take it to the next level with our unparalleled production services.

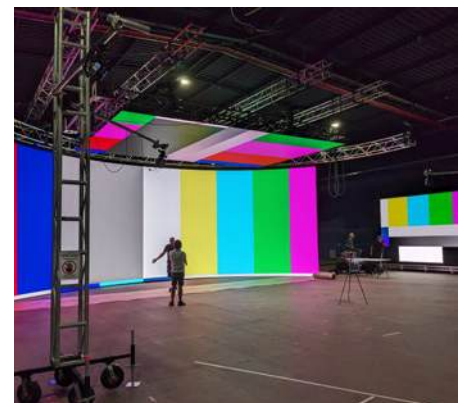


QLD

Pixel Line

172 Granite St,
Geebung, QLD, 4034

T: (07) 3103 3171
E: hello@pixel-line.com.au
W: pixel-line.com.au



Pixel Line is your go-to supplier for premium large-format LED screens, projection, media servers, broadcast, and switching and control equipment in Queensland. Our focus is the supply of expert technical services and premium video equipment for live events, temporary displays, and film and TV production. We stock a massive range of ROE Visual LED, Brompton Tessera LED Processing, Christie Digital and Panasonic projection, Barco Event Master E2 and S3 units (with Encore 3 soon to arrive), Dataton Watchout V6 and V7, and more. Our recent investment in ROE Visual Ruby 2.6F means the very latest and best, next generation LED is now available right here in Queensland.



QLD

Point Source

Unit 177 / 8 Wills Street,
North Lakes, QLD, 4509

T: 0414 567 179
E: email sales@pointsource.com.au
W: www.pointsource.com.au

Point Source is a full-service integration and video production company based on the north side of Brisbane. We offer live video production services and have an OB van available as either full service or rental. Additionally, we have rental equipment including Riedel Bolero stock.



QLD VIC

*See VIC for more location details.

TSA

7/8 Anisar Court,
Molendinar, QLD, 4214

T: 1300 439 872
E: info@theatresafe.com.au
W: theatresafe.com.au

At TSA, we specialise in providing premium rigging, automation, and drape solutions for events of all sizes. Our extensive inventory includes industry-standard rigging equipment for safe and efficient installations, state-of-the-art automation systems for seamless movement and control, and a wide range of elegant drapes to create stunning backdrops and stage designs. Whether you're planning a concert, theatre production, or corporate event, we offer reliable gear and expert support to ensure your vision comes to life with precision and style.



SA

AJS Lighting Sound Events (a.k.a. Andy J Sound)

10 William St, Mile End South, SA, 5031

T: (08) 8221 5551
E: info@ajsound.com.au
W: www.ajsound.com.au

Established in 1996, we are a proud family-owned company that combines the latest in vision, sound and lighting technology to achieve cutting-edge, creative and engaging experiences. AJS collaborates with clients to provide customised solutions and our technical superiority and service excellence ensures that each of your events is unforgettable. We boast a large and dedicated staff collectively considered to be superior in excellence and service throughout the industry.



SA

Augusta Production Services

17 Kirkham Avenue, Port Augusta, SA, 5700

T: (08) 9641 3072, 0408 811 613

E: aps@internode.on.net

W: www.augustaproductionservices.com



Located in the Far North and Flinders Region of South Australia, Augusta Production Services are specialists in regional touring, stage lighting, location video broadcast/streaming, LED vision, entertainment rigging and speciality constructions for any type of event from the smallest of intimate gatherings to outdoor concerts, regional events, corporate functions, remote power solutions, and commercial AV installations. We are uniquely invested with the capability and experience in supplying both fully managed and turn-key AV services to the mining and industrial sectors, the outback, and furthest remote reaches of South Australia. We work very closely with our clients and suppliers to ensure that we only produce results that surpass the standard of expectation every time. This is further facilitated by employing the latest, up-to-date innovative technology, partnered with our extensive technical and logistical abilities to ensure that every event is delivered on time with the highest precision. Over the years, we have also gained many significant credits for supplying our services to countless high profile events, festivals, and elite touring artists, both national and international.



Augusta Production Services

SA

Novatech Creative Event Technology

153 Holbrooks Road, Underdale, SA, 5032

T: (08) 8352 0300

E: hello@ncet.co

W: www.ncet.co



Novatech is one of Australia's leading and most respected family-owned audio-visual production companies. Since their inception in 2001, they have been driven by passion and commitment to staging exceptional events across Australia, using leading brands such as L-Acoustics, ROE Visual, Brompton, Barco, disguise, MA Lighting, ClayPaky, Ayrton, Shure, Riedel, and more. Whether you need equipment for dry hire, long term hire or a full turn-key solution, Novatech can offer competitive rates right across Australia. Backed by experienced staff and an ever-increasing inventory of the world's best brands, Novatech provides you with confidence and peace of mind when staging your next event. Check out our equipment fleet at ncet.co/equipment/



SA

QLD

NSW

VIC

*See QLD, NSW and VIC for more location details.

NW Group

43 Winwood Street, Thebarton, SA, 5031

T: (08) 8317 6030

E: ask@nwgroup.com.au

W: www.nwgroup.com.au



NW Group is one of the top suppliers of full-service live event production in Australasia. We have extensive experience working across all sectors of the event market, including corporate, arts and entertainment, special projects, and venues. Our team of experts is equipped with cutting-edge equipment and technologies to ensure flawless production for any type of event. Our comprehensive range of services includes audio reinforcement, visual projection, intelligent lighting, staging, rigging, and more. Whether you need assistance with event planning, equipment rental, or on-site technical support, NW Group is here to help. Contact us today to discuss your upcoming event and discover how we can take it to the next level with our unparalleled production services.



NW GROUP

VIC



Clearlight Shows

5 Horscroft Place, Moorabbin, VIC, 3189

T: (03) 9553 1688

E: hire@clearlight.com.au

W: www.clearlight.com.au

With over 40 years supporting Australia's entertainment industry, Clearlight Shows Hire Department offers a comprehensive range of cutting-edge lighting solutions for outdoor and indoor shows. From large-scale productions to corporate events, film, theatre, and touring, we supply reliable, high-performance gear from leading brands including ETC, Robe, Showtec, LDR, Martin, Wentex, Chauvet, Vari-Lite, Swefog, Zero88, Infinity, Astera and Selecon. Our Moorabbin showroom allows designers and technicians to experience the latest fixtures firsthand, while our extensive stock of accessories, cables, and consumables ensures complete production support. Clearlight Shows is your reliable production partner, delivering the latest technology, exceptional service, and unbeatable value for every show.

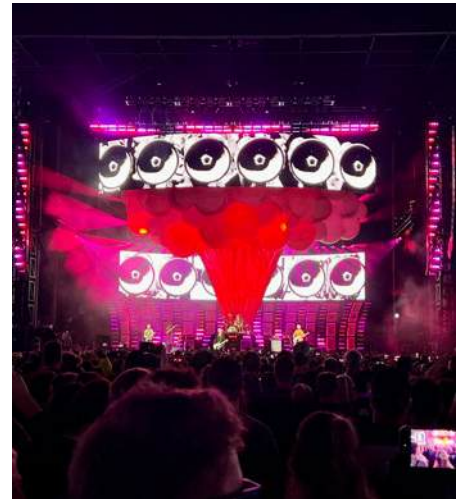


VIC

NSW

WA

*See NSW and WA for more location details.



Creative Technology

8 Dalmore Drive, Scoresby, VIC, 3179

T: (03) 8768 6400

E: reception.au@ct-group.com

W: ct-group.com

Creative Technology, an NEP Live Events Company, is the leading production partner and supplier of video tech and live event solutions. We help clients make, manage, and show the world their content. From large international broadcasts to regional productions, Creative Technology and the NEP Worldwide Network are proud to cover it.



VIC



CVP

9-11 Ricketts Road, Mount Waverley, VIC, 3149

T: (03) 9558 8000

E: hire@cvp.com.au

W: www.cvp.com.au

Whether you're looking to record and broadcast your performance, create a stunning 60-metre-wide projection, or deliver live-to-screen visuals at your concert, CVP brings your vision to life with precision and creativity. From small, focused projection installations to massive arena experiences with multi-camera coverage and even full production management, our expert team ensures every detail is executed to perfection. As one of Australia's leading and most trusted suppliers, CVP offers a comprehensive range of high-quality equipment, including indoor and outdoor LED screens from Absen, VuePix Infiled, and Planar, powered by Novastar, Brompton, and Colorlight processing systems. We now also offer outdoor trailer screens, bringing flexible, high-impact visuals to any location or event. Our extensive inventory of Panasonic projectors and advanced media servers such as disguise and Watchout guarantees flawless delivery across any scale of production. At CVP, we believe in excellence, and it's reflected in everything we do.



VIC

Genius Laser Technology

Factory 6, 63-65 Voltri Street,
Cheltenham, VIC, 3192

T: (03) 9584 6482, 0413 566 734

E: production@geniuslaser.com

W: www.geniuslaser.com



Genius Laser Technology (GLT) is a Melbourne-based specialist in high-powered laser show productions, visual experiences and water show installations. With over 30 years of experience, GLT is a trusted name in the laser show events and entertainment industry. At Genius Laser Technology, the team have vast experience in laser show productions, laser show safety, and laser show projector manufacturing. With an extensive range of laser products ranging from four Watts to 130 Watts, the GENLAS series offers versatility and reliability in any situation. Alongside the GENLAS range we serve as authorised distributors for Pangolin, KVANT, and Unity products. Whether you're planning a concert, corporate event, or special occasion, trust Genius Laser Technology to create a truly spectacular laser show that will leave a lasting impression. Contact us today to discuss your event requirements and let us bring your vision to life with our unparalleled expertise and passion.



VIC

QLD

NSW

*See QLD and NSW for more location details.

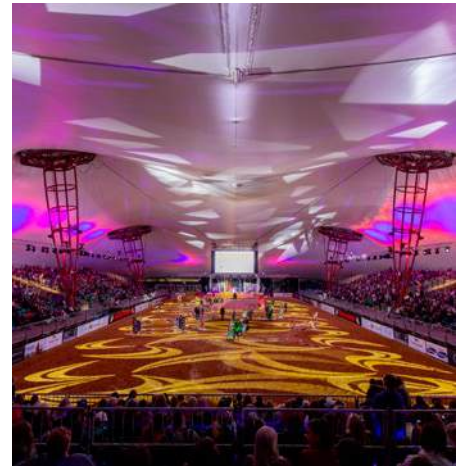
Harry the Hirer Productions

81 Burnley Street,
Richmond, VIC 3121

T: (03) 9429 8688

E: Productions@harrythehirer.com.au

W: www.harrythehirer.com.au/expertise/av-production



Harry the hirer Productions are a full-service production rental supplier with large stock levels of lighting, video, rigging, staging, and good quality audio product. Harry the hirer will happily supply a single component to support any production or event requirement, and also have extensive experience in full turn-key technical equipment support. Call us to get to know our fulltime team of tech experts, or just to chat about latest kit.

**Harry
the hirer.
Productions**

VIC

QLD

NSW

*See QLD and NSW for more location details.

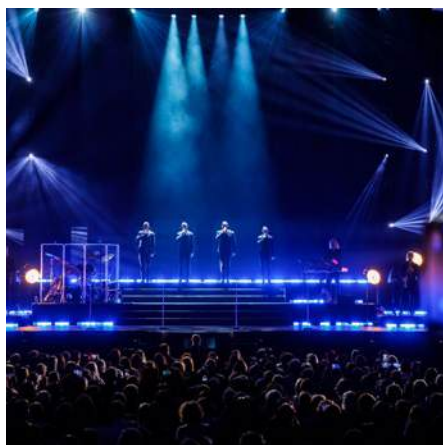
HTH Touring

37 Link Ct, Brooklyn, VIC, 3012

T: 0476 994 275

E: info@hthtouring.com.au

W: www.hthtouring.com.au



HTH Touring is an Australian-owned and operated company specialising in providing lighting, video, and rigging solutions for concerts, touring productions, and live events across the country. Our expanding inventory features equipment from leading global manufacturers including Avolites, MA, ACME, Ayrton, Chauvet, GLP, Martin, Robe, VuePix Infiled and Dicolor, ensuring every system we supply is reliable, versatile, and tour-ready. Backed by a team of experienced professionals, HTH Touring is committed to supporting artists, designers, and production crews with the technology and expertise to deliver world-class shows - from club tours to major festivals.

**HTH
TOURING**

VIC

HD Production

8 Myrtle Road, Kialla, VIC, 3631

T: (03) 5752 5012

E: contact@hdpro.com.au

W: www.hd-production.com.au



HD Production is regional Victoria's premier audio-visual production supplier, providing the latest in production equipment with an experienced team, dedicated to ensuring your next event is seamless and stress free. Based in Shepparton, HD Production provides professional audio-visual production solutions across regional Victoria. We cater to all events from small conferences to large exhibitions, from community and sporting, to arts events and large outdoor music festivals. Services include audio and lighting equipment hire, live video streaming, IMAG, projection and LED screens, staging and rigging hire, backline hire, production management, operation and crewing.



VIC

Moon Mother Productions

1/2 23-25 Seaside Parade,
North Shore, VIC, 3214

T: 1300 556 264

E: biz@moonmother.com.au

W: moonmother.com.au



Your Event. Our Production. Our Stage. Beautiful Experiences.

Moon Mother Productions delivers beautiful audio and visual experiences backed by advanced technology and expert management. Operating since 1991 with over 60 years' combined experience, we offer complete production services from community gatherings to major events throughout Australia. Our Australian Made mobile trailer stages provide rapid deployment for festivals, sporting events, and tours, while our passionate crew handles everything from staging and audio to lighting and special effects. We pride ourselves on going above and beyond, working closely with you to find effective and affordable solutions that present your event in the best light. One partner. Complete production. Beautiful results.



VIC

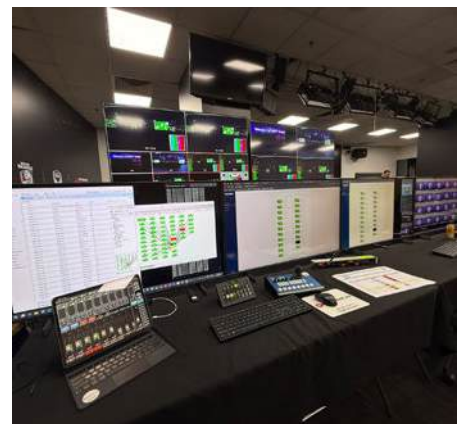
MyEvent Productions

120 A'Beckett Street,
Melbourne, VIC, 3000

T: 1300 412 431

E: hello@myevent.io

W: myevent.io, myeventproductions.com



MyEvent Productions delivers end-to-end audio visual solutions, live production, and professional broadcast-quality streaming for corporate events across Australia. From hybrid conferences and multi-camera livestreams to full scale AV setups, bonded streaming, remote production, and on-site technical crew, we provide reliable studio-grade results every time. Our team integrates advanced technologies, including robotic PTZ systems, audio over IP networks and robust networked infrastructure to ensure seamless delivery for venues, agencies, and brands. Whether it's a boardroom webcast, a high-profile gala, or a nationwide virtual event, MyEvent Productions is your trusted partner for modern, scalable and professional event production.



VIC**QLD****NSW****SA**

*See QLD, NSW and SA for more location details.

NW Group

80 Proximity Drive,
Sunshine West, VIC, 3020

T: (03) 8657 0400

E: ask@nwgroup.com.au

W: www.nwgroup.com.au



NW Group is one of the top suppliers of full-service live event production in Australasia. We have extensive experience working across all sectors of the event market, including corporate, arts and entertainment, special projects, and venues. Our team of experts is equipped with cutting-edge equipment and technologies to ensure flawless production for any type of event. Our comprehensive range of services includes audio reinforcement, visual projection, intelligent lighting, staging, rigging, and more. Whether you need assistance with event planning, equipment rental, or on-site technical support, NW Group is here to help. Contact us today to discuss your upcoming event and discover how we can take it to the next level with our unparalleled production services.

**NW GROUP****VIC**

Outlook Communications

Unit 4, 2A Cope Street, Preston, 3072

T: (03) 9495 1755, 0431 818 620

E: jack@outlookcomms.com.au

W: www.outlookcomms.com.au



Outlook Communications (a division of The Big Production Group Pty Ltd) provides innovative technical solutions for theatrical productions, concerts, and events. Our wide range of audio, lighting and video gear and experienced technicians allows us to exceed expectations. From providing a speaker and mic, to providing technical elements for a full theatrical production, and everything in between, Outlook will help bring your event to life.

**outlook****VIC**

Phaseshift Productions

39 Taunton Drive, Cheltenham, VIC, 3192

T: (03) 8586 3444

E: info@phaseshiftproductions.com

W: www.phaseshiftproductions.com



Phaseshift is a dedicated lighting company providing lighting and lighting services to the entertainment industry across Australia. We specialise in live production and touring across bands and theatre as well as exhibition and corporate events. With an up-to-date and current inventory, we either have the lights you want, or can get them. We also have a great team of diverse and talented technicians, operators and designers to deliver, create and bring any vision into the light.

PHASESHIFT

*See NSW for more location details.

TDC – Technical Direction Company

39 Bayside Avenue,
Port Melbourne, VIC, 3207

T: (03) 9647 5900
E: Hello@tdc.com.au
W: www.tdc.com.au



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L to R - working mums and production managers Tia Wojcik and Millie Mullinar with Rex Rees



There's No Parents Like *Show Parents*

A few years ago, my partner, who works a nine-to-five in an industry unrelated to theatre, discovered one of his colleagues had a past life as a lighting technician. When he mentioned that I am a lighting technician, the two of them shared a pleasant exchange about how she and I probably know some of the same people. “What are you going to do when you have kids?,” she asked my partner. “What do you mean?” He was perplexed, not least because this colleague had so confidently assumed we would have children. “You can’t have a family if you do that job,” she stated as a matter of fact, “doesn’t work.” I have no doubt about what led her to make that assertion. Still, her words have drifted back into my mind intermittently in the years since.

When I started as a trainee lighting technician there were few women in my team and of those women, even fewer in senior positions. For this reason, Catherine Alexander was somewhat of a remarkable colleague. This compounded one Opera season when Catherine was on tour in Melbourne from Sydney and one of her children came to join us on a coffee break. Catherine has three kids, and if there is a core ingredient that made her career doable alongside parenting, it would be that for 20 years she worked for Opera Australia, where traditionally shows are programmed in rep (one night on, one night off). For much of that time Catherine’s husband, Geordie, was head of the Opera’s lighting department and they would try to work alternate shows. Essentially this meant that each night one of them would be at work and the other would be home with the kids. The following evening they’d swap places.

Of course, no show goes straight into show-call, and there are long hours to contend with beforehand. Like so many people they relied heavily on help from family. They were also eligible for a government scheme that helped shift workers with after-hours care. “Normal childcare didn’t really work,” says Catherine. “Our worse time was after school. Even if I had the day rehearsal and he had the night show, that overlap of time in the afternoon was hard. We ended up getting a nanny and it was subsidised by the government. She used to come for four hours every night after school and give the kids dinner.”

Catherine and Geordie lived in Sydney, but I would see Catherine twice a year when the Opera toured to Melbourne. Before their children started school, Catherine’s mum would travel with them and look after the kids while they worked. Once school made that arrangement impossible, Catherine and Geordie began taking turns staying behind in Sydney to be with the children. “When they were really little, it was horrible having to leave them,” she says. In those years, if she had a matinee day followed by an evening performance the next, she would use the roughly 16 hours between shows to fly back to Sydney for a quick visit.

The juggle often meant that either Catherine or Geordie would use their annual leave to look after the kids. While this limited their opportunities to take holidays, if an interstate Opera season coincided with the school break, the other parent would drive the kids down to Melbourne. Their eldest is now 21 and the family recently took only their third-ever holiday together, though, as Catherine jokes, the girls have enjoyed the amenities of Southbank’s serviced apartments many times over the years.

“I really don’t know how we made it work,” she says. “They’re all really well adjusted too!” Catherine certainly had an advantage that the father of her children was head of her department. She recalls driving to the Opera House in the afternoon in the car fitted



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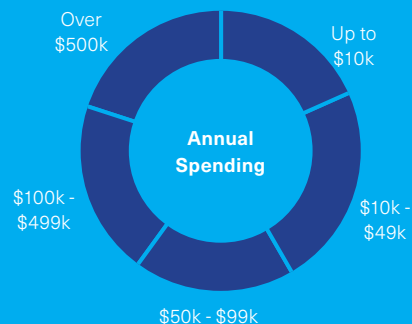
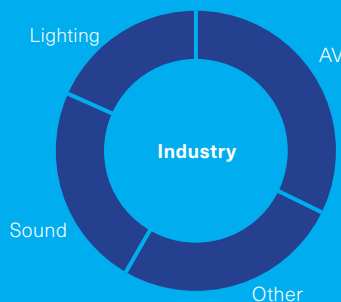
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with the children's seats, leaving it in the car park for Geordie to take home at the end of his day. She would drive away that night in the car he had taken to work that morning. The Opera's technical manager at the time also had young children, which meant there was understanding from management and Catherine was already well established and respected in the industry before having her children. CX ran an article celebrating her work in 1998, when she was a Lighting Supervisor at the Opera House. "It would be different if you were going from show to show, trying to get the next job," she says. And as hard as it was, there were occasional benefits. She could usually do school drop-off, for instance, and was around if there was something on during the day at the school. When it comes to what workplaces can do, she says job-sharing and part-time options are essential.

This conversation brought to mind another colleague, Rex Rees, with whom I worked on *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, and whose children I recall sitting in the company management office during school holidays. Rex is a stage manager by trade and has worked in the industry for 20 years. After finishing several years on *Cursed Child*, she went on to join the Australian tour of *Wicked*.

Rex has two children who are currently school aged. When they were little, she found it easier to work the odd hours as they got to share their days off together. Once they started school their schedules got incrementally harder to coalesce. "I definitely started to feel like most of my interaction with them was 'put your shoes on, brush your teeth, pack your bag'... we're going to be late (again)."

Like Catherine, there are infinite tiny details in how Rex manages to maintain her parenting and her job. "I choose to start early each night to ensure I can call the kids before bed. We choose what events are important for both parents to be at, and which ones could be a solo trip for Dad. We plan weekend sport around knowing that from midday at the latest I would need to be at work. We choose how we manage school holidays verses matinee days, and to not to double up on after school activities on the same days." While 'balance' is a popular phrase in these conversations, Rex doesn't think it's an appropriate term, given home and work life are never completely separate. "Parenting is a full-time job, being a stage manager is a full-time job. Home life and work life are never completely separate. Kids and shows are unpredictable despite best laid plans."

Rex mirrors Catherine's point on job sharing and flexible work arrangements and adds that there are some good examples of this happening on the West End. She also adds companies should allow leave as part of seasons, and allow children into the theatre, not without boundaries obviously, as it helps young kids understand where their parents disappear to for such long hours; make continuing to breastfeed at work easy, by which she means provide a comfortable

"The Opera's technical manager at the time also had young children, which meant there was understanding from management and Catherine was already well established and respected in the industry before having her children."



Catherine Alexander at a focussing session

space to feed that isn't a toilet; and, ultimately, keep employing mums. "Don't second guess because you think they'll be unreliable. We lose too much amazing experience this way." Rex returned to touring for a time and, despite the work and family schedules being "planned within an inch of its life", she describes the amount of judgment she received from both in and outside the industry as "Wild. How can you do that to your kids? How will your partner cope? I started replying with 'if this was my partner going on tour, would you be asking the same questions?' The answer was no, they wouldn't have."

In saying all of this, Rex has taken a step back from show-call for the time being. She is working as a Production Coordinator at VCA.

"My current position gives me the best of both worlds - I get to build shows with the student cohorts (which I'm loving), I do a huge variety of events and performances and I get to work with such an incredible team - but for a decent chunk of the year I'm home by 6 pm and rarely work weekends. I miss being an SM, and plan to head back to that world one day, but for the moment, this is perfect."

While the logistics are hard and there aren't any simple solutions, Rex makes the best case for the juggle being worth it. "I am a better mum for being in a job that I love, and my kids understand that I'm a person too and that they absolutely should strive for a career they are passionate about."

Sometimes it all gets too much...



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Allen & Heath's New Qu Digital Console Range

The new Qu range of Allen & Heath digital consoles pushes hard up into SQ territory, offering well-conceived, fresh, yet familiar looking layouts and features. So similar is the new Qu range to an SQ at first glance, that two questions immediately spring to mind: which console should you purchase, and is the SQ range on the verge of an upgrade?

It's been a long time coming, but finally the new Allen & Heath Qu range is here, and apparently taking the world by storm, just like its predecessor did back in 2013. And I can see why.

The range seems to have well and truly come of age, offering a decidedly modern spin on Allen & Heath's long-running Qu "walk up and mix" philosophy (though I still see a good deal of "walk up and walk away" in 2025, frustratingly).

The new Qu range consists of three basic physical models: the Qu-5, with 17 motorised faders and 16 mic/line local inputs; the Qu-6, featuring 25 motorised faders and 24 mic/line local inputs; and lastly the flagship Qu-7, that provides 33 motorised faders and 32 mic/line local inputs, all of which are on combi jacks. Alongside these models there are three fixed-architecture Dante variants – the Qu-5D, 6D and 7D – making for a total of six in the new range, all of which are now vastly more capable of catering to a broad range of facilities and operators: from small- to medium-sized venues (pubs, town halls, houses of worship etc) to sub-contracting audio engineers who are always looking for a generous but affordable set of pro-level features in a compact, flexible form, without the cost or complexity of large-format touring consoles. Connected to S-Link stage boxes, all six models offer 32 mic preamps – a significant departure from the older generation Qu.

While the new Qu range is unquestionably more complex and versatile than the previous incarnation, the console remains a perfect

introduction to digital mixing. If you're a pub owner who dabbles in mixing bands on Friday night you may still struggle, but if you're an audio engineer who understands the basics of routing structures, layers and bussing, you'll hit the ground running. And if you're already an Allen & Heath digital console user, things will feel remarkably familiar.

The new Qu console range is a fantastic blend of simple layouts, an upgraded (and larger) touch-screen user interface, higher audio sample rates, more inputs and outputs, and enough layers, mixes and soft keys to get your workflow humming without providing so many options that the console becomes cluttered or intimidating.

Comparison with the SQ Range... Inevitably

To digress on the Qu range specifically for a moment, it's worth addressing the elephant in the room here – comparisons with the SQ range, since the two ranges appear to be on a collision course.

I've been mixing on an Allen & Heath SQ-7 live for a few years now and the specific comparisons between it and the new Qu-7 – which I've been working with for a month or so – are pretty striking. Here's a brief impression of how the two compare.

On paper and in workflow the two consoles now share a surprising amount in common: both run Allen & Heath's XCVI 96kHz FPGA engine – which is now the company's standard for low-latency, high-resolution mixing and for hosting DEEP processing modules – both offer

motorised faders, an uncannily similar physical layout, a generous amount of local I/O, and an emphasis on hands-on control combined with touchscreen navigation. In practice, this means any engineer familiar with an SQ environment will find the Qu instantly familiar – same style of channel strip control, similar touchscreen integration and comparable soft-key/rotary assignability. They're even basically identical in size, so much so that when both become dinosaurs in years to come their footprints will be barely distinguishable to a paleontologist.

Both digital consoles include seven-inch capacitive touchscreens paired with physical controls – which let you move fast with hands-on faders and dig deep into parameters on the screen – although, for mine, the QU's new redesigned UI is superior all round: better on the eye in low-light, generally nicer to look at, and overall a step up from the SQ's software, which now looks quite gaudy and dated by comparison.

And while superficially the two ranges of Allen & Heath console appear slightly different when compared button for button and switch for switch, in real mixing situations they're similar enough that your muscle memory of juggling bussing, creating monitor mixes or setting up scenes transfers well between the two.

Both can run at 48k if necessary, allowing backwards compatibility with older stage boxes as well as anything in the S-Link ecosystem. Similarly, both ranges of the SQ and Qu lineups support Allen & Heath's ecosystem of remote control apps and scene management tools.

Where They Differ

Where the two console ranges diverge is mainly in their scale of operation.

On the left-hand side of the Qu surface there are four custom mix layers, where the SQ provides six. Similarly, the SQ offers 16 customisable soft-keys while the Qu provides only eight. Regarding these two facilities in particular then, the question is simply about quantity: if 16 soft-keys seems like overkill or four mix layers seems ample for your needs, then the Qu immediately becomes a compelling new option in the Allen & Heath range, since in many respects it's no longer the 'cheaper' option, but rather, the 'leaner' one.

One advantage I see the Qu having over the SQ, apart from its improved UI, is its full collection of EQ controls, held over from the previous model, which are neatly laid out on the left-hand side of the upper section of the console. I like having full control over all four bands at once like this. It allows you, for instance, to manipulate gain on a low-end bell while simultaneously adjusting the Q on the top-end. You can't do that so easily on an SQ.

Similarly, the Qu offers peace of mind to less experienced operators with three key features: the Automatic Mic Mixer (AMM) found on other Allen & Heath consoles, which dynamically adjusts multiple microphone channels simultaneously to prioritise the dominant mic in a group; Auto Gain and Gain Monitoring modes per channel that analyse initial gain setting and then continuously monitor channel levels to avoid unexpected peaks; and thirdly the Feedback Assistant, which scans your mix outputs for problematic frequencies, which can then be either statically controlled manually or automatically and continuously, via notch filters, to reduce feedback – typically an inexperienced operator's worst fear.

The SQ meanwhile has more layers, more inputs for routing and submix options, eight customisable rotary encoders (where the Qu range has none) making it the more natural fit for big theatre shows, broadcast trucks, larger houses of worship, or any venue that hosts a solo act one day and a 12-piece band with in-ears the next.

The SQ range offers a more advanced and flexible approach to auxiliary sends compared to the new Qu series. On the SQ consoles, each mix bus can be configured as mono or stereo, with up to 12 stereo mixes, plus groups and matrices - giving engineers far more control for complex monitor setups.

By contrast, the new Qu series simplifies this structure, providing 12 mix outputs (which can be linked for stereo) and a few matrix buses, but routing is more streamlined and fixed compared to the fully customisable architecture of the SQ range. The Qu's auxes are still powerful enough for most live and recording situations, but the SQ's deeper routing flexibility make it the better fit for complex or professional monitor and broadcast environments.

New Qu Vs Old

Without a doubt, the new Qu-5, 6 and 7 consoles (and their postmarked 'D' for Dante variants) represent a major step forward from the earlier generation Qu series. The most obvious of these is the shift to a 96kHz FPGA-powered core and high-performance 96kHz converters, which undoubtedly deliver noticeably greater clarity, lower latency, and more detailed transient response, resulting in mixes that feel cleaner, more open, and more precise across the frequency spectrum.

Beyond this major upgrade, connectivity and workflow have also been given a shot in the arm. The inclusion of S-Link networking allows seamless integration with Allen & Heath's ecosystem of stage boxes and personal monitoring systems, providing flexible I/O routing options. New "D" models in the range feature built-in Dante capability, enabling 16x16 networked audio at up to 96kHz – ideal for broadcast, installed sound, or multi-room applications where digital audio distribution is key. In addition, a 32x32 USB-C interface replaces the older USB-B connection, allowing higher-bandwidth, low-latency recording and playback directly to modern computers or DAWs.

The additions of a vastly improved and larger touchscreen, along with monochrome

channel-display scribble strips, cannot be understated here either. While the lack of channel strip colour-coding on the new Qu range (familiar to SQ console operators and above) is a missed opportunity to my eye, users of the previous generation 'Q' models will nonetheless notice a significant improvement here (for starters you can read the screen, and you may be able to ditch your roll of white electrical tape once and for all!)

To that end – operationally at least – the user interface offers arguably the greatest advance here, having been completely refreshed for faster, more intuitive operation. A brighter, higher-resolution touchscreen with improved metering and gesture control vastly enhances visibility and ease of use.

Having said that, I would contend that increasing the size of this screen even further to say 10 or 12 inches would have really knocked this console out of the park, making it a compelling option at almost any price. Indeed, in some respects I can see that the advancements visible on the new Qu range have been actively curtailed by the popularity of the SQ range, which is a real shame. When so much work is done on screen these days, I find it remarkable that the latest console redesign doesn't include the biggest screen it can practically accommodate, regardless of the potentially adverse effects on other models in the extended family! It didn't stop Allen & Heath designing a bigger screen for Avantis, after all! I would have preferred the new Qu range to feature a larger screen that paved a clear upgrade path to the SQ family, rather than being limited by the SQ's design. Unfortunately, Allen & Heath have opted for the latter.

Other than this gripe, overall, the latest Qu range significantly refines and upgrades every aspect of its predecessor. It delivers superior audio performance, modern connectivity, and workflow-enhancing automation – all in the same rugged, gig-ready format that made the original series so successful.

If you're in the market for a digital console, and you've already contemplated the Qu and SQ ranges, to my thinking the decision on which console to buy rests mainly on I/O capacity, the Dante option (which, on the Qu range, is only offered via the 5D, 6D and 7D – you can't install a Dante card at a later date), the need for higher native channel counts, and more flexible monitoring options. As far as sonic character and processing capability, the Qu and SQ ranges are all but identical.

If you'd prefer a console that's a little cheaper to purchase, that offers a slightly reduced feature set, but which in most other respects is identical sounding, the modern Qu experience, with its freshly redesigned UI and flagship XCVI/DEEP horsepower, may be the one for you.

Product Info: allen-heath.com/hardware/qu

Distributor Australia: tag.com.au

Distributor New Zealand: jansen.nz



The ACME NEOZONE is part of ACME's GLAMOUR series. It is a medium size wash/beam hybrid moving head LED light. There is a pretty big market for lights this size and spec in this country. The light's hybrid status and fact that it doubles as a wash and a beam is its unique selling point. With that in mind, it's best to think of it as a wash light that can do a nice beam instead of a pure hybrid.



ACME NEOZONE

Construction

It's an IP20 rated fixture, but it has the feel of an IP65 unit. At 20kg, it is heavier than it looks. At 960W, you can get two to a 10a circuit, with the LEDs themselves taking 760W for a good amount of light output.

The NEOZONE is available with standard clamps as well as folding clamps. The folding clamps are a really neat feature; they are practical, well designed, and well thought out. It means you won't lose your clamps or have to spend time taking them on and off as you switch between hanging them on a truss and popping them on the deck. I've become quite a fan of folding clamps and would love to see more of them.

Optics, Colour and Brightness

The ACME NEOZONE gives you 11,200 lumens of light output, comparable to many market leading wash lights of the same size. It has 19 40W RGBW LEDs, each of which can be individually controlled. It is laid out as a centre pixel, a smaller ring featuring six LEDs, and then a larger ring of LED pixels with 12.

It has a zoom range ratio of 8:1 with a beam angle that ranges from 3.5° out to 28.5° and a field angle of 5° all the way out to 50°.

The NEOZONE features linear CTO colour correction ranging from 2,500K up to 8,000K. It does colour really well, and you have to see it in person to fully appreciate it.

I think it does a wash better than it does a beam. Having said that, this doesn't mean it does a bad beam. As a wash light that can give you a solid beam, this is an excellent fixture. In a smoky room you can narrow the NEOZONE right in and get a nice tight beam, then zoom it right out and get a nice, even wash.

Applications and Features

Pan range is 540°, tilt range is 220°. It moves quite quickly for a light of its size and weight.

It is robust and strong enough to be part of a production house's inventory. It is sleek enough to live in a venue. It is quiet enough to do film and TV with optical quality and colour mixing to suit. It has flicker-free adjustable

management design for HD cameras.

You can light a stage with it, you can program individual pixels with it, use it as eye candy, and get some really nice beams going with it too.

The wash/beam hybrid seems to be less common than the beam/spot hybrid. The wash/beam hybrid setup is quite interesting. If you wanted to use the light for its wash and its beam, you might not use both functions from the same rigging point. If you want to use the light to its full extent, you do have to think about your lighting design.

Control and Programming

The ACME NEOZONE has all your standard DMX protocols: DMX512, RDM, Art-Net and sACN. It also has a four button control panel onboard. It has four different DMX modes, ranging from 17 to 86 channels.

It's quite a straightforward light to program and operate; nothing too tricky or out of the ordinary. If you wanted a smaller wash light, you could turn off the outer ring and be left with a wash light that is 7 40W LEDs.

The individual pixel control is probably the most visually impressive feature, especially when programmed well.

What is the difference between field angle and beam angle?

- **Beam Angle:** The angle between the two planes of light where the luminous intensity is 50% of the maximum luminous intensity at the center of the beam
- **Field Angle:** The angle between the two planes of light where the luminous intensity is 10% of the maximum luminous intensity at the centre of the beam

Verdict

There are a lot of lights in the 20kg wash light range, but this is a wash/beam hybrid. I think it is more of a case of the beam being an extra feature to the wash light. If I was in the market for a mid-size beam fixture, I'm not sure this would make the cut. If I was in the market for a mid-size wash fixture, this would definitely get a look in. The fact that it has beam-like capabilities puts it near the top of the list. It comes with quite a reasonable price tag too – well worth your consideration as a buyer or a user.

Product Info:

en.acmelighting.com/item/NEOZONE

Distributor Australia and New Zealand:

www.ulagroup.com

The Specs

Light source:

Osram 19 x 40W RGBW LED

Total lumen output:

11,200 lumens

Beam angle:

3.5° - 28.5°

Field angle:

5° - 50°

Control channels:

17/21/86/10+

Pan movement:

540°

Tilt movement:

220°

Linear CTO colour correction:

2,500K - 8,000K





ETC Tour Hog

I'll admit at the outset that I am a long-term Hog user. I have always found the Hog system quick and easy to get up and running; you're never wasting time setting the console up before you can get into the actual lighting side of things. I feel that Hog doesn't get in the way of what I'm trying to do. Other consoles have too many menus and too many button presses to get into things that are hidden, and I feel they negatively affect what I'm trying to achieve. Once you're ingrained in a workflow that works for you, it doesn't make much sense to change it!

Tour Hog

While I'm already familiar with Version 5 of the Hog software, introduced on the Version 4 hardware, I recently got a new Tour Hog to take out on two gigs. I was lighting Missy Higgins at the Wanderer Festival at Pambula Beach, NSW, and again at Night at the Barracks Festival at North Head Sanctuary in Manly.

Wanderer Festival's rig was fairly small scale and included mostly generic fixtures, while Night at the Barracks was a Chameleon-supplied rig with a bunch of Ayrton Diablos, Martin MAC Auras, and a couple of Martin MAC Vipers; a much more sizeable rig.

As I was filling in for Missy's regular lighting operator, Kate Hall, and because they were two very different rigs, I ended up mostly busking both shows. I did have some video elements pre-programmed, along with colour combinations for each song, and then I built around those. Even though this hardware was new to me, I was up and running quickly and easily, as is standard with Hog.

Preparation and Remote Control

I have a Hog PC set-up at home, and I did all of my pre-programming on that. On site, I use an OSC remote for focusing. The Touch OSC software, which you can use on iOS or Android, sends OSC commands to Hog. ETC have Hog OSC templates available for download on their site, and you just get them onto your device and open them in Touch OSC. Bingo – you now have a remote!

Hog 4 to Tour Hog – The Learning Curve

In terms of the software, there are some minor cosmetic differences. Hog made most of the major changes in the last few versions of the 4 software. When it upgraded to 5, it was already a stable platform that was proven. The major difference is with the actual hardware.

The trackball and cursor keys long-term Hog users know well are no longer there. The screens on the Command keys are now proper LCD screens, so they convey a bit more information. They're also in a different layout; a four by three grid, rather than a three by four. User Keys are a new feature; they're a set of four keys that can be mapped to many different functions in your preferences. For example, they could be set to intensity bumps or effect rates. That's a big change.

In terms of replacing the trackball and the cursor keys workflow, you've always been able to scroll using Open and your encoders. I think the reason that they're both gone is you can do a lot of the scrolling with the touchscreen using standard gestures.

The absence of the cursor keys is what I noticed the most while busking. It made me realise how much I was used to using them for editing cues. What I ended up doing was mapping some of the User Keys to be cursors. I also used to use the ring around the old trackball for scrolling through windows, but again, there are workarounds, and I'm retraining myself.

The biggest learning curve for me is the new colour engine, but that came in the 4 software over a year ago. It now makes use of multi-emitter LED fixtures in seven or more different colours, and incorporates that into all your colour palettes. It translates quite well between those and your standard RGBs or CMYs. I was still getting the hang of some of this while working in the virtual space.



Physical

The way the new screen folds down on its own arm gives you a few more working angle options. The Tour Hog is nice and compact, especially considering it's giving you 64 universes. In addition to EtherCON Ethernet connections, the Tour Hog also has opticalCON Duo fiber ports. More and more venues and production houses are starting to replace their Ethernet cores with fiber cores, so that now means you don't have to have an adapter in your front of house rack.

The Tour Hog is quite light, which is welcome, but still feels solid and well-built. In addition to USB-A, it also has USB-C connectivity, which is quite handy, and you can run two monitors from them. Wi-Fi is built-in, so you don't have to carry around a wireless access point.

Further Development

ETC and Hog always have a lot of continuous development happening in the background. I'm assuming they're working on a few things, like the ability to import MVR and GDTF fixture profiles. That would be handy for plot views, and for when you come across a fixture you're not familiar with.

Verdict

The Hog 5 software and the Tour Hog hardware are a great evolution. I think ETC and Hog have been approaching things in an intelligent manner. Making most of the major changes in software before they roll out the new hardware, so it's not such a big learning

The Specs

Features

- Neutrik powerCON TRUE1 power input and thru
- Two Neutrik EtherCON Ethernet connections
- Two Neutrik Multimode opticalCON Duo connectors
- USB 3.0 type A (4) and type C (2) connectors
- Wi-Fi and Bluetooth antennas
- Four DMX outputs (5-pin XLR)
- SMPTE input (3-pin XLR)
- MIDI In/Thru/Out
- Desk Light Connector (3-pin XLR, standard pinout)

System Capacity

- 64 universes

Display Functions

- Built-in articulating 23.8" high resolution multitouch display and dual 12.5" dashboard displays; six full colour function key displays
- Supports two external display port monitors at 1280x1024 minimum resolution, with optional touch or multi-touch control
- User configurable displays with recordable views
- Palette, list, views, scenes, batches, effects directories
- Programmer window
- Plot views
- Output window
- Fixture Schedule and Patch windows, sortable by fixture or by universe
- Three colour schemes for daylight use, regular use or dark environment use

Programming

- Compact RGB backlit command keypad for quick programming
- Command-line interface
- Programmer Dashboard display for encoder mapping, command line/status display and additional programming tools
- Programmer window displays selected and adjusted fixtures
- Lists constructed with +, -, and Thru or selection softkeys, Next, Back and All commands
- Intensity set with command keypad, full key, intensity palettes

curve for end users, is a smart move.

From 4 onwards, all files are forwards compatible; you can open 4 files in 5. And for the time being, all the 4 hardware will run Hog 5 as well. I think that's a very customer friendly way of doing things.

Product Info: www.etcconnect.com/Hog
Distributor Australia: www.jands.com.au

- Ordered groups
- Comprehensive fanning using segments and buddying
- 12 Function keys for user kinds and commands
- Dedicated kind keys and five high-resolution parameter encoders, with two keys per encoder
- Eight user "U-Keys" for user defined functions
- Media picker window
- Hog Colour System
- Programmer window
- Groups for simplified fixture selection
- Palettes: intensity, position, colour, beam, effects
- Effects Engine
- Pixelmapping Effects
- Park
- Undo command
- Delete, Move and Copy commands
- Highlight, lowlight and rem dim commands
- Cue level and parameter level timing
- Record, Update and Merge commands
- Knockout and Clear commands
- Set command for text labels and data entry

Playback Controls

- Playback Dashboard display for playback bar display, master ranges, and additional playback tools
- 10 pageable, motorized RGB-backlit master playbacks with customisable faders, flash, go, halt, back and choose keys
- Main playback stack including GM, Restart, Assert, Release, Pig, Skip Forward, Skip Backward, Master Pause, and Master Play keys
- Master Ranges for quick reassignment of playback masters content
- Unlimited fader Pages
- Comment macros and keystroke macros
- Paging keys
- Virtual masters
- Scenes
- Batch controllers
- Group masters
- Triggering via Command keys
- Playback expansion via Tour Wing
- OSC input/output, MIDI messages, MIDI Show Control, MIDI/LTC timecode

About The Author:

Gadigal Sydney-based lighting designer, programmer and operator Daniel-Joseph 'Gordo' Gordon is a 25-year industry veteran with a who's who list of clients in the Australian contemporary music scene, having worked with Paul Kelly, Holy Holy, Ballpark Music, Angus & Julia Stone, INXS, and more.



ADDING VALUE TO PRODUCTION

Plucky, lucky or shortsighted?

In Australia we are very good at primary production. Grow it, mine it, flog it off. Where we seem to fall over is adding value to that raw product. This is far from a new phenomenon. Donald Horne's assertion that we are "a lucky country run by second rate people who share its luck" has never held so much weight as currently.

A recent Australian government round table was framed as a forum focussing on enhancing productivity. Gains made here might look good on the national bottom line, but they ignore the broader reality that we can augment in so many areas and so much more intelligently than we do now.

So where do we add value here in the wide brown land? First, we could look at examples of local businesses that have made the commitment to develop and/or manufacture their products on shore. This approach may carry an intrinsic cost in higher rents and wages but that is offset by having immediate physical oversight of every step of the production process. Doing so results in a superior output and allows upgrades to be implemented effectively.

In the events and AV world, Rode, LSC, and ENTTEC are all good examples of local companies backing an idea and committing to not only bring it to market but consolidate it there. They all have excellent international

presence and continue to produce quality products by investing in future development.

But they are the outliers. In the Temu-ification of the global product cycle, offshoring to China is an easy way to quick profit with low overheads. Apart from generating waste by its disposable nature, it ties you into managing a business relationship that has consequences. This model makes QC much harder to manage, adds a massive transport impact, and leaves your enterprise ultimately captive to the economic engine room that is the People's Republic.

Our other great arena of success is tertiary production, specifically services. Sport, education, tourism, hospitality and entertainment are fields where we are world class. As a nation, we have invested considerable resource into these sectors, although it's arguable that those five are listed in descending order of government support.

Where we fall over is the middle part of the

equation: secondary production. Adding value to raw materials by refining them is not a strong suit for antipodeans. We are OK at turning these refined materials into products but rarely do. Last century, while locked behind a tariff wall, the country built a reasonably strong and diverse manufacturing base. Much of its output was locally focussed but a few looked further afield. Unfortunately, even more were offshoots of internationally based firms. Jobs were made here but profits went offshore. The colonial legacy continued.

Cars are the most obvious example. The demise of the locally produced automotive industry has affected the whole country far greater than losing a FoMoCo vs GM brand loyalty culture. The greatest loss was in all of the ancillary local businesses that supported these large multinational manufacturers. Some of them pivoted to new industries, some went under. But the biggest loss was the manufacturing skillset. We saw a similar draining of the events talent pool during pandemic shutdowns. As have long term show

crew redeployed themselves somewhere more stable, so too have the highly skilled toolmakers, pattern makers, engineers, et al who made up the bulk of the manufacturing personnel. It takes decades to (re)build this talent base.

That this business handout was all underwritten by government support is overlooked by free market culture warriors. Ford, GM, Chrysler and Toyota all greatly benefitted from corporate socialism. When this financial support was yanked, the car mobs left in a hurry. Their model here was not viable without being propped up with our taxes.

Probably our major disadvantage to manufacturing and development is the lack of easy access to capital. Plenty of ideas but no quick or simple way to market. We don't have large VC pools on tap to fund startups like more adventurous countries do. Further, as a nation, we lack the ability to fail. We'd rather gamble on a horse race and laugh off our losses than back our inventors. Then we flog off our ideas to overseas interests for cents on the dollar. Again...sigh.

Yes, economies of scale are against us. But they are not insurmountable. Careful planning in product and production development has paid off for those companies I listed above. They have consolidated on well received products and kept developing the next generation. That also supports the next generation of manufacturing knowledge and workers.

The other significant impediment to our manufacturing success is the length of time required to research and develop a new product from scratch. This requires forward planning over multiple business cycles and financial backing that allows investment past the immediacy of the next AGM. While IPOs and public listings might generate a large sum of cash, they expect immediate returns,

so you'd need a very solid commercial profile before going down this route. Further, strategic control of your business is ceded or, at the very least, watered down to produce dividends, rather than build the business. As ever, deep pockets help.

What are the answers here? After selling our children's future for a quick buck via the property hoarding encouraged by distorted tax benefits, we now leave them with little else in support. While deciding that supporting the investor class is more important than actually housing people, we have done also little to

invest in the economic base that could sustain our world to come.

How about offloading that second (third, fourth or more) property and investing in the future resilience of our country? Why not support a local manufacturer? Lend some money to struggling new companies. Be a mentor or business angel to a new entrepreneur. Keep our best talent from fleeing overseas.

Make Australia Manufacture Again - wouldn't that look great on a hat? Welcome to the MAMA era.



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¹Passion, Pride, Pitfalls Dec 2014



Death of a Radio Station

Snippets from the archives of a bygone era

In April of 2021, a Myall Lakes newspaper headline announced, “Big things ahead for Myall Coast Radio.” The accompanying article revealed that the station had raised over \$100,000 to launch its community radio service. But in April 2022, only a couple of months before I joined as a presenter, ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) ruled that Myall Coast Radio was not providing an open narrowcasting service as defined in the Broadcasting Services Act 1992, and therefore had failed to comply with its licence condition. Specifically, ACMA didn't like the music format.

Curiously, the station wasn't spewing out sexually explicit or expletive-filled rap and punk music; instead, ACMA found that the music had too much of a “broad and general appeal”. Forced to surrender its narrowcast licence, the station battled on using an internet streaming service, but not being able to broadcast on the FM waveband to its community resulted in the gradual decline of its sponsors that provided the vital funds for its ongoing operations.

Nevertheless, it was admirable how the volunteer staff, steered by the leadership and technical prowess of the station manager, carried on with a fierce commitment to deliver the same level of community service accompanied by music, news, and information that it had proposed to ACMA when the licence was first granted.

Each morning before my show, I'd leaf through the Myall Coast Radio binder filled with the latest community announcements, including those for the elderly residents and visiting tourists alike. These included the 'Free Clinic Bus' service, providing transport for medical, optical, dental, and welfare appointments for those in need. Additionally, 'Linked Community Services' offered low-cost transport for the disadvantaged so they could go shopping or even attend social and community outings. There was also a host of other community announcements too numerous to mention, from local sporting events to monitoring the koala population to broadcasting vital tourist information and special broadcasts during emergencies such as floods, fires and major accidents.

These special broadcasts were a boost to the Myall Lakes community, as the major commercial radio stations transmitting from Mount Sugarloaf, overlooking Lake Macquarie and Newcastle, were not only alienated from the Myall Coast and its services, but they also suffered major signal degradation, dropouts and distortion in the Myall Lakes area. Along with their services, Myall Coast Radio also supported the socially isolated

individuals, those with medical or mobility issues or the loss of a partner. A joint initiative to read the local newspaper for the visually impaired was also part of the planning. The service was especially welcomed by the Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest communities, which have the oldest population profile in New South Wales and the entire nation and who traditionally tuned in to radio broadcasts, not smartphones or computer apps. Similarly, the mass of tourists entering the town, who were welcomed by the Myall Coast Radio 87.8 MHz billboard, could no longer tune their radios in for vital tourist and local weather information, including safe boating, swimming and fishing.

I was never made aware at the time that a disgruntled former Myall Coast Radio volunteer had lodged the vexatious complaint with ACMA that led to their investigation of the station. ACMA's own compliance guidelines state that it operates under a co-regulatory model and generally only investigates the operation of a Low Power Open Narrowcasting (LPON) service when “a formal complaint is made about the service.” In fact, the official investigation into Myall Coast Radio (Report BI-601) explicitly mentions the complaint as the trigger for the April 2021 investigation that brought about the loss of the valuable community asset from which broadcasts had been made by the local member of parliament and the Mayor.

All community radio stations combine their messages with music, news and information, but here's where it got crazy. In a bizarre trip down the rabbit hole, ACMA went through



Brian on-air at Myall Coast Radio 2023

However, Section 18 of the Broadcasting Services Act covering narrowcasting services notes only areas where the 'reception is limited'; the Act doesn't mention any limitations on the type of music that narrowcasters can play. Section 18 says: "Open narrowcasting services are broadcasting services (a) whose reception is limited (iv) because they provide programs of limited appeal." It specifically mentions that the reception is limited, not the programming or music. But this is where ACMA pulls out its trump card to 'move the goalposts'. It uses Section 19 of the Act, which states, "ACMA may determine additional criteria or clarify existing criteria." I wonder how many artists would enter into a recording contract with a clause like that.



Tea Gardens NSW

So, in the blink of an eye, the community's hopes for the Myall Coast Radio station were dashed, and by late 2023, the station's financial situation had become so dire that they could no longer afford the rent at their professionally outfitted on-air and production studios at Tea Gardens. Sadly, we had to rip out all the equipment at the Tea Gardens studios and transport it to a small room at the rear of the Bulahdelah rural Transaction Centre, run by the Chamber of Commerce, which then became the makeshift MCR studio. Of course, the costly fittings and studio fixtures that made up the Tea Garden's soundproofed on-air studio and the production studio had to be abandoned, and I was later to learn that due to the financial situation, the broadcast and transmission equipment was sold to the Bulahdelah Chamber of Commerce. I continued doing shows at the Bulahdelah back room studio, but as I reported in CX205, August 2024, family commitments left me little time to prepare my show, and I took a break in December 2023.

Myall Coast Radio's audio logs with a fine-tooth comb, concluding that "the music genres were too vaguely defined and had broad, general appeal." Myall Coast Radio's 87.8 MHz broadcast had been limited to typically one Watt ERP (yes, one watt ERP, effective radiated power). Regional LPON stations' maximum limit is 10 watts ERP. Did ACMA seriously contend that the music's 'broad, general appeal' challenged its commercial entities

transmitting over 80 kilometres away at 20kW (twenty thousand Watts) in all directions, or was this just 'all hat, no cattle bravado' with ACMA 'riding shotgun' for its commercial station entities?

Here's ACMA's finding: "Our investigation found Myall Coast Radio FM was not targeting a 'limited audience' as required under its licence," said ACMA Chair Nerida O'Loughlin.

I returned to Myall Coast Radio in January 2025 and, like the other presenters, I didn't understand how to programme music to satisfy ACMA's obsession with music that wasn't broadly appealing. But not having a

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broadcast licence meant that an internet streaming service wasn't regulated by nor had to suffer draconian inquisitions by ACMA, so I carried on delivering our community service messages with programmes that included music that wouldn't turn off our listeners. Admittedly, I did have a skit featuring some of Yoko Ono's primal screams and wails, but I stopped short of presenting Tuvan throat singing or Swiss yodelling.

Typically, most community radio stations are constantly walking on eggshells in fear of ACMA's pedantic rulings, especially when anything marginally crosses over into the realms of the commercial stations. In September 2025, Magic 87.6, a narrowcaster broadcasting to Mudgee, Kandos, and Gulgong, was found to be in breach of the same arbitrary 'broad appeal' music absurdity. The ACMA investigation (Report BI-701) confirmed that the station's target audience was seniors 65 and over when the licence was issued circa 2015/16; however, the investigation found that this would "likely appeal to a general audience in the broadcast area," and the station's manager claimed he was told narrowcasters could not play any "recognised artists" that might also be played on commercial stations, a term which is not defined in the Act. At the time of writing, the station was required to pay a non-refundable \$15,100 assessment fee to ACMA so the regulator can evaluate an alternative music programme proposed by the station, which is run by a husband-and-wife team now facing the loss of their radio station and severe financial difficulty.

The paranoia is such that even comedy broadcasts and political satire cause some trepidation in most community stations. I did get a Trump AI voice to read out the local weather report one morning, but before airing a Christmas skit I'd written about Santa Claus being a 'socialist interloper' because he delivered free toys by sneaking into children's homes at night, I checked with the committee, who were worried it might be taken seriously. Additionally, inspired by the Indigenous Voice Referendum, I ran my own referendum, 'Should

you pay extra for tomato sauce on a meat pie?' Trump AI voiced his support for the 'no' vote and even threatened tariffs on Australian meat pies if the tomato sauce surcharge wasn't lifted. Listeners were instructed to submit their votes on a 'naughty seaside postcard', which was a thinly veiled dig at how comedy on commercial radio had descended into on-air teams airing sexual innuendo and toilet humour while laughing hysterically at their own tedious insider jokes.

A classic example of toilet humour was demonstrated when the Kyle and Jackie O Show aired a segment in August of 2024 where callers had to identify the station's female staff by listening to recordings of them urinating in the toilet. ACMA found the segment and commentary revolving around the content to be "vulgar, sexually explicit and deeply offensive," constituting multiple breaches of the Commercial Radio Code of Practice's decency rules. In fact, ACMA listed 12 breaches in all and issued repeated warnings to the station; however, no punitive actions were taken, nor licences revoked. Here, Myall Coast Radio's breach of playing "popular music of broad appeal" presents as a mere blip on the radar compared to the "deeply offensive" breaches by one of ACMA's commercial entities.

In early 2025, Myall Coast Radio volunteers were advised that an application to ACMA to reissue an FM broadcast licence was declined; the advice conveyed that ACMA suggested a merger with GLFM (Great Lakes FM), a community station based in Tuncurry, NSW, over 100km to the north of Myall Coast Radio's original Tea Gardens studios. A number of emails from the Myall Coast Radio committee were then sent to its members with recommendations for the merger, including: "Revamp the Tea Gardens roadside billboard. Circulate information to past members to encourage them to rejoin." And, "Reignite interest with previous sponsors." Although I wasn't on the MCR committee, I attended two separate meetings with GLFM regarding the 'merger', one at the Bulahdelah studio and one

at GLFM's Tuncurry studios on May 2, 2025.

The amalgamation proposal was accepted by GLFM as noted in correspondence on May 19, 2025. All MCR volunteers were then required to register as GLFM volunteers (as I did), and access was requested by GLFM to refit the Bulahdelah studio. But in June of 2025 I received a text from an MCR volunteer stating that GLFM hadn't offered any positions to former MCR announcers. I did formally contact GLFM twice, offering my services, but they didn't respond. I then offered my resignation to the Myall Coast Radio committee, thanking them and all the volunteers for their support, and advising them that I thought the merger was disadvantageous to the former Myall Coast Radio volunteers and presenters.

On September 5, 2025, the Myall Coast News of the Area newspaper ran a headline that read, "Great Lakes FM launches new studio in Bulahdelah." The article went on to report, "The new studio at Bulahdelah will retain the current experienced presenters, while encouraging new volunteers." However, the article mentioned only one former MCR presenter, Greg Hayes, a talented country music host and presenter I featured in CX188 (Feb 2023). At the time of writing, almost six months since the 'merger', I could not locate any references to Greg's broadcasts or the participation of other former Myall Coast Radio presenters on the Great Lakes FM website, nor could I find any mention of the merger with Myall Coast Radio on the website, and the huge Myall Coast Radio billboard in Tea Gardens still hadn't been altered to direct the Myall Coast community to the GLFM station.

From the 2021 announcement of the launch of Myall Coast Radio with its \$100,000 funding to the devastating loss of its licence for playing music of a 'broad and general appeal', the gutting of its Tea Gardens on-air and production studios, and the loss of all its broadcast equipment and initial capital, culminating in a minimal and unremarkable merger with GLFM, it certainly has been a short walk from the penthouse to the outhouse for Myall Coast Radio.



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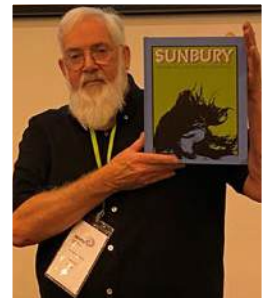
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