

Lighting

LDI 2025

LDI 2025 REINFORCES WHY LAS VEGAS REMAINS THE GLOBAL PROVING GROUND FOR LIVE PRODUCTION TECH

Regulars

JENNY BARRETT
TALKS NZICC TECH
ANDY STEWART: AI VS HUMAN EXPERTISE
JOHN O'BRIEN ON BUSHFIRE SUPPORT
BRIAN COLEMAN - THE TALENT SCOUT

CX

Retail

MADISONAV GOES MI

CEO KEN KYLE IS ENJOYING 'WORKING IN RETAIL'

Staging

FANTASTIC NEWS FOR EVENTS FANTASTIC

Biz Talk

SELLING YOUR BUSINESS

Installations

QUEST GOES FULL DIVA AND THE AEC CHOOSES ANOLIS



Live

KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD

'THE WEIRDO SWARM' GATHER AT MELBOURNE'S SIDNEY MYER MUSIC BOWL TO EXPERIENCE KGATLW LIVE ON ADAMSON'S VGt

News

- AVOLITES D9 POWER CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT
- THE P.A. PEOPLE CELEBRATE 50 YEARS
- LEA EXPANDS WITH NEW PARTNERSHIP
- THE COUNTDOWN TO GTX 2026 IS ON
- TELEVIC CONFERENCE PARTNERS WITH COSAIR
- NAOSTAGE'S NEW AI-POWERED TRACKING

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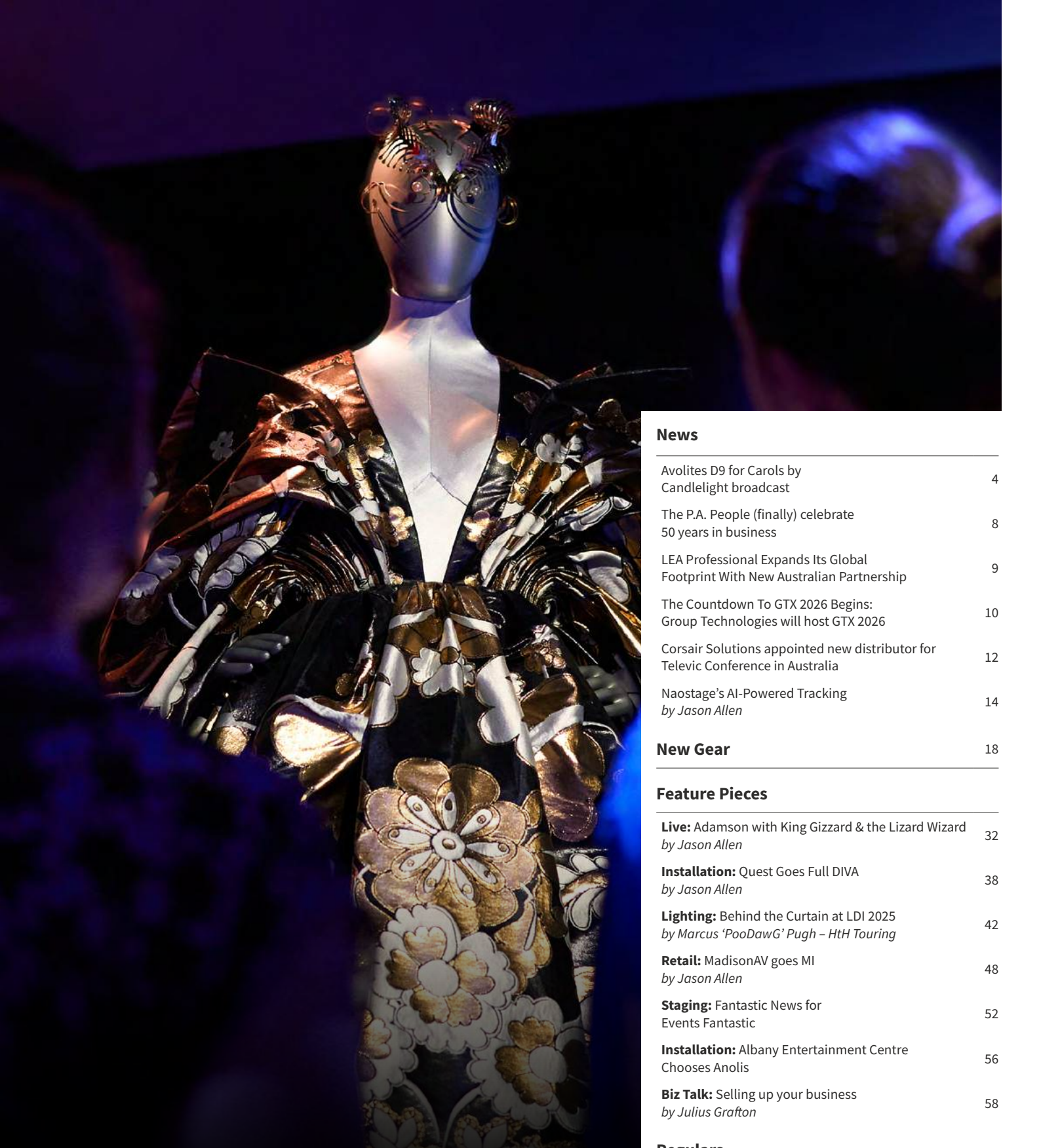
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Contents Photo – DIVA at The Australian Museum of the Performing Arts, Arts Centre Melbourne. Photo Credit: Mark Gambino

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PHOTO CREDIT: CLARE SPRINGETT

Avolites D9 for Carols by Candlelight broadcast

Lighting designer Daniel Saveski – the current head of lighting for Australia’s Channel 9 (GTV9) – used an Avolites D9 console (with a D7 for backup) to light the broadcaster’s famous Carols by Candlelight Christmas special. The event has been an annual Australian tradition since 1938, staged at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl in Melbourne.

Owned and co-ordinated by Vision Australia, a leading national non-profit organisation providing services for those with blindness and low vision, Carols by Candlelight is their largest annual fundraiser and is produced and broadcast by the Nine Network. Dan has worked on the event for the last nine years in different lighting related roles, and this was the second year he has been the lighting designer.

Dan specified the D9 because he wanted a powerful and intuitive control platform that could be programmed quickly and easily.

While fluent in and working across multiple lighting and visual control platforms, he thought Avolites would be especially appropriate for this show.

He had initially rediscovered Avolites and the D9 during the COVID lockdowns, although at that stage there were no D9s available in Australia!

After Avolites became ‘a Robe business’ in late 2023 and LSC Control Systems became the new official distributor, his interest was renewed and he started actively looking at the brand and its products, especially the D9. This included booking a demo, where he “fell in love” with the hardware at first glance!

The more he explored via the offline D9 editor, the more he appreciated the “power and simplicity of the workflow,” and Avolites had really started to stand out for him.

LSC and Avolites business development manager, Clare Springett, introduced him to the T3 console, which he loved. He immediately purchased one, commenting that it’s “incredible to have a console that fits in a backpack, unlocks 16 universes, and doesn’t compromise on programming or playback space!”

For the 2025 Carols event, he wanted to tap into the power and flexibility of the D9 to control a sizable lighting rig. The rig comprised 65 Ayrton Rivale Profile moving lights, three Ayrton Domino LTs running on a remote Ground Control system for follow spots, together with 21 GLP Impression X4s and 50 Impression X4 XL wash lights, 24 ACME TORNADOS, 46 ACME PIXEL LINE IPs, 14 Martin Mac Aura XIPs, 20 ShowPro Fusion Wash 48s and 8 Claypaky Scenius Unicos.

On top of that were Creamsource and Creamsource Mini LED soft lights, 12 CK ColorBlast 12 TRs, 12 ETC LED PARs, 17 sections of Starcloth drape, together with several hundred metres of LED festoon and LED tape around the set.

All lighting equipment for the event was supplied by PRG, who Dan describes as “simply amazing” to work with, making the process effortless, offering “a distinctive level of comfort and confidence when they are looking after one of my shows.”

The set was designed and built several years ago and is stored and maintained by Nine Network’s staging department.

In addition to the lighting, a large upstage LED screen handled a variety of visual content. The set design further enabled Dan to incorporate ROE Visual CB3 panels into the set of windows on the left and right stage wings and the ‘rosette’ in the centre of the scenic proscenium arch, as well as the mid stage low fence in front of the house band. These were all supplied by CT Australia.

He also included a roof feature in the design, made up of ROE Vanish that was not visible from the front, but worked brilliantly in terms of adding depth and visual interest from those all-important low and upward angled camera shots.

During programming, he found the D9’s ‘Locate’ options for specific fixtures “incredibly helpful.” By setting the default Locate to a tight zoom, he



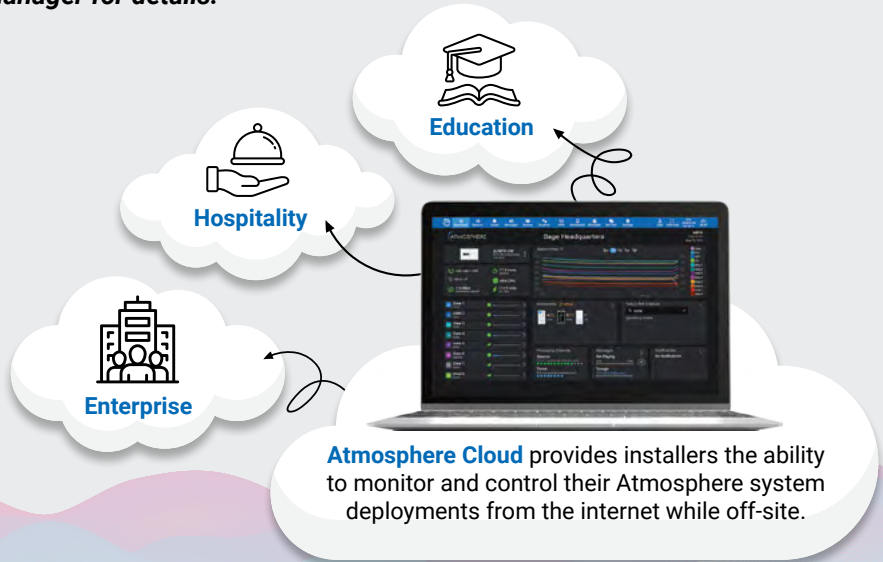
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was able to focus key light positions much more quickly, knowing exactly where the centre point was from the start.

The 'Attribute Editor' was another "essential" programming tool for Dan, particularly for managing framing shutters and maintaining precise RGB control over the CMY engines in the different fixture types.

He found the 'Set List' feature pretty "invaluable" on a show like this, where songs were constantly being moved between segments right up until show day. "Set List allowed me to rapidly reorder tracks while retaining all the specific notes and programming attached to each list, so last-minute schedule changes were seamless!"

He totally appreciates how the 'Key Frame Shapes' feature enabled him to concentrate his eyes on the stage rather than being buried in console syntax, which "seriously sped up" the process.

Moving forward, he says he will be specifying a D9 more often and whenever he can get his hands on one!

Overall, he found the D9's workflow incredibly straightforward and an aid to efficient programming. He is impressed with how the Avolites platform has stood the test of time – the brand celebrates its 50th anniversary throughout 2026.

He mentioned the importance of maintaining a clean and organised workflow on the desk and in the rig, giving his crew the clarity they need to perform at their best.

"I lead from the front, ensuring that even in high-pressure national broadcast environments like Carols by Candlelight, we can operate as a team with precision, mutual respect, and a shared passion for the craft."

Beyond the technicalities, Carols by Candlelight is a special project with enormous meaning for Dan, and together with all involved, he is hugely proud to be part of delivering it.

"It is also a cherished yearly reunion with my crew 'family,' and the show carries a profound weight as so many Australians are watching with their friends and loved ones, and our work is bringing smiles to children's faces nationwide."

All the money raised goes towards supporting specialist services for children who are blind or have low vision.

Working closely with Dan on the 2025 edition were lighting directors Lynden Gare and Hamish Lee and screens director Matt Jones.

Dan was so delighted with the performance of the D9 and the D7 used as backup, he has already slated a D7-330 and a D7-215 to run the 2026 Australian Open broadcast.

He has even vowed to don his "Avo Trainer" hat and convert a few lighting director colleagues to the platform! Frequently working across multiple control platforms, Dan has become one of Australia's go-to "terminology translation" phone support nerds for most of his professional network, and comments that it's been "a great experience" seeing how these tools are evolving and helping others bridge the gaps between different systems.



PHOTO CREDIT: CLARE SPRINGETT



PHOTO CREDIT: CLARE SPRINGETT

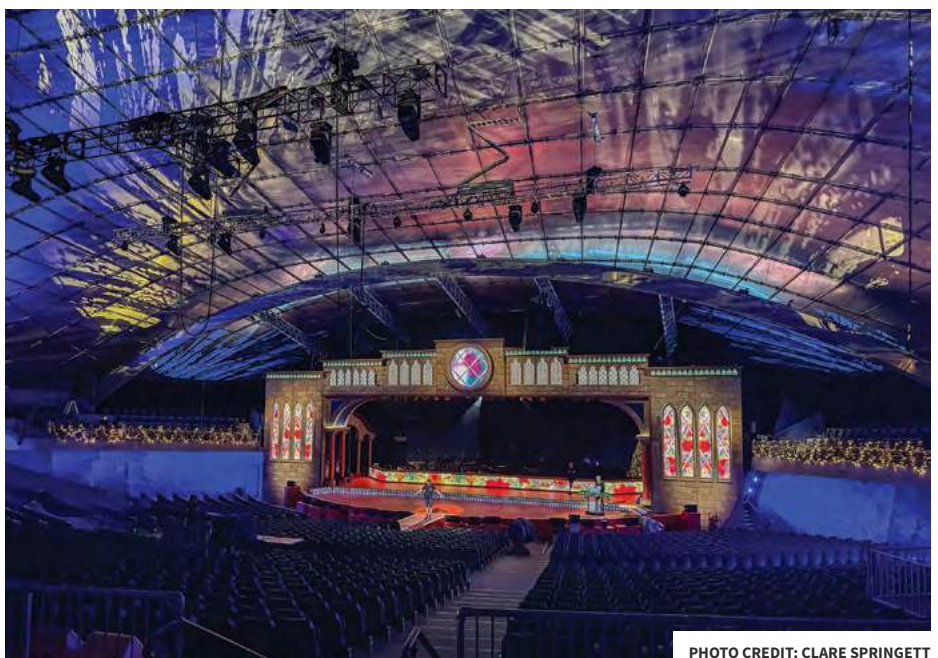


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THE P.A. PEOPLE (FINALLY) CELEBRATE 50 YEARS IN BUSINESS



DAVID COLLINS AND CHRIS DODDS CUT THE CAKE

Late in December 2025, Sydney's The P.A. People finally celebrated the milestone that is 50 years in business. Delayed by the COVID pandemic by three years, the occasion was marked by the launch of the book 'Five Decades of Purpose', a history of The P.A. People, featuring contributions by many of the people who have helped grow and shape the business (and which, incidentally, I helped compile and edit - ed).

It was an honour to have David Collins, the founder of the company then known as CS Services, which would evolve into The P.A. People, join the ceremony. Both David and Chris Dodds, today's owner and Managing Director, both regaled the crowd with great memories and successes stories from the last 50 years.

From their humble beginnings in the 1970s to now, there are hundreds of people who have been and continue to be a part of The P.A. People's journey, with many in the room for the event. The company are grateful to everyone who has played a part in their story, past and present. Their support, belief and contribution have helped shape The P.A. People into what it is today.

As The P.A. People celebrated this milestone, they did so with pride in their history and excitement for what lies ahead.



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PETER TWARTZ, GLENN LEEMBRUGGEN, SUSAN TWARTZ



DES WILLIAMSON, NATHAN BARRIOS, SAM DODDS



NATHAN BARRIOS, MARK CONDON, SCOTT RILEY, KEN DODDS



FAUSTO PASTRO, STEVE DRURY



JEFF VILENSKY, JACQIE DENNIS, KEVIN HAMMOND



JACQIE DENNIS, GREG YATES, GRAEME HARRIS, GRAHAM NEWMARCH



JEFF MACKENZIE, PHIL SCHEUL, STEVE CHEZZI



LEA Professional Expands Its Global Footprint Through New Australian Partnership

LEA Professional's technology catalogue, featuring industry-first advancements in intelligent IT solutions, best-in-class DSP, and smart power management, is set to reach more Australian customers in 2026 through a new distribution partnership with Jands.

The Jands team has been providing the highest quality technology solutions to its customers since 1970. This partnership will bring LEA Professional's award-winning Network Connect series of professional amplifiers and companion Dante Connect series, featuring Dante and AES67 connectivity, to more Australian customers. These series enable integrators to use cloud-based remote control, monitoring, notifications, and more from any internet-enabled device, keeping them connected anywhere in the world.

"This partnership reinforces Jands' ongoing investment in future-ready audio technologies and its commitment to supporting the evolving needs of the Australian professional AV industry," said Phil Muffet, CEO and Managing Director, Jands. "As AV systems continue to move toward networked, remotely managed environments, LEA Professional's approach to amplification aligns closely with the way consultants and integrators are designing, deploying, and supporting systems today."

LEA Professional's smart amplifiers are the most feature-rich amplifiers available in the industry, featuring onboard 96kHz DSP, LEA Cloud connectivity, WebUI, third-party API control, real-time load monitoring, Lo-Z/70V/100V selectable by channel, Smart Power Bridge technology, event and fault monitoring, high-efficiency power design, over 3,000 speaker tuning presets, and LEA's advanced amplifier control software, SharkWare.

"Partnering with Jands is an important step in our international growth strategy," said Scott Robbins, Vice President of Sales, at LEA Professional. "The team's deep understanding of the Australian market and strong relationships across the region will help us better serve customers and accelerate adoption of our solutions."

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The Countdown to GTX 2026 Begins

On Wednesday 25 February, Group Technologies will host GTX 2026, Australia's leading audio technology tradeshow and networking event.

Hosted at the Group Technologies Training and Demonstration facility in Melbourne, the event will mark a significant refit of the complex, introducing Australia's first dedicated L-Acoustics L-ISA Immersive demo space, as well as a new Atmos mix room featuring solutions from Focal and RME. The event promises to be jam-packed with new product releases, hands-on demonstrations and brand debuts, bringing together both familiar industry faces and new attendees for a firsthand look at the latest gear alongside key brand representatives.

From GT's expansive Live Space to the new L-ISA zone, major PA technology demonstrations from L-Acoustics and RCF are poised to take centre stage, including a showcase of RCF's aptly named flagship GTX10 Touring and Installation line array system. Sessions will be accompanied by special international guests from each brand, including *David Cooper* and *Jacob Barfoed* of L-Acoustics, as well as *Andy Magee*, *Antonio Ferrari* and *Lucio Serri* from RCF.

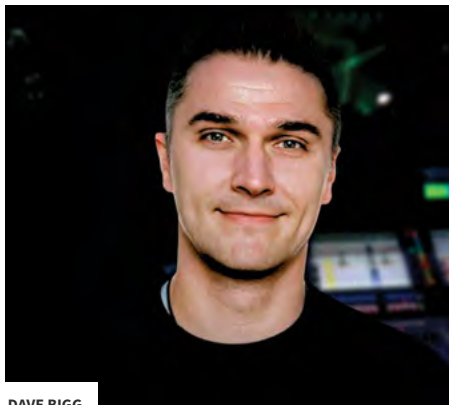
In The Mix Zone, DiGiCo's flagship Quantum 852 console is set to impress once again, accompanied by the brand's new ultra-portable flypack mixer, the Quantum 112. *Ian Staddon* and *Dave Bigg*



DAVID COOPER



JACOB BARFOED



DAVE BIGG



IAN STADDON



ANDY MAGEE



ANTONIO FERRARI



LUCIO SERRI

GTXX

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ISOVOX

WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2026 10:30AM - 7PM

GT HQ - 86 DERBY STREET, PASCOE VALE VIC 3044

After party from 7pm-late at **Cornish Arms Hotel Rooftop**
(163A Sydney Rd, Brunswick VIC 3056)
(transportation will be provided from GT to the venue)

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from DiGiCo will be joining from the UK to delve into the console's incredible feature-to-size ratio and answer attendee questions. Also featured will be solutions from German audio interface manufacturer RME, with representatives *Eric Chiu* and *Max Holtmann* on hand to guide visitors through the brand's comprehensive set of technologies.

Another special guest gracing The Mix Zone is Fourier Audio's *Elliott Sinclair*, on hand to share insight into the brand's innovative VST3 plugin-hosting hardware for live environments. Many additional products from Sound Devices, KLANG, Quest Engineering, and Cordial will also be showcased throughout the space.

GT's new Atmos mix room is set to attract significant attention, with *Vincent Moreuille* of world-renowned studio monitor brand Focal in attendance as part of its inauguration.

With no shortage of developments in the retail sector, Austrian Audio microphones and headphones will be on display, with *Martin Seidl* travelling from Vienna to answer questions and discuss the brand's latest developments. Another special guest in attendance is *Fabrice Del-Prete* of Switzerland's PSI Audio, discussing the brand's renowned all-analogue monitoring solutions and unique Active Bass Traps.

A range of synths, drum machines and effects will be available in the interactive 'Just Play' area, inviting attendees to get hands-on with gear from Elektron and Erica Synths. Synthesizer enthusiasts will have the chance to engage directly with special guests *Christian Alsing* (Elektron) and *Girts Ozolins* (Erica Synths), representing their respective brands.

GT's renowned hospitality is set to once again be a highlight, with generous catering, a lively bar, and an after-party running at The Cornish Arms Hotel Rooftop. With anticipation already building, GTX 2026 is shaping up to be another standout event for the Australian audio industry. Group Technologies looks forward to welcoming attendees this February, with more details to follow.

For registration and more info, visit grouptechnologies.com.au/category/gtx/



ERIC CHIU



MAX HOLTSMANN



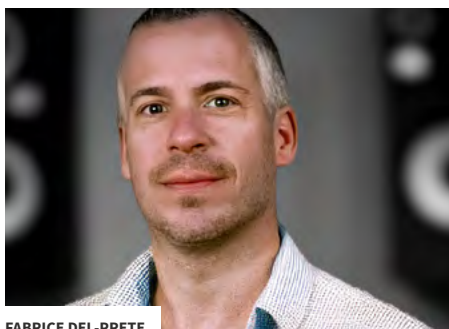
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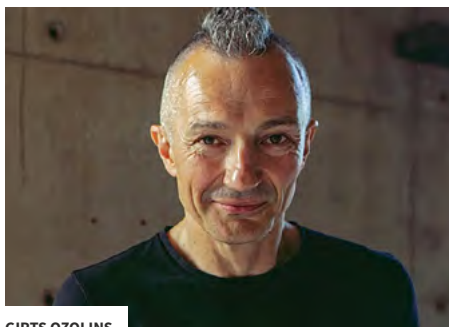
MARTIN SEIDL



FABRICE DEL-PRETE



CHRISTIAN ALSING



GIRTS OZOLINS

Corsair Solutions appointed new distributor for Televic Conference in Australia

This new partnership marks an important step in strengthening Televic's presence in the Australian market and ensuring closer, more responsive support for end users, system integrators, and consultants working on professional conferencing projects.

Corsair brings strong local expertise, technical know-how, and a solid track record in delivering high-quality AV and collaboration solutions. Together, they are committed to supporting projects across courts, government, corporate, education, and institutional environments with:

- Local sales and technical support
- Faster response times and on-the-ground expertise
- Access to Televic's full portfolio of advanced conferencing solutions
- Strong project guidance from design to deployment

Televic Conference remains fully committed to the Australian market and will work closely with Corsair to ensure the highest standards in product performance, service quality, and long-term partnership.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss an upcoming project, feel free to reach out to Corsair or contact Televic's local representative Basile Cuigniez (b.cuigniez@televic.com) directly.

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Naostage's



AI-Powered Tracking

NEW PRODUCTS BRING TRACKING TO THE PEOPLE

It's now been over a year since French tracking solutions company Naostage partnered with Adelaide's Novatech Creative Event Technology to distribute their AI-powered technology in Australia. In one of the first few truly great uses of AI in our industry, Naostage's K SYSTEM uses a combination of their cameras, processors, and software to provide automatic, beaconless tracking of performers, with AI locking on to the performer automatically as they enter the stage or performance area.

Novatech were an early adopter of this powerful system, investing in a top-of-the-line system.

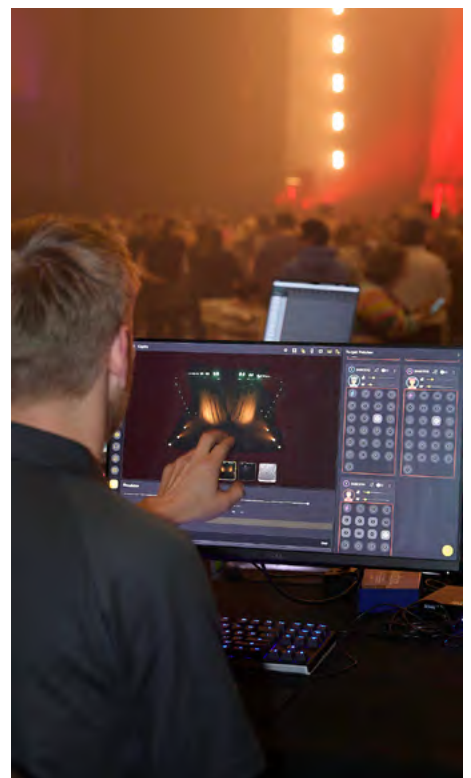
The system generates PSN (PosiStageNet) or OSC data from the performer's location, which can be used for controlling not only lighting fixtures for followspot applications, but also send control

signals to immersive audio processors like d&b audiotechnik's Soundscape or L-Acoustics' L-ISA, and to video and other show control systems.

The K SYSTEM consists of the KAPTA sensor bar, the KORE processor, and the Kratos software. The KAPTA uses multiple cameras, including visible, thermal, and NIR (near-infrared) to capture the stage area in any conditions, including total darkness or heavy smoke. The patented system uses the KORE processor, directed by the KRATOS software, to lock on to individual performers in a defined area determined by the user.

"We took K System out on a tour with Tones and I," relates Leko Novakovic, Managing Director of Novatech. "We were doing arenas, including Rod Laver in Melbourne. We mounted one Kapta on the front truss, and it covered the entire 18-metre-wide stage. We initially only intended it to track Tones, but her operators asked if we could track her dancers as well. It ended up tracking Tones and multiple dancers, and didn't break a sweat"

While K SYSTEM remains the top-of-the-range Naostage solution for total show control, the





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With interoperability and scalability, this expanded offering means anyone can build a system that fits their application and take advantage of extended compatibility with AV third party systems.

“This extended flexibility allows smaller productions or venues to take advantage of Naostage’s technology and to scale as their needs grow,” explains Leko. “It also allows AV pros to target integration or architectural markets with a cost effective and creative system.”

With AI running the tracking, the system couldn’t be easier to use; “Set up time and calibration takes between 20 and 30 min to an experimented operator,” says Leko. Operations during rehearsals, or live shows are easy; the operator assigns a performer in the target patcher, and the system will follow them. You can then set it to fade in on entry, fade out on exit, and track them with any combination of lights. In Novatech’s case, the KORE is outputting control data directly into their

grandMA3 lighting consoles, but any interactive AV scenario can be imagined; dynamically activated video backgrounds in relation to the performer, dynamically adjusting the wet/dry setting of a reverberation depending on the position of an audio source, and more.

With a Naostage YouTrack system available at a fraction of the price of a full K SYSTEM, and a K SYSTEM composed of KAMs and a KORE S at half the price of a high-end K SYSTEM, Naostage solutions are competitive against all of the main competing tracking systems. It’s a great time to consider tracking for production companies, theatres, and other venues.

Novatech will have demonstration systems available for evaluation; contact them for a test drive! “We think it’s going to be a huge seller,” concludes Leko.

www.ncet.co

company have recently introduced a new system called YouTrack, which is a manual tracking system designed for the realities of live entertainment; easy to deploy, flexible to operate, and ready to evolve into full AI automation. YouTrack brings modern, reliable tracking to productions of any size.

YouTrack is composed of KAM, a robust and high-performance RGB camera, PoE and IP67, which guarantees consistent visual rendering even in very low light conditions, and NUK, a compact computer pre-configured with KRATOS that offers exceptional real-time performance.

With YouTrack, Naostage introduces a new approach; you can start with a powerful manual tracking system, then seamlessly transition into AI automation as your needs grow. It offers unmatched flexibility and long-term value.

Between the original KORE processor and the NUK sits the new “Kore S” which limits the AI to processing four video streams (one KAPTA or four KAMS) while the KORE processes up to eight video streams simultaneously, for example, two KAPTA, eight KAMS or one KAPTA and four KAMS.



EAGLESTRIKE

followmenal



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
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Symetrix Unveils Cognio: The Next-Generation Audio, Video, and Control Platform



Symetrix have announced the launch of Cognio, a brand-new software-driven Audio, Video, and Control (AVC) ecosystem designed to dramatically simplify system design, accelerate deployment, and deliver more flexible, scalable AV experiences

Cognio represents a fundamental rethinking of how AV systems are built, combining distributed intelligence with code-free control into a single platform powered by DesignOps, the patented software that underpins the next-generation hardware and software platform. By seamlessly connecting its modernised software application with a distributed approach to smart devices, Cognio unifies design, configuration, commissioning, control, and ongoing operation into unified, streamlined workflows in which a single device can power multiple spaces, or multiple devices can support a single space, allowing systems to scale naturally across rooms, buildings, or entire campuses.

Rather than starting with fixed hardware, Cognio enables AV professionals to design workflows based on rooms, zones, and signal flows, then add hardware later, delivering unprecedented flexibility and scalability in AV design. True pre-hardware emulation lets designers perform AV line checks before installation, allowing them to confirm that audio and video signals are present and functioning properly from their desk, before ever setting foot on site, saving teams time and money.

Cognio is the result of more than four years of dedicated design and development, shaped by extensive feedback from consultants and integrators worldwide. By streamlining processes into a single platform, Cognio dramatically reduces complexity while delivering better outcomes for integrators, consultants, and end users.

A Wire-Free Workflow That Eliminates Manual Routing

At the core of Cognio is a patented, wire-free design approach to workflows powered by DesignOps software, using a spreadsheet-like canvas for unbounded creativity. Designers place processing modules in sequence rather than manually drawing signal paths; Cognio automatically connects them and maintains the routing logic behind the scenes. Add, remove, or rearrange modules, and the signal flow adapts

instantly, eliminating visual clutter, reducing errors, and significantly reducing design time. The result is a clearer, faster, and more intuitive way to build even the most complex systems.

With a completely reimagined approach to system design, Cognio eliminates repetitive tasks, enables reuse at every level, and provides offline emulation, so users can design, validate, and deploy systems in record time without sacrificing quality.

Distributed by Design: Processing and Control Everywhere

Cognio is built on a distributed architecture in which every connected device shares a common firmware foundation. This enables signal processing, AVoIP Dante audio, control, and web-based access to exist throughout the system, not just in a centralised processor.

This approach allows integrators to deploy exactly the right amount of capability where it's needed, expand systems incrementally and on demand, and design resilient architectures that adapt as projects grow or change. By leveraging software-driven architecture, users get powerful systems that scale efficiently and cost less than traditional hardware-centric solutions.

Audio Emulation Before Hardware Installation

One of Cognio's most powerful capabilities is true pre-hardware system emulation. Cognio firmware runs directly on the DesignOps computer, generating real digital audio through the design so indicators move, signal paths can be validated, and issues can be identified early. Designers can see how a system will behave long before any hardware is installed, reducing on-site commissioning time and accelerating time to successful deployment.

Design Sleek, Highly Intuitive Control Interfaces, No Code Needed

Cognio features a powerful, no-code control interface builder that allows AV professionals to create polished, visually engaging user experiences without external graphics tools or custom programming. Vector-based interface elements scale cleanly across devices, while a built-in theme system allows integrators to apply branding, colours, and styles instantly, then reuse them across projects, customers, or vertical markets. With intuitive design tools anyone can use, Cognio makes it easier than ever to create attractive control interfaces that clients will love.

INTRODUCING



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NEW GEAR

AYRTON EAGLESTRIKE LT FOLLOWSPOT

EagleStrike LT is Ayrton's weatherproof followspot. It uses a 1,200W LED module to output 55,000 lumens at a colour temperature of 6500K. An optional camera transforms EagleStrike LT into a fully automated tracking spotlight. Out front, a 270mm front lens delivers a 2.9° beam; its 13-lens optical system with 15:1 zoom ratio gives a working range of 2.9° to 43°, and dedicated gobo reducers narrow the beam to 0.9° or 2.5°. The CMY flag-based colour mixing system is similar to Ayrton's 'Ultimate' series luminaires. Progressive CTO offers temp adjustments from 2900K to 6500K. The colour section includes six complementary colour filters, two CRI enhancement filters, one minus green, one gobo correction and one multi-colour filter. It has full-framing across 100% of the file and +/- 90° rotation, two overlaying rotating gobo wheels, each with seven gobos, a 15-blade iris diaphragm, a single-colour effects wheel and two frost filters, as well as two combinable rotating image-multiplier prisms: a 4-facet linear and a 5-facet circular. EagleStrike LT has infinite pan, uses a liquid cooling system, is IP65 rated and weighs 54.7kg.

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



INFINITY FURION W402 WASHBEAM

Furion W402 WashBeam from Infinity is an IP65-rated moving head fixture that outputs both beam and wash light. It uses 7 x 45W RGBW LEDs and has a zoom range from 3.1° to 54.6°. Studio Mode enables quiet fan operation for when it's required. A dedicated Infinity road case for four Furion W402 WashBeam fixtures is also available.

Australia: Clearlight Shows
clearlight.com.au 03 9553 1688
 New Zealand: Kenderdine Entertainment
 Lighting Ltd kelpls.co.nz 09 302 4100



INFINITY FURION W602 WASHBEAM

Infinity's Furion W602 WashBeam fixture also does wash and beam. The W602 uses 19 x 45W RGBW LEDs, and shoots a 3° beam that zooms to a 48.2° wash. W602 has a user-calibrated 7500K output, and a CTC channel for white light adjustment from 2700K to 7500K. Studio Mode enables quiet fan operation for when it's required. A dedicated Infinity road case for two Furion W602 WashBeam fixtures is also available.

Australia: Clearlight Shows
clearlight.com.au 03 9553 1688
 New Zealand: Kenderdine Entertainment
 Lighting Ltd kelpls.co.nz 09 302 4100



ELATION REBEL WASH 4 AND 12

REBEL WASH 4 and REBEL WASH 12 from Elation are moving head wash luminaires. Both use the same RGBL LED engine. The REBEL WASH 12 has 12 x 60W RGBL LEDs to deliver 14,000 lumens. The REBEL WASH 4 deploys 4 x 60W RGBL LEDs for 4,000 lumens output. The engines are high CRI, with calibrated colour temperature control, a dedicated variable CCT control channel (2400K - 8500K), and a CMY emulation mode for old-schoolers. Both units feature 5°-40° motorised zoom, 360° continuous pan and tilt, 16-bit dimming, and a fast electronic shutter/strobe. Both have IP65 protection for outdoor use.

Australia: ULA Group ulagroup.com 1300 852 476
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AKG C-SERIES

AKG are targeting musicians, podcasters, YouTubers, and streamers with their C104, C114, and C151 condenser microphones. Each uses a transformerless FET circuit for low noise floor and wide dynamic range. Designed to be seen on camera, all of the mic bodies are constructed from 100% recycled PIR metal and every aspect engineered for minimal environmental impact. For content creators, they are made to plug in and start capturing. The C104 large diaphragm cardioid condenser microphone relies on a cardioid capsule, with a 22mm Electret condenser diaphragm. The C114 large diaphragm multi-pattern condenser microphone has an edge-terminated capsule, similar to AKG C12 and C414 microphones. It uses an integrated cardioid, and omnidirectional and figure of eight polar patterns are offered. The AKG C151 small diaphragm cardioid condenser microphone also uses a cardioid capsule, with a 16mm Electret condenser diaphragm.

Australia: MadisonAV
madisonav.com.au 1800 436 378
New Zealand: JPRO
www.jpro.co.nz (09) 275 8710



JBL PROFESSIONAL SRX900 SERIES

JBL Professional have three new units in their SRX900 Series powered loudspeaker system. The expansion includes 12-inch, 15-inch, and dual 12-inch point-source loudspeakers and a range of supporting accessories. SRX912M is a compact, multi-purpose, two-way 12-inch powered loudspeaker, designed as a low-profile stage monitor, main PA, or front fill. SRX915M is a high-output, multi-purpose, two-way 15-inch powered loudspeaker optimised for use as a main PA or as a stage monitor. SRX922 is a compact, three-way, dual 12-inch powered point-source loudspeaker with a trapezoidal full-range enclosure. It is made for high-output main systems, side-fills, or as a point-source element within larger SRX900 deployments. Accessories for the suite include horizontal and vertical U-brackets, array frames, truss clamps, transportation carts, and covers. The range incorporates a host of features, including directivity control, onboard DSP, inbuilt limiting and protection, solid Ethernet support, and are all self-powered.

Australia: MadisonAV madisonav.com.au 1800 00 77 80
New Zealand: JPRO jpro.co.nz 09 275 8710



NEW GEAR

SHURE MV88 USB-C

The MV88 USB-C from Shure is a professional-grade mic designed for mobile content creators. MV88 USB-C is a stereo condenser mic with a USB-C connector to plug straight into an Android or iOS phone or tablet. It uses audio processing from Shure's MV7+ and MV6 microphones, and features Auto Level Mode, which continuously adjusts gain in real time. Real-time Denoiser removes unwanted background noise. There are quick-start presets, microphone gain, five-band EQ, limiter, compression, and a high-pass filter, all accessible through the MOTIV Video and MOTIV Audio mobile apps, and MOTIV Mix on desktop.

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



HIVE DANTE INTEGRATION

HIVE's Beeblade media engines just got Dante connectivity as standard. HIVE's Dante implementation requires no setup, licensing or configuration. They use a custom-built driver that is pre-installed from the factory. With up to 16 output channels per device, each channel can be routed independently to networked speakers. Each Beeblade unit allows users to transmit high-quality, multi-channel audio directly over standard Ethernet.

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

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NEW GEAR



MARTIN MAC ENCORE TWO

MAC Encore Two from Martin is long-throw LED moving head light. It uses a 760W LED white light engine, producing 21,000 lumens, with a 5,600K neutral white output. It runs quietly, with selectable noise output optimisation levels where needed. MAC Encore Two has native TM 30, TLCI, and CRI scores over 90, boosted to 95 with the integrated Spectrum Enhancement Filter. It has an enhanced CMY system. The 1:10 zoom system (5°-54°) and 150mm front lens are designed for long-throw applications. For effects, there are two gobo wheels (7 rotating and 11 static) plus a dual frost system available throughout the zoom range. It weighs 36kg and control options include DMX, Art-Net, sACN, and Martin P3.

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



HIGH END SYSTEMS DATAFLASH 5000

The High End Systems Dataflash 5000 is a strobe fixture capable of 52,000 lumens. It uses an RGB LED array for colour and a 3200-7500K white light centre for punch. Included dome accessories improve its versatility. The Reflector Dome attaches to the fixture face for strobes and atmospheric, while the transparent Eye Candy (EC) dome highlights all of the fixture's effects. IP65 rating makes Dataflash 5000 a solid choice for festivals and outdoor gigs. Dataflash 5000 comes with many strobe modes and macros, and the round face design enhances its pixel mapping capabilities.

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



SERATO SLAB

SLAB from Serato and AlphaTheta is a MIDI hardware interface specifically designed to natively control the Serato Studio DAW. Users can create patterns with sequences, control stems, add FX and filters in real time and more. Velocity-sensitive RGB pads aid with user feedback. As well as native integration with Serato Studio, SLAB's MIDI Mode lets it function as a universal MIDI pad controller that can custom map in Ableton Live, FL Studio, and Logic Pro DAWs, or any MIDI Learn capable software.

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ELATION



NZICC IN AUCKLAND CITY

ONE BUILDING, ONE BRAIN:

The Technology Behind NZICC

HOW OPERATIONS, INTEGRATION AND PRIDE SHAPED THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND NZICC

Two careers, one building

For both Ryan Göllner and Stephen Ward, the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) represents more than the delivery of a major venue. It marks a convergence point in two long careers shaped by live events, installed systems, and a shared belief that technology should ultimately serve people.

Appointed 18 months ago as NZICC's Technology Services Manager, Ryan oversees production AV and ICT services, working closely with external partners including NW Group and visiting production companies to ensure the venue's technology is reliable, scalable, and show-ready. His path to the role spans recording, live sound, broadcast, venue operations and AV integration, with experience in Las Vegas, Hollywood, Maui, Dunedin and Auckland.

"I worked at the old SkyCity Convention Centre, and just prior to this role, I was at VEGA. I am one of the few people in the country who has experience with the people installing all the systems and with the previous venue itself. It's been a serendipitous journey."

Ryan's role sits within the venue's operations team, but it is closely intertwined with VEGA's ongoing involvement. Alongside delivering the full AV installation, VEGA is supporting NZICC through a long-term service level agreement, providing continuity between design intent, commissioning, and live operation.

VEGA's Managing Director Stephen's connection to the project stretches back even further than Ryan's, "I have been involved with NZICC for the last four years. I feel like I've come full circle. I started out as a tech at the Aotea Centre in 1992 and now I'm back, part of the team delivering the largest single AV project in the country here in Auckland."

That shared history, both with Auckland's venues and with each other, has helped establish a level of trust that has carried through the project, "It makes a huge difference when you already understand how each other thinks," Ryan says. "You've already got that shorthand, and you know the other person has the best interests of the venue in mind."

One building, one brain

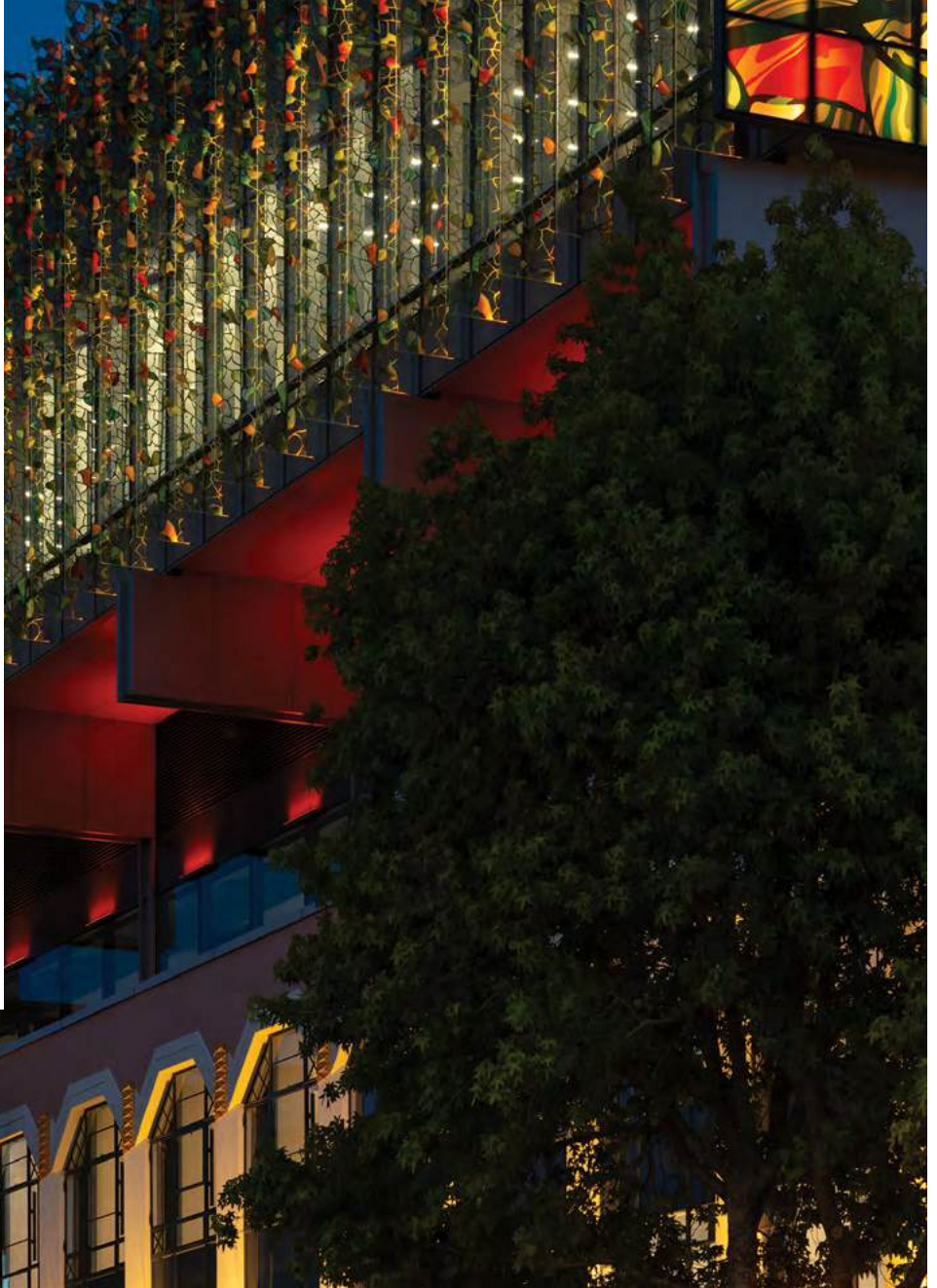
What Ryan and Stephen share is perspective. Both have worked on the integration side, and both understand what happens once the integrators step back and a venue has to live with the systems every day. That crossover between design, delivery, and operation has directly shaped how NZICC has been conceived technically.

Rather than treating AV, IT, control, and production as separate layers, the building has been designed as a single, connected environment, what Ryan and Stephen describe as “one building, one brain.”

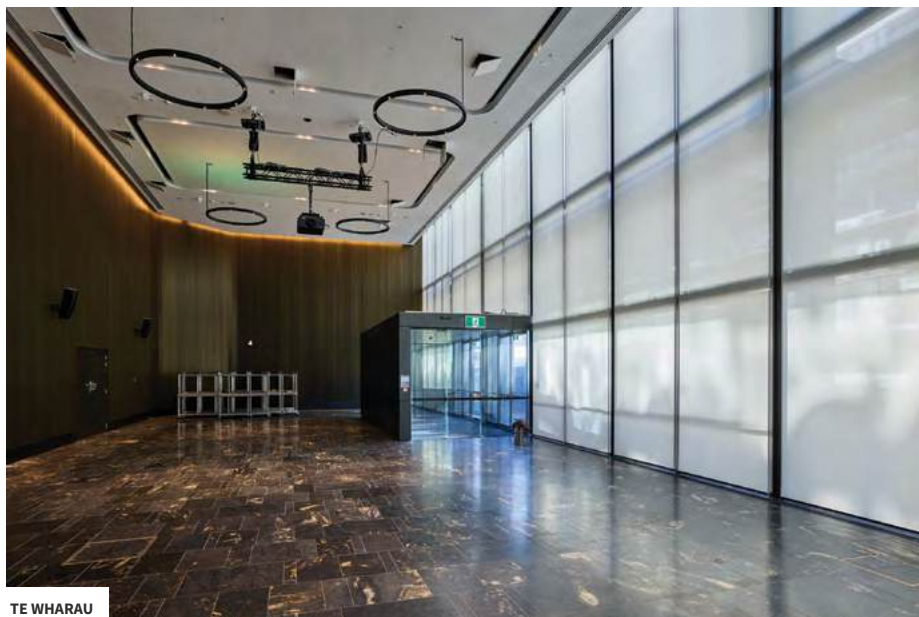
Under the hood, NZICC uses New Zealand’s largest building-wide Crestron NVX AV-over-IP video network with over 320 endpoints, connected via fibre to Cisco Nexus switching, allowing video from any input to be routed anywhere in the venue. Audio is distributed and routed via a Q-SYS DSP backbone, with venue paging and show relay supported through the stage management and IPTV systems.

For Ryan, the operational benefit is immediacy: “If an event expands or a client adds another space at the last minute, you’re not hitting a technical wall. You’re just re-scoping how the system is used.”

With that backbone in place, the focus shifts from infrastructure to performance.



NZICC EXTERIOR



TE WHARAU

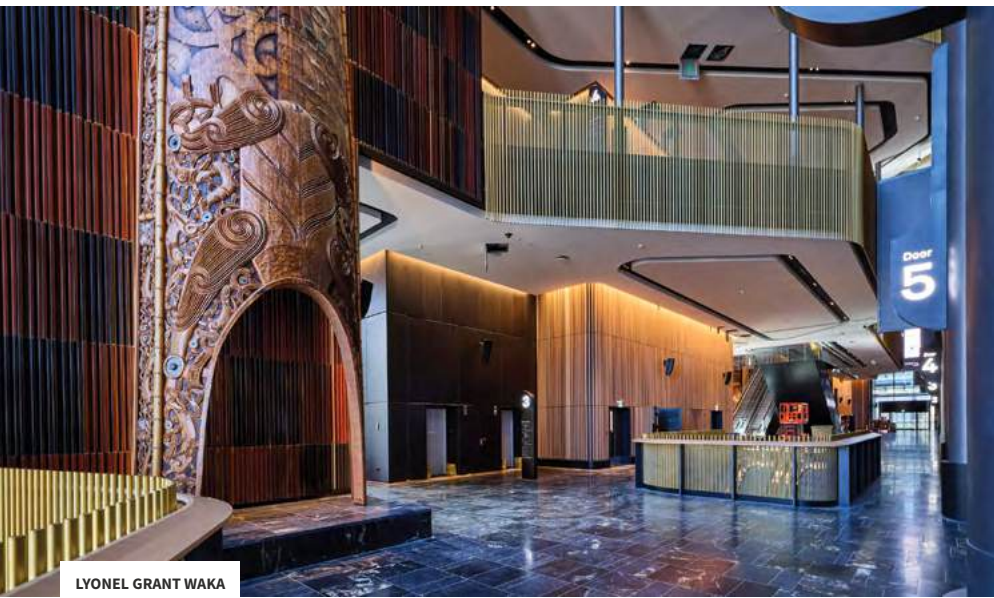
The plenary theatre

New Zealand’s largest seated theatre, with capacity for 2,850 people or 1,150 flat-floor for banquets, also offers the capability to be quickly reconfigured into two smaller multipurpose spaces seating 1,235 each, with fully discrete audio, control, and signal paths.

At the core of the audio design is the largest JBL VTX A Series theatre installation in the Asia-Pacific region, featuring the A8 line array system, Crown I-Tech amplification and Soundcraft Vi Series digital mixing consoles. The lightweight system supports fast changeovers through a simple, logical rigging design.

“I think sound people are going to be blown away. The audio is clear, consistent, and comfortable; you’re not struggling to hear, and you’re not being pushed,” shares Stephen.

Ryan expands, “You easily can change how the space functions from a control point of view. Rooms that might normally operate as conference spaces can be reassigned as green rooms, with camera feeds routed in so performers can see what’s happening on stage and know when they’re about to be called. That means you can run big stage shows from the theatre, alongside other smaller events.”



LYONEL GRANT WAKA

Exhibitions

Designed for high-turnover trade shows, large-scale builds, and simultaneous events, the exhibition halls at NZICC place an emphasis on power distribution, rigging capability, acoustic separation, and operational safety.

Each hall is equipped with a 400A power bus system, allowing high-capacity power to be dropped vertically from the technical grids anywhere within the space to suit changing exhibition layouts. This approach removes reliance on fixed floor outlets and allows exhibitors and production teams to scale infrastructure to match the build, rather than working around predefined limitations.

Overhead, rigging is handled via a Movecat i-motion motor control system, networked across the exhibition level. The system provides real-time visibility of total grid load as well as individual motor loads, displayed as weight or percentage of capacity. Built-in limits prevent overloading, with defined stop points at both the top and bottom of travel, supporting safe and repeatable rigging workflows, Ryan adds, “The Generation Xers are going to love it. The motor controller is just like an old school arcade game!”

Acoustic separation was also a key consideration, given the likelihood of multiple events running concurrently. Ryan points to acoustically sealed, carpeted catwalks and high-performance room dividers designed to minimise noise bleed between halls, allowing exhibitions, plenary sessions, and meetings to operate side by side without compromise.

Connectivity across the exhibition level has been designed for high-density usage, with venue-wide Wi-Fi engineered to support large attendee numbers alongside exhibitor requirements. From an operational standpoint, the exhibition halls reflect the same philosophy seen throughout the building: infrastructure that stays out of the way but is ready to scale when pushed.

Meeting rooms and accessibility

Supporting the larger theatres and exhibition spaces are more than 30 meeting and breakout rooms, designed for high turnover and consistent operation across a wide range of event types.

That consistency is reinforced through mobile smart lecterns and breakout racks that self-

discover the floor box they are connected to, automatically presenting the correct audio and video to the room and updating the control interface with additional inputs. The lecterns provide integrated microphones, local source connectivity and foldback, while breakout racks extend the system for more complex events without reconfiguring the room infrastructure.

Accessibility has been built into the technical design rather than added as an afterthought, a nod to VEGA’s expertise in this area. Williams AV infrared hearing assist systems deliver clear, secure audio for individuals with hearing challenges, making them ideal for large venues like NZICC. Infrared technology ensures privacy by keeping signals contained within the room, while multiple channels allow simultaneous events without interference. These systems help venues meet accessibility standards and create an inclusive experience for all attendees.

The fun stuff for the creatives

Beyond the core AV systems, NZICC has been engineered with a level of production flexibility rarely seen in a convention centre, blurring the line between conference venue and performance space. Lighting is fully integrated into the wider control environment, with LED and dimming infrastructure designed to support both corporate and theatrical use cases.

The theatre staging infrastructure is equally adaptable. Large freight elevators connect directly to the stage, and with the help of a pneumatic lift system, the stage can be deployed within 45 minutes, while the full theatre floor and retractable seating take approximately two hours. The lower-level seating is fully retractable, converting the space rapidly between seated, banquet, and open-floor configurations.

Throughout the theatre and adjacent spaces, floor boxes wired with Cat6 and single- and multi-mode fibre provide multiple options for camera positions, broadcast workflows, and front-of-house mixing locations. An automated fly system, the only one of its kind in a New Zealand convention centre, features 15 configurable, programmable lines that can be queued and recalled, opening the door to repeatable, dynamic show moves over extended runs.

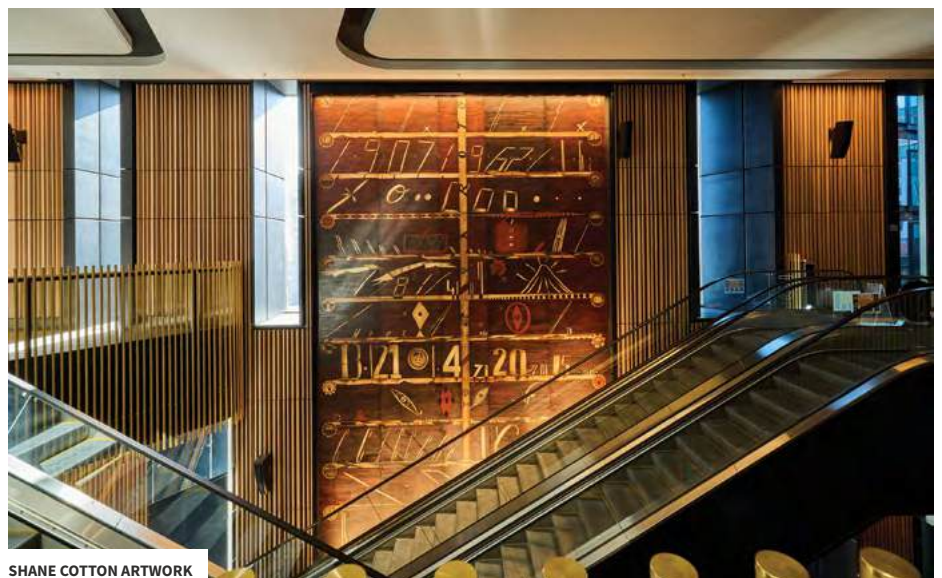
Lighting infrastructure has been designed with the same flexibility in mind. Power and DMX can be routed to every circuit on the catwalks, supported by truss travellers and moving power/data umbilicals that allow fixtures to be repositioned quickly in response to creative concepts. For Ryan, it’s a system that will reveal its full potential over time: “As crews get comfortable in the space, we are set up to support increasingly ambitious and technically complex productions.”

Non-negotiables achieved

For Ryan and Stephen, one principle sat above every brief and specification: pride was non-negotiable. At every stage of the project, the question was simple: is this good enough to stand behind? Not just technically sound, but something the people delivering it could genuinely be proud of. By that measure, NZICC has met its mark.

That pride has become personal. Many of the team talk about bringing family through the building, pointing out systems and spaces and saying, “This is what I built,” or “This is where I work.”

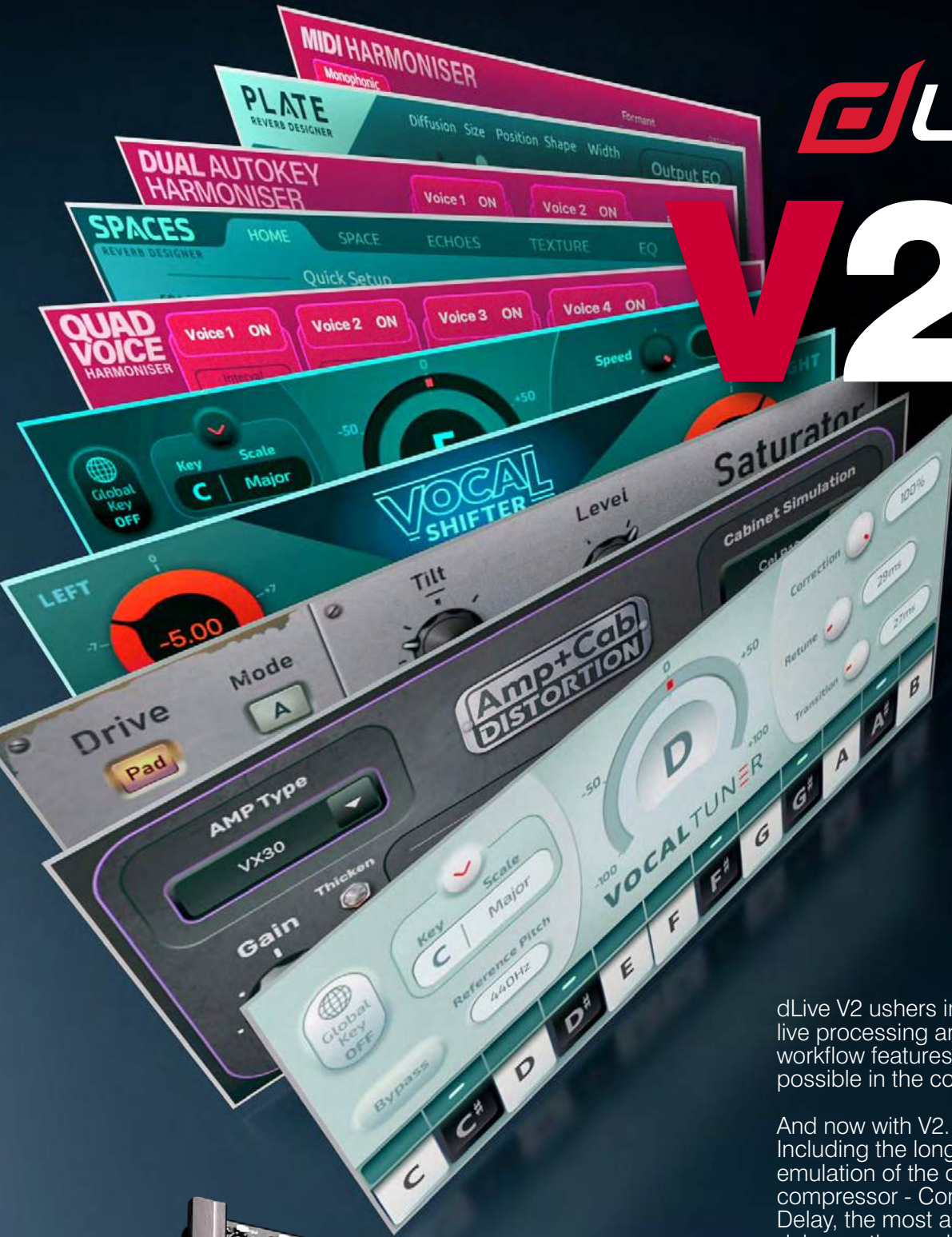
That approach has now been recognised beyond New Zealand. NZICC and VEGA have been named finalists in the Smart Building category at the Inavation Awards, presented at Integrated Systems Europe in Barcelona, a nod to the way the venue’s technology integrates seamlessly as a single, operational whole. For a building already described as an unconventional convention centre, it may well be the first of many such milestones.



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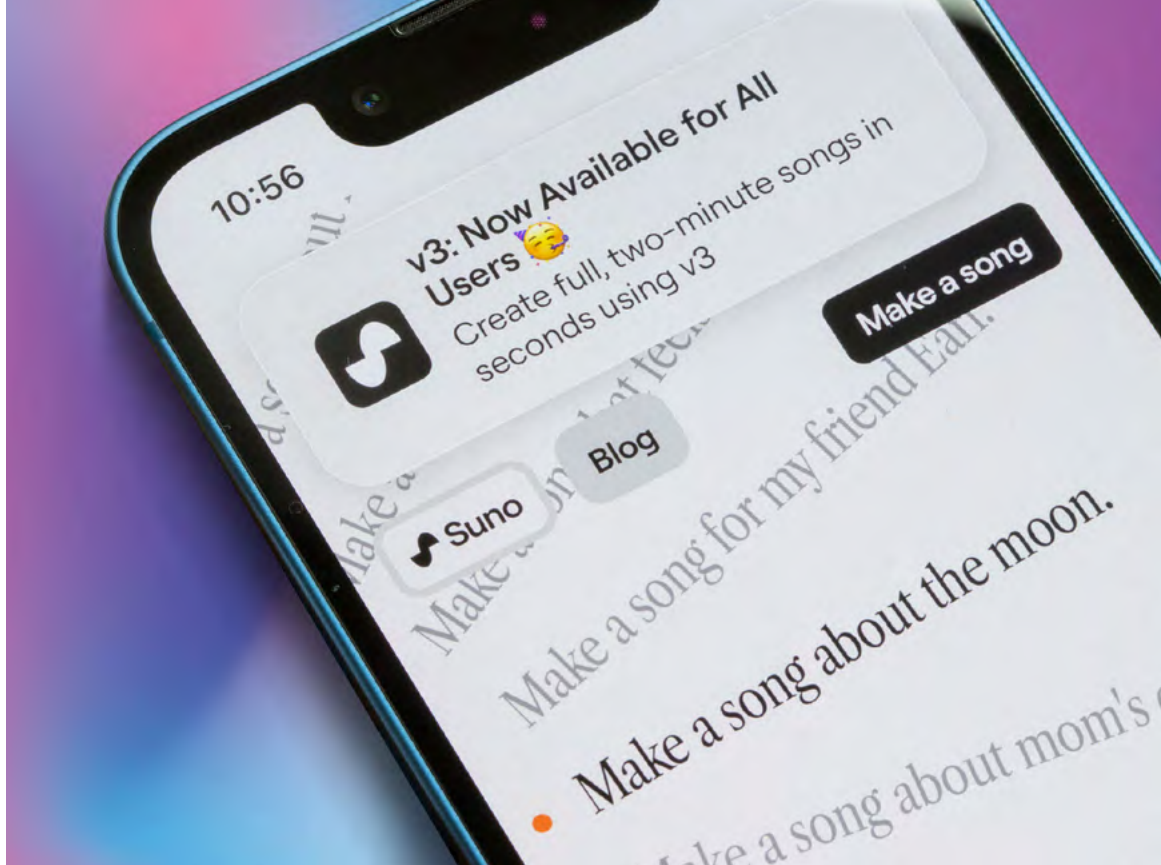


ALLEN & HEATH



EXPERTISE IS EVERYTHING

...Or is it?



While much of today's cutting-edge software encourages us to hand over the reins to AI – to make decisions about everything from EQ curves to song structures – we're also told that surviving in this industry depends on the opposite: emphasising the unique sounds we bring, maintaining our technical expertise, and refining our taste and judgement – the very things that make us human...

But the two concepts – to me at least – seem to contradict one another. On the one hand, the trend in audio software seems to be all about automated processes that, in many instances, wholly replace the needs of an engineer to apply their technical expertise. On the other, our skills and expertise are apparently also the only thing that will set us apart in an AI-dominated future. But the very tools we already use to produce music – and more broadly audio content – seem destined to rob us of the very skills we've worked so hard to develop, along with the desire, it seems, to even apply them.

You only have to use one of the latest real-time resonant peak analyser plugins or automated bus compressors for a short while to realise how quickly these sorts of tools take away your desire to manually craft the parameters of a processor. It's a seductive, slippery slope – one that can also quietly undermine your confidence, making you doubt your own judgement. When that confidence falters, some of the qualities that make your work unique can slip away along with it. In short, the decisions you make as an individual (human) are commonly usurped by AI's predilection for taking over almost every role, and that's dangerous for us humans...

The long-term risk here is that as humans gradually hand over control of most aspects of audio production in all its forms, we may lose not only our understanding of these tools, but also the skills we've spent years honing. And besides, who says AI can do things better, and on what basis is this assertion made? If we are to agree that music is an art form, and that the decisions around every aspect of how a song should be made are

ultimately subjective, then how are the decisions AI makes any better?

What concerns me most is the prospect of a future where human interaction with audio is no longer seen as valuable – or even viable – either technically or artistically. Indeed, the argument doing the rounds today is that AI is already superior in every way, and that humans by comparison are slow and expensive. But these are not measures of art, but rather, manufacturing. It's a mistake to confuse the two.

It's not just the final product that matters – it's the process itself. For audio professionals of all kinds, the process is our passion, our craft, and our livelihood. Moreover, many of us care about it deeply enough that we are also interested in passing our knowledge on to the next generation (who are naturally drawn to music and creativity), if not as a career, then at least as a pursuit worth exploring. To deny the next generation of budding audio enthusiasts and professionals the lived experience of making music as we currently do, is like outsourcing the ride of a perfect wave to a machine: efficient, perhaps, but utterly missing the point.

The future is always uncertain, of course, but if the next era of recording, mixing, mastering, post-production, and sound design is to keep humans at the fulcrum, then the expanding use of AI to automate technical work and guide creative decisions deserves close scrutiny. Otherwise, in a relatively short period of time, our so-called 'unique' human traits of subjectivity and taste will be mercilessly overrun by the efficiencies of AI, which are increasing exponentially.

Dancing With The Devil

If any of this resonates – if you believe you offer clients a distinctive sound that isn't easily replicated, and that they work with you not just for results you produce but for the human perspective you bring – then the next question is unavoidable: are you already using AI-powered tools to improve efficiency, inform artistic decisions, or solve technical problems that once seemed insurmountable?

If you're anything like me, then the answer to this question is a simple 'Yes!' For all my protestations about AI and the automated processes that can undermine my instinct to solve artistic or technical problems myself, I still use these tools every day – and will, in all likelihood, rely on them more and more as time goes by. But whether this is innately a good or bad thing is hard to say with certainty.

One thing I instinctively recognise is that I'm lucky to have been trained over the years in countless audio processes and techniques long before this new era of AI dawned, which gives me the perspective of being able to understand – and more importantly, hear – what works and what doesn't when these new tools are applied.

But one thing is certain, while it's true that some of the newest plugins offer automated processes that conceal at least some of their internal mechanics – which some engineers find frustrating or in some cases disturbing – they sound remarkable, performing aural feats of near-magic. While they're not the best educators of engineering best-practice by a long shot, they nevertheless offer solutions that were science fiction a couple of years ago, opening the door to new ways of recording and mixing.

Take, for example, a simple plugin like Black Salt Audio's Silencer. Not only does this simple, inexpensive tool practically eliminate spill from a hi-hat into a snare mic – one of the most common issues of any drum kit recording over the years – it also has the capacity to perform similar feats of magic across all kinds of recordings, making

the problem of 'spill' and crosstalk between microphones in a live recording vanish like stars after sunrise. Over the course of this year there will likely be a thousand plugins on the market just like it, at which point every form of spill between any instruments will likely have been conquered.

This opens up the prospect of recording in spaces that were previously too noisy or ill-suited to tracking music, and will also encourage engineers to track groups of musicians in one space again – the old-fashioned way – albeit without the concerns now that each mic or instrument could cause problems for others in the space. Phase anomalies will be eliminated and concerns about mistakes and the editing limitations they bring will likely vanish. This is a profound development.

Other plug-ins that use real-time analysis to control resonances and EQ anomalies, like Oeksound's Bloom and Soothe2, or Soundtheory's Gullfoss, also provide effective solutions to problems that engineers previously could often only partially resolve. These plugins have, in some cases, been seen as guilty of concealing their processes, and the companies themselves have been cagey in interviews about how their plugins really work. Regardless, there's no denying the sonic benefits these modern tools bring to the table. Frankly, I wouldn't want to be without them now.

Even a classic tool like SSL's famous bus compressor has been given an automated refresh. The new autoBus plugin by Solid State Logic has an AI engine strapped across it courtesy of Sonible that offers users a viable and remarkable sounding automated solution to mix bus compression – a process that countless operators have failed to grasp (or at least master) over the decades. This plugin is simple yet deceptively sophisticated, and while I already have three analogue stereo SSL bus compressors in the studio here at The Mill, I've used the new autoBus on mixes to great effect

already. It's simple to apply, and dastardly in what it suggests about my future input into the process!

So despite my reservations about AI and other automated processes, which have the tendency to dull our impulse to wrestle with artistic or technical problems ourselves, I use these tools daily, and will almost certainly continue to do so with increasing frequency. Whether that makes me a hypocrite or complicit, I'm not sure.

What I do refute, however, is the claim that AI – because it is more efficient and faster at certain tasks – is therefore objectively better at everything. This is false.

The artistry and craft of making music is a subjective process. And by process, I mean, humans made it... using their minds and bodies in a space, over time. They did not punch it out as a robot might – fast and efficiently. They took time to produce a unique musical outcome that no other process can replace. And perhaps more importantly, everyone involved in this process will carry the memories of having made it with them long into the future. It's a human process, an organic process, which has innate value wholly unrelated to the product that a listener might stream later on. You can't buy it, or indeed sell it. It's a memory that those lucky enough to have experienced this process carry with them for a lifetime.

CX REGULAR, ANDY STEWART

Andy Stewart owns and operates The Mill on Victoria's Bass Coast. He's a highly credentialed producer/engineer who's seen it all in studios for over four decades. He's happy to respond to any pleas for recording or mixing help... contact him at: andy@themill.net.au


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Adamson VGt Rocks The Bowl with *King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard*



Believe it or not, sometimes I go to gigs just to enjoy them, with no intention of writing about them. Such was the case when I made my way to Melbourne's Sidney Myer Music Bowl on Saturday 30 December 2025 with my 14-year-old son to see hometown heroes King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard. It was the second of two nights for the band at The Bowl; the night before, they had performed an orchestral set. This show was designated a 'rock' set. Weeks earlier, I saw them play a modular synth 'rave' set for free at Melbourne's Federation Square. Calling this band 'versatile' doesn't really cover it, and neither does 'prolific', with 27 studio albums to their name released since 2012.

With each album covering totally different sonic territory, The Gizz are an anomaly in the best possible way. There's always a certain consistency in their aesthetic, even though the styles and instrumentation change constantly. They've even stepped outside of western musical tuning and released microtonal work. They're fond of an odd time signature, heartily embrace prog rock, and somehow make it sound like they're both satirising and honouring whatever genre they're playing in.

At the rock show, there's a lot going on. With six members on stage, at any given time, you're hearing drums, bass, up to three guitars, anywhere between one and five vocals, one or two synths, harmonica, flute, and a few other things I couldn't identify by sight or sound. The show opened with 'Field Of Vision' (from their album Flight b741) which blended straight into 'Altered Beast I' (from their album Murder Of The Universe). Total prog rock; intertwined guitar playing in odd time signatures against each other, at least 12 different sections; I have no idea how they remember all of

it. Over the night, they played prog, boogie, blues, 'Dad rock', metal, and late 80s style thrash.

KGATLW affectionately refer to their fans as 'The Weirdo Swarm' and go out of the way to make everyone feel included and safe. It was a beautiful vibe at the show; people in costumes, inflatables being thrown around the mosh pit, weird hats, and a definite celebration of neurodiversity (I'm including my obsessive time signature counting in that). The Bowl was at around 10,000 capacity that night. Around 45 minutes in, totally absorbed by the music, my son, who's already quite the gig veteran, elbowed me and said "Dad - look! No-one's got their phones out! I've never seen that before!" And he was right - not one person taking pics, making 'content' or not being present. They are a special band indeed.

The show sounded absolutely amazing, especially considering how dense their arrangements can be. Multiple vocals, distorted guitars, thundering drums and tight bass were all cooperating in the mix. Nothing was fighting for attention and



VGT MAIN HANGS, E119 SUBS, CS10 UNDERHANGS, CS10 FILLS AND CS10 CENTRE

everything sat beautifully. It is the first time I have honestly been of the opinion that the PA sounded like a studio monitor. I was so in the moment I think it took about an hour before, in between songs, I casually glanced up at the line array covering us, expecting to see a familiar logo, and instead, saw Adamson's.

Well, that's it, I thought, I have to write a story about this now. On the following Monday, I contacted Adam Dullens, proprietor of Australian Adamson distributor Audio Logistics, and enquired about what I had been listening to, and who owns it. Turns out, it was (mostly) Adamson's new VGt line array, and Melbourne production firm Monitor City had taken delivery of it last October.

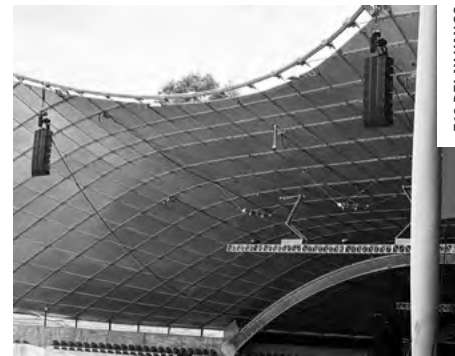
VGt is a large-format line array loudspeaker and the first member in Adamson's Vergence Group. A VGt element includes eight transducers, amplification, a MILAN/AES70 networked DSP endpoint and Autolock rigging. The LF can be switched between Omni and Cardioid modes, and the whole array can be optimised across the full broadband frequency range, or down to a minimum one octave width.

I got on the phone to Monitor City's Director Matt Dufty to find out more about the PA, and what they'd been doing with it since delivery.

"I went to the Vergence launch in Canada in October 2024 to have a listen and see what it was about," explains Matt. "We already own a significant amount of Adamson PA, and I realised that their new VGS sub was basically an Adamson E119 with a powered module in it. That meant if we bought VGt, we didn't need to replace our whole stock at once, just top boxes. I heard it, was blown away, and decided we'd get some kit over here."



VGT MAIN HANG, CS10 UNDERHANG, FLOWN E119 SUBS AND CS10 SIDE FILL



E12 DELAY HANGS



PHOTO CREDIT: TOM GOLSWORTHY

Monitor City took delivery of 20 elements of VGt in October 2025. “We literally got it on a Wednesday and put it on a truck on a Friday for a show the next week,” recalls Matt. “VGt uses all the same drive software, Adamson AI, as our existing stock, which is brilliant. I can sit up in the office, draw a PA, and then that file can go downstairs into a drive rack. VGt is like a big Adamson CS line array cabinet, but with five channels, not two. We used our existing looms to plug it all in. It was so easy to integrate.”

Monitor City bought two sets of rigging to split up the PA as necessary. “The rigging is really well done,” observes Matt. “You can have four VGt cabinets on a dolly, and then there's an underhang frame for S10 or CS10 line array elements that sits under it in the dolly. You just fly it out and then connect the bottom cabinets. We bought the top cabinets because it matches all of our subs and fill cabinets. We didn't have to go out and buy a whole new ecosystem. It just fits in nicely.”

The first gig Monityor City's VGt ever went out on was at Sydney Showground's The Dome, a challenge for most PAs. “Because it is a literal huge wooden dome, it's a weird room acoustically,” explains Matt. “The gig was a launch for graphic design software company Canva, which was being broadcast. We hung the PA and tested it with a DPA headset on stage. The warmth coming out of the PA was incredible. It's got a lot of firepower too, with 151dB of peak SPL. We've since done a wide range of gigs with it, including dance parties, corporate gigs, and of course King Gizzard, and it just keeps delivering.”



PHOTO CREDIT: TOM GOLSWORTHY



PHOTO CREDIT: TOM GOLSWORTHY



PHOTO CREDIT: TOM GOLSWORTHY

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Knowing full well there had been another brand of PA hanging in The Bowl before the King Gizzard shows, I asked Matt how that came to be taken out and VGt put in just for those two nights. “We have a bit of history with the band, and provided Adamson PA for their music festival, Gizz Fest,” outlines Matt. “We decided to pitch for the gigs, and the orchestra package as well. Getting it was a double whammy, as we were doing The Bowl for the first time and throwing an orchestra into the mix. We were really pleased with the results. It was cranking all the way up to the back of the hill but was nicely contained as well.”

The full PA consisted of left right hangs of VGt, 10 elements per side, with CS10 underhangs, augmented by six E119 cardioid subs flown behind the mains and 12 ground stacked. Side balcony fill was courtesy of four CS10 elements per side, with another four CS10 in a centre hang. The delay hangs on the shell were eight E12 elements per side. Miscellaneous front and other fills included S10P and CS7Ps point source cabinets. The results, which I thoroughly enjoyed, were stunning in their clarity.

“Our system tech, Dan O’Callaghan, came to me and said ‘look, we could probably drop a couple of cabinets from this design’ - no one’s usually coming to tell me that!” chuckles Matt. “The concept of hanging up as much PA as you can to get as much headroom as you can is pretty obvious. But PA technology is getting to the point where, if you’ve got weight restrictions, you can use a few less boxes and still get the coverage and SPL you need.”

There’s a lot of bookings on the cards for Monitor City’s VGt rig. “We’re doing a big corporate party on Cockatoo Island, and then we’ve got the Port Fairy Folk Festival after that,” concludes Matt. “VGt will be covering the main stage of the festival, and there’s four stages of various sized Adamson rigs, so that’s going to be exciting!”

PHOTO CREDIT: TOM GOLSWORTHY



PHOTO CREDIT: TOM GOLSWORTHY



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BIGGER
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DIVA AT AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM OF PERFORMING ARTS, ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE, ON DISPLAY FROM 11 DECEMBER 2025 TO 26 APRIL 2026. PHOTO CREDIT: ASTRID MULDER



OPENING NIGHT. PHOTO CREDIT: MARK GAMBINO



OPENING NIGHT. PHOTO CREDIT: MARK GAMBINO



OPENING NIGHT. PHOTO CREDIT: MARK GAMBINO



PHOTO CREDIT: ASTRID MULDER



PHOTO CREDIT: ASTRID MULDER



Quest Goes Full DIVA

THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM OF THE PERFORMING ARTS OPENS IN MELBOURNE

Australia's newest museum, The Australian Museum of the Performing Arts (AMPA), located in Melbourne's Hamer Hall, opened with a bang on the night of December 10, 2025 with a grand opening party themed 'Divas Through the Ages'. The theme was inspired by their first exhibition, DIVA, opening to the public the next morning.

Hundreds of famous and fashionable guests walked the red carpet and embraced the theme of the evening, with stand out looks from notable Australian divas including Courtney Act and Reuben Kaye. Our very own Kate Miller-Heidke performed with her band, as her legendary dress atop a swaying pole from her 2020 Eurovision entry 'Zero Gravity' loomed above the crowd.

AMPA was created to showcase the Australian Performing Arts Collection, an incredibly culturally important collection of almost 850,000 items collected by Arts Centre Melbourne over the last half-century. We're talking items like Peter Allen's maracas, Nick Cave's visual journal,

Kylie Minogue's gold hot pants, and a cloak worn by Dame Nellie Melba. There's something for everyone in the collection, with every major performing arts discipline represented, from Dame Joan Sutherland to Chrissy Amphlett, from AC/DC to the Australian Ballet.

It was totally appropriate to open the museum with DIVA, an exhibition developed by London's Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). The exhibition features more than 250 objects including 60 items drawn from the V&A's Collection, items from Arts Centre Melbourne's Australian Performing Arts Collection, and items loaned from across the world.

Running until 26 April 2026, the exhibition showcases legendary divas including Maria Callas, Judy Garland, Joan Crawford, Grace Jones, Cher, Prince, Tina Turner, Elton John, Madonna, Adele, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Whitney Houston, P!nk, Bjork, Billie Eilish, and more.

Representing Australia's contributions to diva-dom are Dame Nellie Melba, Peter Allen, Marcia Hines, Kylie Minogue, Olivia Newton-John, Kate Miller-Heidke, Chrissy Amphlett and Dame Edna Everage. Other more recent trailblazing Australian divas include Jessica Mauboy, Amy Taylor of Amyl and the Sniffers, Reuben Kaye, and Meow Meow.

The voice of the diva is amplified by a sonic experience designed by legendary London-based sound designer Gareth Fry. Which brings me to the technical heart of AMPA, and their partnership with manufacturer Quest Engineering, born and headquartered in Melbourne. Quest are the official Technology Partner of AMPA, and worked closely with Arts Centre Melbourne and engineering consultants Aston Consulting to ensure that the museum was provided with audio infrastructure that could accommodate any requirement as it reconfigures for every exhibition.

“Quest are an Australian company, and it feels right for the brand to be the Technology Partner of the Australian Museum of the Performing Arts,” says Shane Cannon, Director of Sales at Quest distributor Group Technologies. “We’re part of the Australian arts community, involved with Arts Centre Melbourne, and this is a stage we want to be on.”

With Aston Consulting in charge of the technology overview, Arts Centre Melbourne staff determined how many audio channels the space would need, how signal would be patched and distributed, and how many speaker outputs would be built into the space. They had to bear in mind that the museum is a completely open space; the walls, divisions, and sections of DIVA are specific to that exhibition, and will change completely in six months. That will be the ongoing technical reality of running audio in the venue.

The backbone of the audio system is a Dante network, designed to carry 64 channels. 16 four channel Quest QXD-2KD Dante-enabled power amplifiers with DSP provide enough amplification channels for the whole network. In addition, two Quest QXD-5KD Dante-enabled power amplifiers are available to run subwoofers.

All of the amps sit in a central rack, with a physical patching system of outputs similar to a lighting patch bay. “On the back of the rack, you've got connections for the outputs of each amplifier channel,” explains Shane. “And then there's all these speaker leads connected to the speaker patch points throughout the space – you just physically patch up which channel you want to go to each point.” Exhibitions are typically run on industry standard software QLab, but the Dante network can accommodate input from pretty much any other kind of set-up.

While there are 64 Dante channels and 64 speaker outputs, AMPA knew they would almost never actually need that many loudspeakers. Their initial stock consists of 24 Quest Qi5 2-way 5"s, eight Qi25 2-way dual 5"s, and eight Qi12S 12" subwoofers. All Quest loudspeaker processing is run in the QXD amps.

The grand opening party was even run on a Quest PA, with Kate Miller-Heidke's stunning operatic range more than handled by the system. “We provided Arts Centre Melbourne's Events Team with a Quest HPI system,” confirms Shane, “There were six HPI110s 10" 2-ways handling front of house through the space, along with two HPI12S subwoofers.”

Attending the opening with Shane, Quest co-founder Mark Ladewig, and a group of engineering consultants and audio pros, we were a very conservatively dressed group among the many divas, drag queens, performing arts legends, and celebrities. Really, we're all more used to working with divas than actually being them! Being there for the tech, I can report the HPI system cut through the full Hamer Hall foyer with assurance, and the audio in the exhibition itself was excellent without ever attracting attention to itself, in the best possible way. AMPA is an asset to the Australian performing arts community, and Quest are the perfect partner.

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AUDIO TECH SPECS

Amplification and Processing

Quest QXD-2KD

Compact 1RU, 4 x 500W Class-D amplifier designed for high-output installations, capable of operating at 8Ω, 4Ω, 70V, or 100V. It utilises UMAC Class-D technology for ultra-low distortion, high efficiency, and precise full-bandwidth performance. It includes an onboard 32bit/96kHz DSP with FIR/IIR filtering, RMS and peak limiters, and integrated Quest custom speaker libraries.

For control and monitoring, the QXD-2KD features a front-panel TFT display with a rotary encoder, alongside RJ45 (network port) and GPIO for external control and monitoring. The RJ45 port allows for integration into networked AV systems, providing comprehensive remote monitoring and control.

Reliable operation is ensured through universal mains compatibility and fan-assisted temperature-dependent cooling.



QXD AMPS

Quest QXD-5KD

A high-powered, 2RU, 4 x 1250W Class-D amplifier delivering up to 2500W per channel in bridged mode and supporting 70V/100V operation. Built on UMAC Class-D architecture, this amplifier offers exceptional dynamic range, ultra-low distortion, and highly efficient power delivery. It includes an integrated 32bit/96kHz DSP for precise signal management, featuring FIR/IIR filters, peak and RMS limiters, and onboard Quest speaker presets.

For control, a high-resolution TFT display and LED-illuminated encoder are available on the front panel. Network control and GPIO are accessible via the RJ45 port, allowing for remote management and integration into broader AV systems.

The amplifier features Neutrik speakON outputs and powerCON mains connections for professional-grade reliability.

Key Specifications:

- Channels: 4 x 750W (Low-Z), 2 x 2500W (bridged), 2 x 1500W (70V/100V)
- DSP: 32bit/96kHz FIR/IIR Filters, limiters, speaker libraries
- Mounting: 2RU rack
- Control: RJ45 and GPIO, front TFT display

Loudspeakers



Quest Qi5

A premium 5-inch loudspeaker designed for installations. Its crafted timber cabinet enhances acoustic integrity by minimising resonance, while advanced driver technology ensures precise reproduction of both vocals and music. Versatile mounting options and a subtle, refined design allow the Qi5 to blend seamlessly into various environments such as bars, restaurants, and intimate commercial spaces.

Key Specifications:

- Impedance: 16 Ω
- Transducers: 1" HF and 5" LF
- Dispersion: 120° x 80°
- Horn: Rotatable
- Power: 135W RMS
- Mounting: horizontal and vertical brackets

Quest Qi25

A dual 5-inch configuration in a two-way passive design engineered for balanced and efficient sound reproduction. Its architectural integration features a smooth front acoustic grille and a rotatable waveguide that provides consistent directivity. Designed to deliver robust output with extended mid-bass performance, the Qi25 is ideal for applications where both visual appeal and superior acoustics are paramount.

Key Specifications:

- Impedance: 8 Ω
- Transducers: 1" HF & dual 5" LF
- Dispersion: 120° x 80°
- Horn: Rotatable
- Power: 250W RMS
- Mounting: horizontal and vertical brackets

Quest Qi12

The Qi12S subwoofer delivers controlled low-frequency reinforcement in a discreet, compact form factor. Its proprietary long-excursion 12-inch driver and hybrid horn-loaded enclosure provide high output and extended bass response, ideal for small to medium-sized installations. The low-profile hardwood cabinet allows for hidden placement under stages, within joinery, or in ceiling cavities, ensuring minimal visual impact. Designed to integrate seamlessly with Qi Series loudspeakers and QXD amplifiers, the Qi12S offers dedicated DSP presets and control for consistent, high-performance system operation.

Key Specifications:

- Impedance: 8 Ω
- Transducers: 12" LF
- Power: 300W RMS



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BEHIND THE CURTAIN AT LDI 2025

ADJ STAND



THE NEW STAGE HOG CONSOLE

A LIGHTING NERD'S FIELD REPORT

LDI 2025 reinforced why Las Vegas remains the global proving ground for live production technology. With a bigger show floor, deeper demos and a noticeable shift toward practical, tour-ready innovation, this year's show was less about hype and more about tools designed by people who actually use them.

Las Vegas in early December is always a spectacle, but this year the Strip had an added technical edge. Thousands of lighting designers, production technicians, system integrators and live-event specialists descended on the Las Vegas Convention Center for Live Design International (LDI) 2025.

Long established as the global meeting point for the live production industry, LDI's 2025 edition confirmed its status. With approximately 14,000 attendees, around 350 exhibitors and a visibly expanded show floor, the event felt confident, busy and energised. While Vegas was also hosting the National Finals Rodeo and UFC 323, the lighting and production community firmly owned the week.

Most major lighting brands were present, alongside large-format LED manufacturers, rigging specialists, control system developers and power distribution suppliers.

“LDI isn’t just a trade show, it’s where creative players come to play.”



AVOLITES D9 330



THE LIVING LEGEND OF FIXTURE DESIGN, RICHARD BELLIVEAU



ETC'S NEW GIGGAPIX WASH



ETC MEGAPIX

Day One Highlights

The Robe family once again commanded attention with a large-footprint stand and several next-generation products from Avolites, LSC and Anolis. The Power Dolly drew strong interest; it’s a rolling base with integrated battery power and wireless DMX, with real potential to change how outdoor and remote installations are approached.

The iForte LTX demonstrated serious long-throw capability, while the WTF (Wash Twist Flash) strobe fully lived up to its name. A clever twist this year was using the fixtures’ own display screens as programmable visual elements during demos, a normally hidden part turned into a feature.

Martin Professional introduced the MAC Encore 2 and the ELP Manet Fresnel, the latter arguably one of the most feature-rich Fresnels currently available.

ETC surprised many with the sheer volume of new products, including the Hog 5 console range, MegaPix and GiggaPix washes and the reborn DataFlash 5000. A modernised take on the classic DataFlash wasn’t on my bingo card, but the refinement and features suggest it may soon appear on touring riders. Rather than chasing spectacle, ETC focused on depth, power and practical design. The stand also featured the ETC Zeo and you can definitely see Richard Belliveau’s ‘fingerprints’ on new offerings from ETC.



ETC STAND



ELATION PARAGON LT



ELATION REBEL DARTZ



SEAN DIXON ON THE EVENT LIGHTING STAND



GLP'S NEXUS BATTERY POWERED RANGE

Day Two Observations

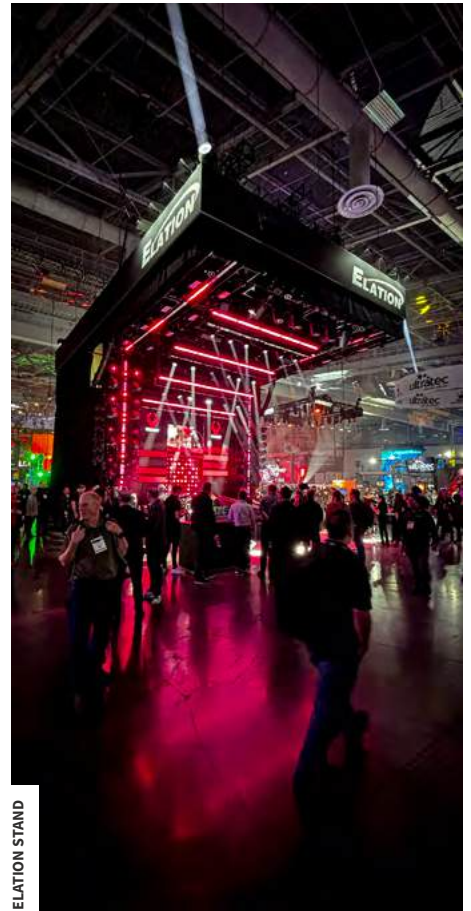
Elation pulled out all the stops for their prime-position “Experience Tomorrow” stand, which won the Most Creative Use of Light Award at LDI. They continued building momentum with fixtures like the Paragon LT, Rebel Dartz and Proteus Radius, reinforcing their push into high-output, IP5x-rated weatherproof units. Elation also showcased the Volt+ battery-powered fittings and the Helio Track, a cost-effective LiDAR-based follow-spotting system. Their recent addition of X-Laser expands their offerings into traditional laser ranges.

GLP went all out with a bespoke 3,948,000-lumen installation: the giant JDC Maxx, a homage to the ever-popular JDC range. Built from 42 JDC2s and 18 JDC1 Bursts, measuring 4.2m high and 3m wide, it was a sight to behold, pushing out an almost unhealthy level of light. GLP also continued to innovate with accessories for the Mad Maxx, making it more versatile than simply being the biggest moving light around. On the opposite end of the scale, they launched the Nexus range of wireless battery units with magnet mounts and app/DMX control.

Indu Electrical showcased the essential backbone of any production: reliable, no-nonsense power distribution that quietly keeps every rig running.

It was refreshing to see Australian company Event Lighting on the LDI floor. Sean Dixon walked us through the PAR F range, an IP65 LED PAR with electronic frost, along with the latest Antari haze, smoke, CO₂ jet and scent machines.

“LASER sources have been fully embraced by the lighting world.”



ELATION STAND



GLP JDC MAXX WITH HUMAN FOR SCALE



GLP JDC MAXX



INDU ELECTRICAL STAND



CLAYPAKY ULTIMO HYBRID



INNER CIRCLE STAND

Day Three Observations

We kicked off day three at Blizzard Lighting, a brand not widely known in Australia. Blizzard brought plenty of fun and creativity to their stand, this year styled as an '80s Apollo Mission ground-control centre.

The two major US lighting distributors took out the largest footprints:

- Inner Circle Distribution (ICD) with Claypaky, Madrix, Roxx, Portman and Astera. Astera showed strong refinement with the QuickSpot, QuickPunch and the SolaBulb, an Edison Screw-style bulb with a zoomable Fresnel lens. Claypaky launched the new Sharpy.

- ACT Entertainment with grandMA, MDG, Ayrtan, ZacTracks, SGM and Hippotizer.

Chauvet's stand packed a lot of visual impact with super impressive timed light shows demonstrating the growing range. The Maverick range continues to gain strength with the Maverick Force and Storm offering great value in IP65 housings. The ePix range has been an impressive addition to the Chauvet offerings. Riding the wave of success from the COLORado PXL Curve, Chauvet have also launched the PXL Curve, a single source head and the COLORado Edge, a really neat little footlight system with built-in cable management.



ACT LIGHTING STAND



AYRTON EAGLE LONG THROW PROFILE



CHAUVET MAVERICK STORM PROFILE



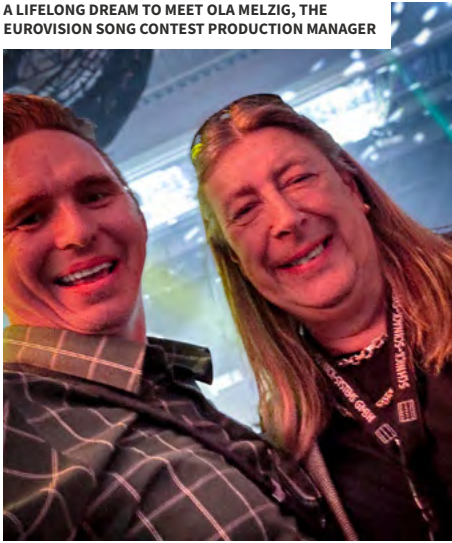
CHAUVET STAND



CHAUVET EPIX RANGE

“There were some genuine surprises when it came to new gear on show this year.”

A LIFELONG DREAM TO MEET OLA MELZIG, THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST PRODUCTION MANAGER



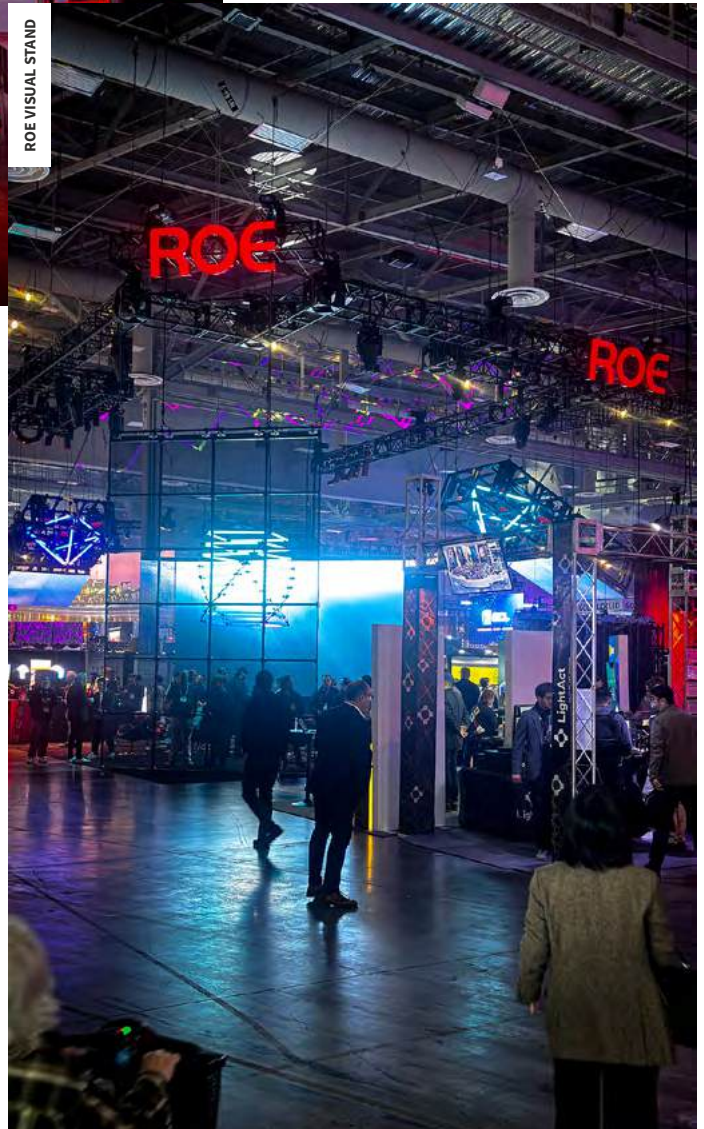
DJ POWER HK-1 SMOKE RING MACHINE THAT SOME SILLY SAUSAGE HAS STUCK GOOGLY EYES ON

VECTORWORKS STAND



VUEPIX INFLIED STAND

ROE VISUAL STAND



ROE Visual showcased the Omni Tube, a 360-degree video tube with a wide range of mounting options, and the Vanish Air, a 6.9mm-pitch LED product boasting 95% transparency. Its immaculate cable management and lightweight design made it one of the most impressive transparent LED solutions on the floor.

LED screen representation was strong overall. As the gigantic ISE show continues to expand, many LED manufacturers appear to be exploring opportunities to exhibit in spaces outside the overwhelming noise of Barcelona in February.

Across the final days, the conversation was dominated by distributed control, web-based tracking systems, compact laser fixtures and modular LED solutions. Many exhibitors focused less on headline launches and more on real-world upgrades, lighter weight, faster setup, better power efficiency and smarter integration.

My prize for the best novelty product on show has to go to the DJ Power HK-1, a smoke ring blower with LED bling mouth. I'm not 100% sure on how I would use this on a show, but damn it's cool.

Final Thoughts

LDI 2025 reinforced that this is a show built by, and for, the people who actually use the gear. Products were demonstrated under load, systems were shown in realistic environments and conversations were grounded in real touring and installation experience.

LDI isn't just about new toys, it's about context, workflow and the evolving relationship between creative ambition and production reality. If the scale, energy and innovation on display this year are anything to go by, the live production industry remains firmly in forward motion.

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MadisonAV

goes MI



KEN KYLE SPEAKING AT THE MELBOURNE RETAIL EVENT

CEO KEN KYLE IS ENJOYING 'WORKING IN RETAIL'

The last six months have heralded more than a few changes in both the Australian audio distribution landscape and the perception and market influence of brands within it.

Things really kicked off at the Integrate tradeshow last August, when MadisonAV made their debut as the distributor of the full HARMAN range, including all of their retail product. It came as they unleashed the news that Canberra's Elite Event Technology had purchased a Qudos Bank Arena-sized fleet of JBL VTX A-Series top-of-the-line PA, single-handedly bringing the brand back into the mainstream of high-end production.

With a completely new portfolio and market vertical to address, MadisonAV hit the ground running to build capability, investing in excellent talent from the retail sales and marketing sectors nationwide. While the DJ and musical instrument (MI) retail channel represented a new area for the business, CEO Ken Kyle has been open about the company's deliberate approach to learning the category and surrounding itself with experienced specialists.

"It is a new vertical for us, and that's why we had to very quickly put together a dedicated team," says Ken. "We're already getting some traction in the market, only a few months in. We have some notable names in the team that have been connected to the vertical for a long time. They've come on board in sales, marketing, and business development roles. Our General Manager of Sales, Robert Lackey, has a huge amount of experience

in that area. He's applying decades of retail audio experience to build a more structured, intentional dealer network that clarifies who we work with and how we support them. The result is tighter alignment between manufacturers, distributor and retailers, leading to better in-store execution, stronger partnerships, and improved outcomes for end users."

With Harman shifting from split distribution model to a single distributor within a relatively short timeframe, MadisonAV had to make a significant investment in working capital and stock. "We needed to get the message out there that if it's HARMAN Pro AV in Australia, you now get it from Madison AV," continues Ken. "And we needed to do it with some haste to start to see R.O.I. Robert and I did an initial tour of duty of retailers around the country, and we got some warts-and-all feedback about the HARMAN portfolio and how it sat in the market. After that, we realised we needed to announce ourselves and pull all the key players together in one place."

The first iteration of that idea came to fruition in an event held at Melbourne's hip Collingwood Yards on December 3, 2025. The pre-Christmas gathering introduced the new MadisonAV Retail team to their MI partners and the broader Victorian studio and broadcast communities. The evening



offered guests the chance to put faces to names and get a sneak peak at products coming down the HARMAN pipeline.

Event Technology having the most significant PA sale in the vertical for quite some time was an important step for us as well, and it certainly did raise awareness of the brand across all of the pro verticals.”

The MI audio retail environment in Australia breaks down into a few sectors; regional or small musical retailers who mainly supply instruments but can sell audio when someone asks, DJ and tech retailers who do a regular trade in monitors and portable PA, and larger and diversified retailers who also have installation and/or production arms. The latter category is a large market, and a more complex one for a distributor to service.

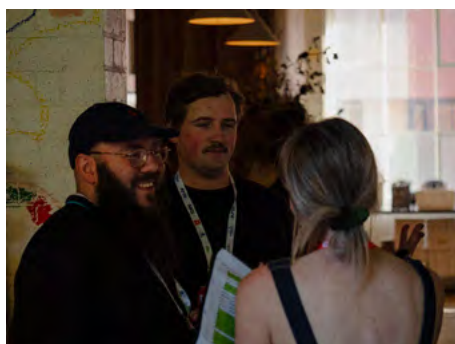
“The thing with the big companies with install or production arms is they are saturated with many, many brands,” agrees Ken. “They have to make commercial decisions as to what they’re going to range; you can’t range everything from everybody. Some of those companies own JBL SRX and are tendering everything from theatres and venues right down to smaller school installations. There’s nothing in our range as far as audio goes that is not in their wheelhouse. We’ve met with these businesses, and in some cases, they were an existing JBL dealer, and in some cases, they weren’t. We’ve retained business that was there, we’ve grown in some cases, and some are still in discussion. As a product offering, we’ve got to have something unique and special, and I think we certainly have that in JBL, AKG and Soundcraft.”

I personally dislike split distribution models in a market as small as Australia, having been around the traps long enough to see them all inevitably fail. I told Ken that I was glad, for the market’s sake, when HARMAN changed their model. “I think it’s become much easier for everyone,” concedes Ken. “As far as HARMAN product goes, there’s no more silos. It’s one product range and it’s a simple message. MadisonAV are a mature business with established market verticals. We have a terrific Technical Sales Support Team, both pre-sales and post-sales. We make our pre-sales technical team market-facing. The resources are there to assist customers with designs and proposals. We do

“We chose to do the first event in Melbourne because that’s where a lot of our retail staff are based, as are a lot of the head offices of the retail groups.” Ken offers. “We have more events for Sydney and Brisbane in planning. I think change works best when it’s discussed and there’s collaboration before it’s implemented. Everyone agrees that there’s some adjustments needed in the pricing structure. All the partners want to know what’s next in the product roadmap, what’s new across the portfolio, and what they can expect. When HARMAN decided to refresh the retail audio range over the past few years, they did so model by model, and by the time they finished, it’s almost time start again. It never really stops.”

While concentrating on the retail audio market, the event proved that there’s been an undeniable halo effect caused by JBL’s recent success with VTX A-Series and SRX Series high-end PAs.

“There’s a lot of awareness in the retail market of JBL VTX A-Series, and I think we’ve done a great job of marketing it since 2022 when we took it on, then launched it at Star City in 2023,” evaluates Ken. “We really got things moving, doing a lot of festivals and shows, and every time we did, we got amazing feedback. We had some prominent Australian acts and tier one artists partnering with us, and everyone was very pleased with the results. Positive stories attached to the JBL logo in the local environment are always going to have a halo effect. There’s been a lot of awareness that JBL is certainly ‘back’ in that big end of town touring market. The announcement of Elite





pre-delivery checks and firmware updates, and we even offer commissioning assistance on complex projects. The more product we have, the more people we attract. And once customers use our services, they realise that we're going to be a great value-add to their business."

One of the great value-adds MadisonAV is offering to both HARMAN and their customers is a dedicated facility to experience the range, and new technology like FLUX:: Immersive audio processing. "We've just finalised the establishment of our Experience Centre here in Sydney," Ken enthuses. "We've secured a new premises for our New South Wales warehousing as of February, and the entire warehouse here in Silverwater will be repurposed into the Experience Centre. We believe that will drive things forward and help our customers by having somewhere to demo immersive audio, line arrays, and big box PA to their customers."

With MadisonAV's roots in telecommunications and hard-core corporate AV, how is Ken liking the new market? "I'm really enjoying working in retail!" jokes Ken. "My personal hobbies have always led me to music stores. Combining a bit of work with my hobbies makes dealing with this market extremely enjoyable. MI retailers are a great group of people; they're passionate, they are or have been DJs or musicians, or just really into the technology. They've been really accepting of us and given us fair opportunity."



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FANTASTIC NEWS FOR EVENTS FANTASTIC

International Cooperation

Modular Backdrops (A brand of Events Fantastic), and Mod Scenes (US) have announced a strategic distributorship partnership that brings together two of the event decor industry's most beloved independent businesses. Event producers across Australia can now access a wider selection of durable, 3D, and tech-adaptable staging backdrops, backed by the personalised service that only independent companies can deliver.

The partnership reflects both companies' commitment to innovation, quality craftsmanship, and the belief that exceptional events deserve exceptional service and solutions.

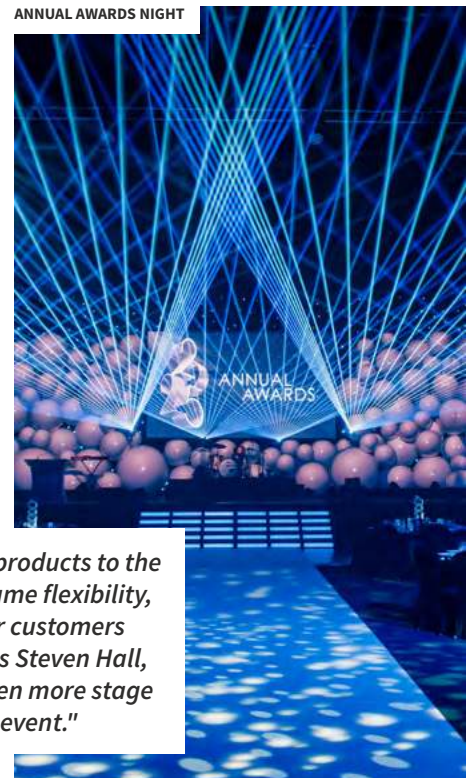
Event Fantastic's Modular Backdrops have long been the top choice in Australia for events that require clean seamless three-dimensional aesthetics for corporate stage sets, gala awards, and exhibitions. And now the Australian events market has access to Mod Scenes' versatile range of modular panel designs and DMX lifters.

After a decade as a production director for churches, concerts, and special events, Steven Hall, owner of Mod Scenes, realised he needed a simpler stage design solution that was less time-consuming yet visually compelling. This inspired his first modular set and the beginning of Mod Scenes, now the highest-rated stage design company in North America.

Previously competitors in the US rental market, both owners recognised the need for independently-owned solutions in the event space. "It's clear that we can do more together," says Thomas Brown, owner of Modular Backdrops and its parent company, Events Fantastic Australia. "As a two-way distribution partner, we're excited to bring Mod Scenes' scenic panels and DMX lifters to the Australian market, and expand our reach with Modular Backdrops in the US."

"Together, we can offer a wider array of products to the live production industry, but with the same flexibility, one-on-one support, and speed that our customers have loved for the past 10 years," echoes Steven Hall, owner of Mod Scenes. "Now we have even more stage decor options that can scale to any size event."

ANNUAL AWARDS NIGHT





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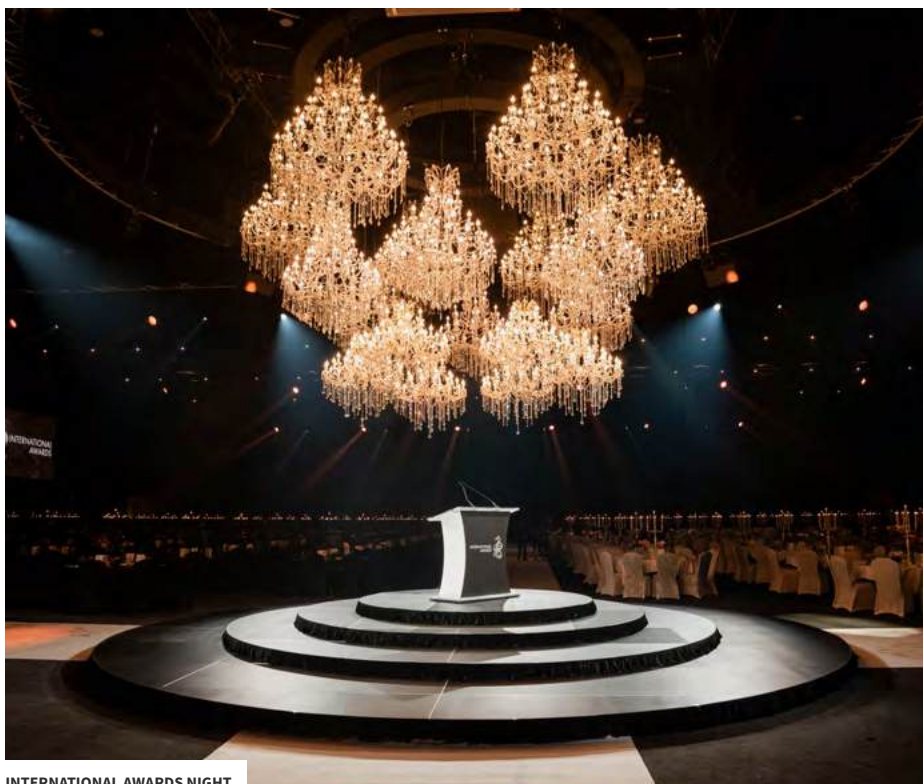
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Modular Backdrops' award-winning Augmented Projection Mapping technology (recognised with the 2018 Special Events Gala Awards for Best New Product or Technology) transforms event spaces into immersive visual environments. 3D panels create an uninterrupted canvas for high-resolution content, while compatibility with standard pipe and drape or truss rigging means AV companies can integrate it with their existing inventory.

Mod Scenes and Modular Backdrops are both known for creative applications and quick setup times. Modular Backdrops' tool-free, single-action connection mechanism dramatically reduces installation time and results in completely hidden hardware. It's the ideal backdrop for projection mapping applications, where competitors' visible connection hardware disrupts the visual experience.

The partnership was officially launched at the LDI (Live Design International) trade show in Las Vegas during the New Technologies Breakfast on December 7, 2025. Attendees got to experience the fully illuminated display of backdrops at one of the most high-tech conferences of the year.



INTERNATIONAL AWARDS NIGHT



OUT OF THIS WORLD AFTER PARTY



OUT OF THIS WORLD AFTER PARTY

International Recognition

Following on the heels of the Mod Scenes announcement, Events Fantastic Australia has been named a finalist for Cater+Event's 2026 Gala Awards. The awards encapsulate the spirit of the events industry and celebrate the exceptional accomplishments of industry leaders.

Nominated for the 2025 Ray White Connect Conference, Events Fantastic is a finalist in the Best Event Produced for a Corporate or Association category. Held in August at the Gold Coast Convention Centre and Star Event Centre, a sold-out group of over 3,000 delegates enjoyed staging, audiovisual systems, lighting, decor, entertainment and logistics provided by Events Fantastic.

"We are honoured to be nominated for the incredible event we produced for the Ray White group, and to be recognised alongside such impressive nominees," said Thomas Brown, Director of Events Fantastic. "This recognition reflects the dedication and creative vision of our entire team, as well as the outstanding collaborative relationship we've built with the Ray White Group."

Events Fantastic is joined by fellow nominees including the Delta Airlines Centennial Gala produced by BlueprintNYC, and Robinhood Presents Crypto Launch produced by the Total Management Group.

This nomination marks Events Fantastic's third recognition at the Gala Awards. The company was previously nominated for two Gala Awards in 2018, taking home the win for Best New Product/Technology for their innovative augmented projection mapping onto their 3D Modular Panels.

Winners of the 2026 Gala Awards will be announced on March 3 at Catersource + The Special Event 2026 in Los Angeles.

www.eventsfantastic.com.au

Sometimes it all gets too much...



The *Support Act Wellbeing Helpline* is a free, confidential counselling service that is available to anyone working in Australian music who needs to talk to someone about any aspect of their wellbeing.



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Albany Entertainment Centre CHOOSSES ANOLIS

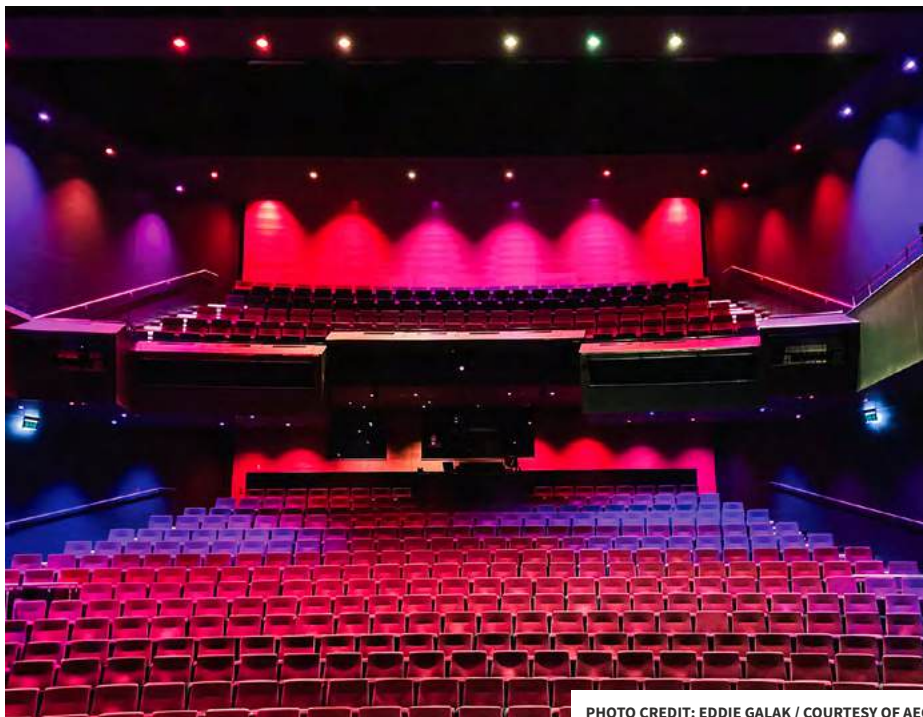


PHOTO CREDIT: EDDIE GALAK / COURTESY OF AEC

Albany Entertainment Centre (AEC) is a contemporary performing arts and events venue famous for its stunningly cool architectural design, located on the waterfront in Albany, about 420kms south east of Perth in Western Australia, which has upgraded the auditorium lighting of its main theatre space – Princess Royal Theatre – from incandescent sources to LED, utilising over 100 Anolis luminaires picked from different Ambiane ranges.

The Anolis fixtures were supplied via Anolis' Australian distributor, Jands, and the project was overseen for them by architectural specialist Eddie Galak, who designed the new lighting scheme from scratch in conjunction with AEC's technical manager, Erik Loew.

The 618-seat Princess Royal Theatre now has 14 Anolis Ambiane XP56s, 48 Ambiane SP16 'tiltable' fixtures and 24 Ambiane HP111s illuminating the main auditorium. 30 XP56 Ambiane Pendant remotes are rigged in AEC's studio space also for audience lighting.

Work on the project had started pre-COVID, initially envisioned as a white LED installation for the seating area. However, as the cleaning lights also needed to be upgraded – requiring 300 lux minimum – it made sense to achieve this using the same system if possible.

Everything then shifted to RGBW when Erik recognised the value of house lighting that could deliver excellent whites while also being integrated into the stage lighting control for specific events, immersing the audiences in colour and atmosphere and making them part of the action!

A colour-changing LED option had the further scope of being offered to visiting productions to embellish or blend in with their stage lighting if required.

As Australia's 'Great Southern' region's main multi purpose theatre space, AEC hosts a diverse range of productions and events, from touring shows and concerts to community events and conferences.

At the front of the stage and on the bridge above the orchestra pit in the Princess Royal Theatre, the XP56s are fitted with 20 degree reflectors and louvres. Underneath the first catwalk are six XP56s with 45 degree reflectors and six with 20 degree reflector plus louvres. On the second catwalk are eight fitted with 60 degree reflectors.

Twelve of the recessed HP111s have 60 degree reflectors and yokes, and 12 have the 60 degree reflector without the yoke, all with the 2700K white chip.

One of the challenges of the overall lighting design was to make the new installation look and feel like the old one while naturally being far more efficient.

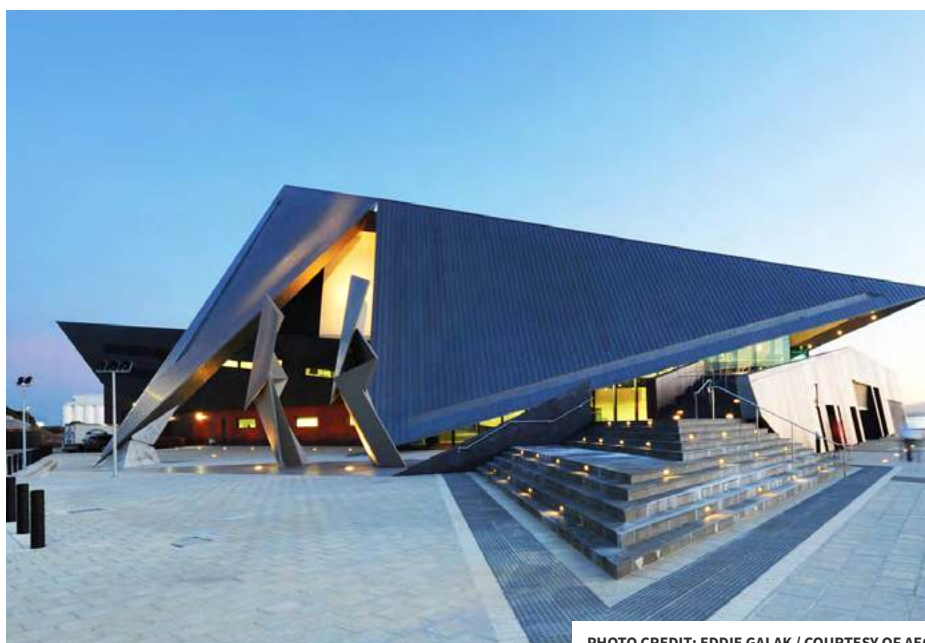


PHOTO CREDIT: EDDIE GALAK / COURTESY OF AEC

To reduce time and physical impact of the new lighting scheme, the existing positions were re-used, including the ones on the lighting bridge undersides and those recessed in the ceiling, and these were combined with new ones created where needed.

There was a specific requirement to ensure the new under-balcony lighting seating areas mimicked the look the previous globe fixtures had produced, which the Anolis installation achieved, together with the addition of some new positions for additional fixtures underneath the back of the dress circle.

In the Kalyenup Studio, a flat-floor, flexible area accommodating up to 200 people for events, the Ambiance XP56 Pendants are attached to points that have been chemically fixed into the ceiling, with the pendant version chosen to best match the aesthetic of the space.

Jands also supplied a Paradigm control system, which was another starting point for the new installation, explained Erik, as, together with other venues in Perth that are also run by the Arts & Culture Trust, they were keen to work with one supplier if possible. In addition, fixtures that could run on sACN were another requirement.

Everyone is impressed with the results, which are a substantial improvement. Erik and his colleagues are delighted: "It feels fresh, new and exciting to be working in this space again!" he enthused.

For Eddie, choosing Anolis was a bit of a no-brainer thanks to the wide selection of fixtures available and their different form factors.

"There is plenty of variety in the range to be able to place a light exactly where it's needed," he commented, highlighting how consistency is another huge advantage with Anolis, enabling both high and low ceilings to be lit with the same family of fixtures.

AEC's electrical contractor Shane Congram from Castlehow Electrical Services completed the installation, working to plans and drawings supplied by Eddie and Jands. Erik commented that Shane and his team's "work and commitment to the project" further helped deliver the excellent results of which everyone is proud.

This massive increase in flexibility has made the auditorium a more dynamic and interesting space, as well as tastefully and evenly lit, offering a vastly improved visitor experience. Erik – who also lights some of the incoming shows – has used the auditorium lights as part of a main show several times to great effect.

Erik also emphasised the importance of good service as part of the package, especially somewhere like Albany, which is far away from anywhere. "Jands is a good company with a great name that we know we can rely on for solid local and nationwide support," he underlined.

Completed in 2010, the AEC complex was designed by Australian company COX Architecture and has won several awards. Its striking glass and steel form was intended to be a contemporary structural work of art on the harbourside, with the angular facade and extensive glazing references to the crystalline molecular structures of earth. It comes alive like a glistening giant cut diamond, transformed by absorbing and reflecting light as people move around.



PHOTO CREDIT: EDDIE GALAK / COURTESY OF AEC



PHOTO CREDIT: EDDIE GALAK / COURTESY OF AEC

SELLING UP YOUR BUSINESS

OR LITERALLY 'PARKING THE TRUCK'



I've had more than a few discussions in recent times, and also partaken of some buy and sell. I currently own a business called Sydney PA Hire, which does exactly what it says on the can. I bought it last year.

My journey extends back into the fog of history – building and selling firms like Graftons, Australian Monitor and eventually even ENTECH. The latter was 'acquired' by Kerry Packer's Consolidated Press in 2003, giving me box seat on how the big corps transact.

That one was on 'a multiple', meaning you take the (agreed) profit and multiply it. In broad business, an 'average' multiple is between 2 and 4. So if you made a hundred grand last year, you shoot for two to four hundred at sale, plus SAV: Stock at Valuation.

In the case of ENTECH it was a healthy amount and I was fortunate that they held me in sufficient regard to offer it back to me. I bought it back for an

embarrassingly low price. For them. And live off it today! Hurrah.

Here goes the guts: I've been associated with around 10 production firm sales in recent years, usually due to retirement, and too many times things fall apart over the 'value' of a thing, like a piece of truss. And then the buyers start to object to GST. So they all get bogged down, and major in minors.

Any production business has two parts; goodwill and inventory. Yet too often the 'value of inventory' is a sticking point as a potential buyer pours over the spreadsheet. "\$300 for a stick of truss? I can buy that new for \$400!" Stock at Valuation, in accounting terms, is written down value, or cost after the thing is depreciated.

The exciting news is that your accountant would value your stock low, near zero in many cases, since the accountant has been slicing chunks off your invested cost as a deductible depreciation cost. And in recent years a lot of \$1,000 items were written off at purchase.

Approaching buying a production firm, I'd take great interest in the customer list but more importantly the workflow. Bust it down to months of the year, break out the big dollar jobs and look at the bread and butter. Think how you can add value, a new mind can make things zing!

Understand the customer mix. If it's institution based all the better. Schools, corporates, councils, events organisers, and charities are awesome repeats. Bands and people less so.

Parking the truck? By that I mean missing the boat. Having a warehouse full of legacy gear that – admit it, you've hoarded – is a dead weight. Around the end of the 90s some guys I knew had a truck full of production gear that withered off, and when the end came, the value of the stuff within was cratered.

It's easy to think of the 'value' of equipment when you buy it. XLR cable \$35, powered 12" speaker \$1,900, LED Par \$550. Now flip and sell online: cable \$12, then speaker \$800, and LED \$300 – if you are lucky. Then try dumping a warehouse-full on an auction website. Where they jerk the buyer with a "15% buyer's premium" and such. They are toast, yesteryear.

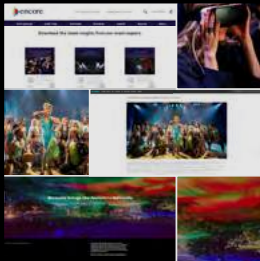
Hello the auction houses. Remember (major one) with me and the Fiat van? When you tried to sue ME to BUY it back after you sold it and paid me, and the buyer decided it wasn't to his liking? They suck. List your stuff creatively, and work at selling it. Auction lots are low rent.

Meri Took and his partners sold the fantastic and large Staging Rentals business piecemeal, drape by riser, for way more than the whole. Because the aggregate of 'book value' and 'multiple earnings' were far less than the realistic demand for drapes and stages on the second hand market. It's a short secret – at Sydney PA Hire, we do drapes and stages as well, and they are higher margin than microphones and speakers!

Selling out is a strange event. You are usually exhausted. It's not the mindset you need; you need to calibrate and take stock. Analyse your customers and sales into categories. Show your best side. And sell it, baby!

I've done it from both sides and I will do it again, given my encroaching age. Grab a bargain?

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ELATION

PARAGON



The long-awaited Elation Lighting Paragon series consists of three fixtures: Paragon S, Paragon M, and Paragon LT. The Paragon S gives you 20,500 lumens with a 550W engine at 23kg, the Paragon M 37,200 lumens with a 900W engine at 32kg, and the Paragon LT gives you 50,000 lumens with a 1300W engine at 44kg. The full range is IP54 rated, and these LED moving head profiles have a lot of R&D behind them. The deeper you dig, the better it gets.

Construction

Despite a lot of time and money being spent on research and development, the overall styling of the fixture is quite conservative. That's a good move in my books. The housing of the fixture itself is made from polycarbonate, a durable thermoplastic known for its high impact and heat resistance (it's also commonly used as lenses in safety goggles). It is fingerprint and abrasion resistant. It is also very hard to scratch.

You can always tell when a light has had design input from someone who actually uses them. You can see it in the small, often understated details. One thing I thought was neat was the rubber feet around the lens of the light. This stops scratching, and allows you to balance the light on its nose, as you often have to do during a bump in or bump out. To build on this, the chassis of the light is also designed so that it can take the whole weight of the fixture without causing any damage to the structure. I love the handles on the LT yoke too.

The Paragons are IP54 rated with HEPA filtration so users can work on it and open it up like you would a non-IP rated fixture without the need for pressure testing to seal it afterwards. It still gives a high enough IP rating to use in an outdoor gig. Of course, IP65 would have been better, but given that you would be changing gobos and swapping lenses it does seem like a practical trade off.

This translates into a lightweight fixture that is perfect for noise critical environments but with enough protection that it can be comfortably used outdoors.

The inside of the light looks nice too. It looks like a lot of care was taken to make sure the wiring was done right. It also has the wiring diagram and everything is printed on the inside of the cover. There was obviously some input from the service team and users here.

Optics, Colour and Brightness

The whole Paragon range is bright, almost a class brighter. Not that it was a surprise. They all use CMY colour mixing and offer a range of good deep colours. I was a fan of the red, a hard colour to get right with a subtractive colour mixing system. The SpectraColour CMYRGB array is available on the LT as well.

They all have a CRI that can go from 70 up to 93. One of the more common approaches taken to improve CRI (Colour Rendering Index) is to add a CRI filter, with the trade off being a loss of intensity. The TruTone system offers something different without the intensity trade off. Elation's TruTone variable CRI technology offers a different approach to increasing lighting fidelity which allows you to adjust the CRI using high and low colour temperature white LEDs placed in a single,

high density optical array. It enables you to adjust the CRI by using more or less of a certain LED.

It gives a good beam and a flat wash. The gobo package looks great, and there is a good mix of familiar style gobos mixed with a few that I have not seen before, which was refreshing.

Applications and Features

The Paragon range has a very wide feature set, of exceptional quality and well refined.

The Paragon S has seven rotating glass gobos, nine fixed metal gobos, a fully interchangeable animation wheel, dual prisms, dual frost effects, and a high-speed iris. The animation wheel can be swapped for custom designs or an optional seven-gobos. Its 240° indexable framing system has full-blackout shutter cuts.

The Paragon M includes two wheels of seven rotating glass gobos, animation wheel, overlapping dual prisms, dual frost options, and a high-speed iris. The animation wheel's interchangeable design supports custom patterns or an optional seven-position gobo module. It also has a 240° indexable framing system, +/-45° individual blade angles, and full-blackout shutter cuts.

The Paragon LT has 14 rotating glass gobos, a high-speed fixed gobo wheel, variable orientation animation wheel, overlapping dual prisms, dual

frost, and a high-speed iris. Its indexable framing system allows full-blackout shutter cuts as well, matching the rest of the series.

The zoom ranges vary depending on what lens you have on the light but typically they go from under 5° out to about 50°. An impressive range, especially when you see it on the smaller Paragon S. Its worth noting too that the zoom is really fast and quiet. They move well and index accurately. The framing system is smooth and crisp.

All three feature an interchangeable lens. You can use a fresnel lens, a frosted PC lens, or a profile lens. They can simply be screwed on to the front. It can be done very easily, with just a few screws, and does not require you to change fixture mode or update the DMX address. There is a sensor in the fixture which lets the light know which lens it has on, which is great news if you are a production house. If you buy one with all of the interchangeable lenses, you really have three lights in one, not just a hybrid.

You only need a 3mm Allen key to work on any of the field serviceable areas of the fixture such as lens attachment, covers, cassette removal etc, and the Philips head screws delineate workshop serviceable areas.

In the market, hybrids have gained a name for themselves as being a great value for money

option, but with a compromise in quality, especially with the feature sets. This is not the case with the Paragon. It reads as a very safe investment if you look at it that way. You can deploy Paragon on just about any high-end application for theatre, concert, TV, corporate, or festival.

Control and Programming

The Paragons have NFC (Near Field Communication) for quick configuration on the display face and on the top of the fixture. The fixtures also don't have to be turned on in order to do this, so it can be done in the case via the Elation NFC app. This is very handy when you need to prep gear.

The Paragon S has four DMX Channel Modes (41/64/41/64). The M has two DMX Channel Modes (43/65ch) and the LT has four DMX Channel Modes (44/67/47/73). A reasonably small channel footprint, given how much the light can do. Their power draws are 900W, 1400W and 1900W respectively.

The Paragons are quiet and do not make much noise. Quiet lights used to be for TV and theatre, but it is becoming something that lighting techs from all types of live entertainment and installation applications are coming to expect.

Verdict

Overall, the Paragon series has to be one of the most well developed lighting fixtures ranges I have ever seen. I don't think you will see a replacement or an upgrade in three years time – you won't need it. Paragon does everything, and it does it well.

If you are looking for a long term, backbone style workhorse, check out the Paragon range for yourself. This written review doesn't do it justice.

Product Info:

elationlighting.com/collections/paragon

Distributor Australia and New Zealand:
ulagroup.com



THE SPECS

Paragon S

High efficiency 550W 6500K variable CRI white LED engine

20,500 total lumen fixture output @ CRI 80

Front lens 120mm

Pan angle: 540°

Tilt angle: 260°

CMY colour mixing

Linear CTO colour correction 6500K-2600K

7 dichroic colours including UV filter, quad colour

TruTone variable CRI 73-93

7 rotating/indexing interchangeable glass gobos

9 fixed metal gobos

Length: 260mm width: 390mm
height: 595mm weight: 23kg

THE SPECS

Paragon M

High efficiency 900W 6500K variable CRI white LED engine

37,200 total lumen fixture output @ CRI 80

Front lens 160mm

Pan angle: 540°

Tilt angle: 260°

CMY colour mixing

Linear CTO colour correction 6500K-2600K

6 dichroic colours including UV filter, quad colour

TruTone variable CRI 73-93

2x 7 rotating/indexing interchangeable glass gobos

Length: 444mm width: 315mm
height: 680mm weight: 32kg

THE SPECS

Paragon LT

High efficiency 1,300W 6500K variable CRI white LED engine

44,000 total lumen fixture output @ CRI 80

50,000 total lumen output in Turbo Mode (CRI78)

TruTone variable CRI up to CRI 93

Front Lens 200mm

Pan Angle: 540°

Tilt Angle: 260°

Motionless Reset

CMY colour mixing array

Optional SpectraColor RGB array

Linear CTO colour correction

5 dichroic colours including quad colour

3 gobo wheels

2x 7 rotating/indexing interchangeable glass gobos

5 fixed metal gobos

Length: 492mm width: 315mm
height: 830mm weight 43.6kg



SUPPORTING THOSE THAT SUPPORT YOU

It is said that soldiers who've been through active duty develop a thousand-yard stare. I've known some and seen that hard look in the eye. It is chilling. Last night, I joined an informal debrief session for our local CFA brigade. Although no longer active on the trucks, I am still a member and doing what I can for my community. I saw that look in many of their faces.

On a normal day, our gathering would be a casual laugh, the odd jibe but happy friends and neighbours hanging together. This day was not normal – it was the aftermath of the Victorian firestorm that exploded on Friday 09.01.2026.

On that Friday, I had already evacuated my home – the house that I poured everything into over many long years; the culmination of my deepest childhood dream; the house that broke my back; and strained my relationship; but equally a place of safety, of solace, of healing and growth – a truly amazing space on oh so many levels.

Several dear friends had built their own such paradises nearby in Longwood, like us, lovingly hand crafted over many thousands of hours. Today, they have naught but ashes and memories. It is only the fickleness of fate that saved me and mine from the same outcome. Or worse.

On that Friday, my parter, confidant, friend, and lover of 24 years was in the thick of it. With a group of neighbours, strangers and more. All putting it on the line in the service of others. She is a Crew Leader and 3rd Lieutenant in our local brigade, ironically the same roles I held during Black Summer.

My dear Dana has developed that stare. That could be scary. Yet I know it is necessary, an armour plating required to face the insane chaos of such infernal madness. Instead, I have nothing but pride. Not only did she join in, she stepped up a level. Multiple, in fact. In this, we have talked openly and honestly. It will take time for her to process it all, but that can wait until everything calms down. Right now, she has a very important job to do, and I most certainly won't get in the way of that.

The two of us were not born into this life, but we are a natural fit and have never felt more at home. Our crew are the epitome of rugged and resilient country folk. Tough on the outside but tender on the inside. Despite lots of "Yeh Nah, I'll be right, mate" bluster, a trait often required to deal with the harshness of life in our landscape, I also know that deep down they will carry hurt. Some will deal with it well, others less so. For a few, it will fester up and explode, like a lolly in a soft drink (best not to ask our grumpy captain about Mentos). Trauma is a bitch, and she slaps everyone in different ways.

These are ragtag, everyday people, from all walks of life, who may normally not cross paths. But when their collective existences are threatened, they find their inner superhero and band together to do what they can. As I write, they are still patrolling locally, mopping up the hotspots. In all directions, there are still active firefights, and this is but the start of summer. They will have a lot to unpack, and a lot to process but they cannot afford the time to relax into that just yet. For now, the shields stay up, the senses heightened and one ear on the pager or phone. Their vigilance is my salvation.

Setting the scene (changing tense to keep it tense)

Mon 05.01: Second Total Fire Ban (TFB) of the summer. We are as prepped as we can be and go about our day. Weather looking ominous later in the week. Escalate contingency planning.

Wed 07.01: Fire kicks off to our west in Longwood. Our team get paged, but Dana is nursing the end of a cold, so stays behind today.

Thurs 08.01: Another TFB. The inferno is growing. Dana is scheduled for a day on the fireground.

Wave goodbye to my dearest, off to join the family of the big red truck. Do a mid-morning telehealth, then go out to check conditions. Definitely getting worse. Stay close to comms and online fire info. About 2pm, I walk outside and the sky is split in two hemispheres: to the north, standard blue summer with a few fluffy clouds; to the south, a wall of doom, black from side to side, glowing evil orange to the west and capped with a Pyro Cumulus cloud. Thunder and lightning kicking off. Time to GTFO. Escape kit is all ready to go, smash it in the ute, farewell my Magnum Opus, grab the dog and head to relative safety with friends and other refugees in Euroa.

Fri 09.01: The firestorm fully erupts. Forecast Catastrophic conditions are just that. The burn is so large and intense, it is making its own weather systems. Longwood, south of the freeway, is already long gone, Ruffy was toast yesterday, and now Yarck, Gobur, Molesworth, then more are hit. I blink, and it's on the way to Alexandra. All places I have spent much time and all sheltering friends and their families. In the late afternoon, I get a report that it is in our street, and all I can do is hope.

Sat 10.01: Conditions are now untenable in Euroa. The tea leaves are reading bad juju so we single file it to a safer haven in Wangaratta. Just as we arrive, I get a call from an angel deep in the CFA, saying 'Get out of Euroa, NOW!'. Thank you, too late, already long gone...phew. Fortunately, a team of aircraft pull the worst of it up just in time, but I am told they come very close to losing this flank.

Sun 11.01: Valiant efforts across the board and fires et al are getting a leash on this wicked beast. Plan for return.

Mon 12.01: I head home through a dark haze, pointing straight for the community hub where I think Dana is, having not seen her for days. Not there, so off home, to pat its walls and wait. Mobile comms still scratchy but we get through and she rushes home for an almighty hug. We spend a few moments saying thanks to the universe, then she gets right back on the case and into firey work.

Fireground conditions keep calming and, as soon as the angry little squares on our apps turn from Red to Orange, the 'silent majority' morons start a bitter argument on our local social platform (Bogie Tree, or BT). Incensed, I jump in and put a rocket up them, effectively telling the whole 400 strong community to shut up and go to bed. They do.

135,000ha of destruction gets stopped just three doors from us. From my stoop, I gaze with amazement at the black ground. Our 21ha is puny by comparison and, many times over this long weekend, was mere seconds from obliteration.

Tues 13.01: This next morning, in the calm after the storm, I start processing some pretty heightened and complex emotions. Several hours later, I send the following to our local world.

A pause for reflection

On Tuesday, Jan 13, 2026 at 2:08 PM John O'Brien via BT wrote:

I was blunt yesterday but feel that was required. Here is the nuance that I more strive for. I put this up not for comment, discussion or response (it will be muted as soon as I post, to keep the noise of BT to essentials). This is more a general call for calm and deep honesty with ourselves and our current situation. Take it in and take a moment to reflect on all of the good that has, and will continue to, come out of this bad. Read on if you wish.

I'd like to pay tribute to the thousands of amazing volunteers, emergency services personnel and agencies that have spent the last 5-6 days working around the clock to keep the rest of our community safe. They have risked their lives, taken their bodies and souls through torture, and faced horrific experiences that most on this group will never go through, let alone truly appreciate. But they do so to help ALL of us. The least that



THESE IMAGES DO NO JUSTICE TO THE TERROR IT INDUCED



Are you concerned about your mate's mental health?

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

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www.entertainmentassist.org.au

Supporting the mental health of Australian entertainment industry workers

¹Passion, Pride, Pitfalls Dec 2014

everyone not directly involved in the battle against the fire beast that threatened us can do is to show tolerance and compassion for those putting it all on the line.

They are the ones who dropped everything, left their loved ones behind, waved goodbye to their homes, and wondered if they would ever see any of that again, let alone just get through the day alive. They are the people who had to suppress all of that, bottle it up and focus on the immediate and visceral danger directly in front of (and all around) them. It takes a special breed to do this, yet they are also ordinary - our neighbours, workmates, friends and family. There will be scars. Please help them as they help us.

Today, they are still on the fireground, and will be for a long time yet.

Most volunteers are scared witless out there when it's all going pear shaped. I know, I've been there enough times. It can be utterly exhausting; physically, mentally and psychically. But some thrive in that environment, pushing through pain and fear, seeking moments of strategic clarity to make the right call, under extreme duress, again and again. The more I did it, the more I sought it. The adrenaline rush of being way out of your comfort zone, life on the line, bonding with a crew in ways that remain ever deep, is intense but brutal. When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro. (Un)fortunately, my body will not permit this anymore but I have great faith in all the people that continue to risk it all in caring for others. This is truly selfless and the rest of us owe eternal gratitude.

We are all scared. I get it. We are all on edge. Because we just faced a calamity way beyond any individual's control. What happened over the last week was literally a catastrophe. Right on our doorstep. Our lives and livelihoods have been threatened. Many nearby have lost everything, dreams and memories shattered. That could so easily have been us.

Our collective 'fight or flight' responses have not just been triggered but, for many, are still very active. Nerves are raw and jangly and we are very much not out of it yet. Crews and agencies will be out there for weeks getting this one completely tame. The rebuild will take years. Without alarm, it also is worth noting that this is only the start of a long hot summer in a land that loves to burn. It is far from over...

We are all hurting and we all want answers. Pointing fingers or playing the blame game achieves nothing but animosity and confusion. There will be a time for finding better ways to deal with the dangers we regularly face here in rural Australia. Bogie Tree is not that platform and now is not that time. We still have a very large active fire scene in our backyard. I look at it from my front door (which I am oh so grateful for still having).

Now is the time to keep calm, support those around us and look after the legions of legends who are tidying up the mess while keeping everyone else safe. Now is when we see our resilient community coming together, bonding in what joins us rather than any differences that might keep us apart. We all love being here, so let's keep making it such a special place.

Hug someone you love; seek solace in your belief systems; show care for those who need it most; support those who are risking it all to care for the rest of us; and drink plenty of water. If you can find some clean air, take a few moments for a deep breath and give thanks that most of us dodged a big one.

Pray to your chosen deity; hug your favourite tree; worship your number one podcaster; do whatever keeps you grounded and sane. Please shed a tear or more - it is healthy to let it out - you will feel better for doing it. If it all seems too much there are myriad support services available online - please use them.

The armchair generals and keyboard warriors can have their day when all the hotspots are quenched, the trucks are back in the sheds and our normal (what actually is normal these days?) lives have resumed.

In the meantime, stay positive.

We are all in it together.

With Love,
Johnno

PS. Reply directly if you want to. I may, or may not, respond. I'm as emotionally fringed and overloaded as the rest of us. But I'd like to keep BT safe, happy, positive and a resource for help and hope. Particularly with what we are all going through.

SUNSET AS THE STORM BREWED



REUNITED BACK AT OUR HOME



How you can help...

Bushfire relief www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief-and-recovery/1151

CFA donations www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/fundraising-and-partnerships/donate-to-cfa

Many, many people are affected and deserving. Our friends mentioned above lost the lot. All four of them have always given way more than they take.

Nellie and Aidan started their house build just as we finished ours. We helped in many ways, even lending them our scaffold for 12 months to keep them safe. They named their gorgeous abode 'Polly', just like our dog: www.gofundme.com/f/aidan-nelle-home-belongings-lost-to-longwood-fire

Justus and Janet we know more from afar, but they have given so, so much for so many years: www.gofundme.com/f/justus-and-janet-hagen-emergency-relief-funds

Journey of a Fledgling Talent Scout



MAGENTA (L-R) HELEN, MANNY, MALOU, BOY, EFREN, CHING. PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN COLEMAN

SNIPPETS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF A BYGONE ERA

In the mid-1980s, my inflated ego as a sound engineer and a sound and lighting installer was due to the fact that after working the Australian circuit for years, I was now outfitting American nightclubs in the Philippines, a country teeming with enormous musical talent but trailing in sound and lighting technology. It was an arena where I was virtually unchallenged, but when Lin Gomez, the Filipino JBL dealer and sound reinforcement installer, approached me after a couple of years and said, “I’ll tell you what your real talent is, Brian,” I couldn’t wait to hear the reply. “You know how to pick the best bands,” he said, crushing my self-image as a technical whiz.

I did pour an enormous effort into the search for talent, partly because I suffered from the apprehension that my first sound and lighting installation in the country at Rosie O’ Grady’s, Angeles City, in 1983, although very effective, was something that I thought could easily be copied. And with our competitors vying for the lucrative US military patronage at Clark Air Force Base, I needed a bit more of an edge. Strangely, our competitors chose their own way to go about things with disco-style lighting, poor sound reinforcement, and undisciplined metal bands.

Over the four-year period that followed, I travelled the country seeking out talent to sign to the three leading American off-base nightclubs and to fill USO (United Service Organisations) contracts with bands that played on base at the Officers’ Club, The Airmen’s Club and the NCO Club. Although the Philippines is classified as one of the largest English-speaking nations in the world, it is a second language, and in some of the remote places I travelled, it wasn’t widely spoken. I had to get up to speed on the native Filipino language (Tagalog), and fortunately, some phrases could be as simple as asking the armed security guard on the door of a nightclub, “May combo dito?” Do you have a band here?

I generally steered clear of the massive rock ‘n’ roll scene in Olongapo City that catered to the military personnel from the US Naval Base in Subic Bay,

which was home to the US Seventh Fleet. I found the bands there to be loud and undisciplined, with on-stage volumes overpowering the jerry-built sound reinforcement systems. The audio mixing was atrocious, with screeching high-mids and massive reverberation, and the lighting guys flashing the front lights on and off made me nauseous. There was just too much to fix.

My first assignment in 1983 was outfitting Rosie O’Grady’s nightclub, Angeles City, with sound and lighting, and after being appointed entertainment manager, I terminated the unkempt and unruly metal band that the owner had in rehearsals; this was before they made it to their first performance. I replaced the metal band with Carol and the Lips, ironically, a band I found playing in an empty nightclub in Olongapo City. Although supported by the owner and his partners, I was ridiculed by others for replacing a metal band with what the locals considered a ‘variety’ band. However, in 1983, MTV was paving the way for an image-essential, commercial type of rock music. I initially introduced Carol and the Lips to the style and music of The Motels with Martha Davis, along with other bands that focused on the new-look visual style and contemporary music sound that went on to dominate the 1980s, which was a monumental period for bands with female vocalists such as The Pretenders, Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, Heart, Pat Benatar, and many others. Carol and the Lips



CAROL AND THE LIPS AT ROSIE O’ GRADY’S NIGHTCLUB, 1983



MAGENTA AT THE OPENING OF CAL JAM, STAGE VIEW



SHAKEY'S PIZZA PARLOR TAFT AVE MANILA



JOURNEY, 2008. PHOTO CREDIT: MATT BECKER

were a massive success; they filled Rosie O' Grady's every night, and they are cited as the band that changed rock music in the clubs that catered to the US military personnel.

One of my go-to places to search for other talent was Shakey's Pizza Parlor. The venues were owned by the San Miguel Corporation, who already had 90% of the bottled beer market, and Shakey's was created to promote their San Miguel draught beer and to dominate the live music scene. Shakey's wasn't really a family venue, more a rock 'n' roll hangout featuring live bands. There were about 15 Shakey's venues scattered over the greater Manila area, and I visited most of them. The bands were easy to approach, and nobody suspected a foreigner of being a talent scout on a poaching mission. My standard offer was to double the band's wages and give them free accommodation off-base in Angeles City. Another incentive for the bands was to be accepted by American audiences, which were made up mostly of GIs, their wives and girlfriends, and the teenage 'base brats' of the US military community.

I only booked bands featuring accomplished and disciplined musicians with excellent vocalists, and especially female vocalists who made the acts more visual and kept the music contemporary. I did change a number of the Filipino bands' names to make them sound more appealing to their American audiences. The first name change was for a band I found at Shakey's (Ermita), called Dimples, featuring a singer named Malou (Maria-Louise), who absolutely stunned me with her rendition of 'Love On A Two-Way Street'. I immediately approached the band to sign them. In those days, bands were paid as employees with individual salaries, and it was a ploy for them to try to include an extra member. They informed me, "Oh, one of our members is away today." So, thinking it was a tambourine player or someone who played the bongo drums, I sarcastically asked who it was. "It's our lead singer." I was ultimately introduced to Ching, a powerful vocalist who added an extra dimension to the band and sang in perfect harmony with Malou's velvety vocals. There were a couple of name changes before we settled on Magenta (named after my favourite colour gel, Lee 113). I signed Magenta to a management contract and booked them in three different clubs off-base and for a number of USO

shows on the US Air Force base. Magenta became the most sought-after band in the country.

Another name change was for a band called Yjoz that I found playing at Shakey's Pizza Parlor on Taft Avenue, Manila. I politely informed the band that Americans wouldn't understand the name Yjoz. I was a big movie buff at the time, and flicking through my movie directory, I stumbled upon Crooked Hearts (a 1972 movie), which became the band's new name at the Third Eye nightclub, my third venue engagement as entertainment manager.

During the same period, my employer at the Third Eye nightclub, a Canadian named Brian, invited me to accompany him to a function in the ballroom of a five-star Manila hotel. Brian was a personal friend of one of the performers, Sampaguita, the renowned 'Queen of Filipino Rock Music', who had invited him to attend. The event was some sort of expatriate businessmen's gathering that turned out to be the most bizarre event that I have ever attended.

Brian had been urging me to book Sampaguita at the Third Eye for some time, and I had been resisting. I had seen Sampaguita some years earlier at a nightclub in Olongapo City. She had a style that identified as 'Pinoy Rock', which was a genre of rock music primarily sung in the Filipino language that just wouldn't have twigged with our US military patrons. There was, of course, my other aversion, that she was often backed by heavy rock bands that I usually avoided. I sensed at the time that my invitation was an enticement for me to see Sampaguita in a live performance and change my mind.

I don't remember Sampaguita's afternoon performance at the Manila event being all that different from what I had witnessed years before in Olongapo City; however, she was only one of several acts, including a promotion that was somewhat unsavoury. Of course all the drinks were free, as was the food, and the overindulgence did somewhat blur the experience, which evolved into the surreal. One of the acts featured a remarkable Tina Turner lookalike, who danced and mimed to the superstar's songs. This was a female impersonator, a 'billy boy', which is a respectful

term Filipinos use to describe a gay guy, and these guys enjoy almost celebrity status in the country.

The steady stream of alcohol and entertainment continued into the evening, and after a brief hiatus, a huge wooden packing crate equipped with four long wooden handles was carried onto the stage by four Filipinos. I don't remember the actual announcement by the auctioneer, but a torrid bidding session began for the contents of the crate. The bidding was extraordinarily high for the unknown contents of the crate, but there were no prizes for guessing what the contents were. Right on the money, at the conclusion of bidding, the crate was pried open to reveal a girl in a bikini who was to be the overnight companion of the winning bidder. At the time, any repercussions from this kind of sex trafficking didn't seem to be an issue with the organisers. A second crate was then carried onto the stage, and the debacle repeated. The third crate attracted the highest bidding; however, it turned out to be the 'billy boy' Tina Turner impersonator who sprang from the crate.

My dislike for the style of rock 'n' roll that was ubiquitous in Olongapo City was vindicated in 1985 when the owners of the biggest nightclub ever to open in that city, Cal Jam (California Jam), ignored the local talent and visited me to book my band Magenta for the grand opening. History doesn't record this, but I have photos of Magenta's opening performance. Some sources state that Arnel Pineda, with his band Amo, opened Cal Jam, but this occurred sometime later. Pineda has stated in his bio that he began his career at Shakey's Taft Ave, Manila, in the mid-80s with the band Yjoz.

Until recently, I didn't know that in 2007 Arnel Pineda became the fifth lead singer of the mega US band Journey (Steve Perry left in 1998). Pineda was only 18 years old in 1985 when I found his band Yjoz playing at Shakey's Pizza, Manila, and billed them at the Third Eye as Crooked Hearts. Had I known about Pineda's 2007 rise to stardom, I could have dined out on this for the past 18 years and bored the tits off on anyone unfortunate enough to sit at my table.



CAL JAM SPEAKER STACKS



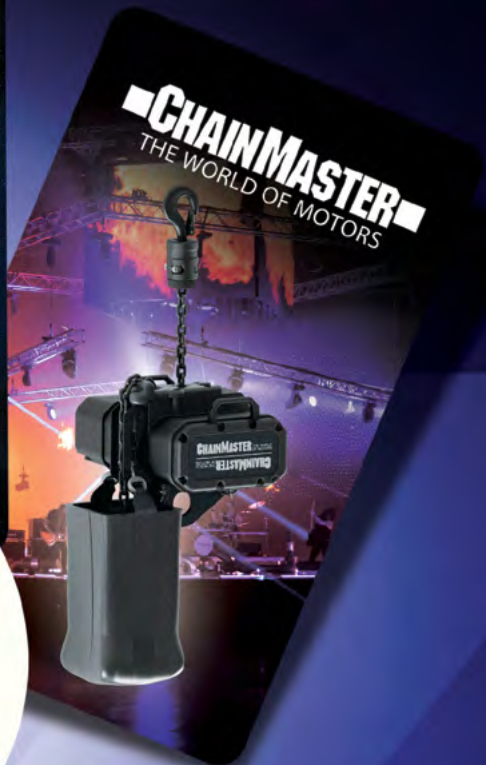
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