



Audio Engineering Society Melbourne Section Inc.

Chairman's Report - AGM 2017

Graeme Huon

Meeting activities

The AES Melbourne section continues to benefit from having the SAE Institute in South Melbourne as a regular venue for presentations covering a wide gamut of audio technologies. We again thank the SAE Institute for providing this valuable service to us.

The meeting program has continued to draw regular crowds with an excellent array of world-class and indeed world leading presenters.

In early August, Peter Blamey of Blamey and Saunders gave the second of two talks on the technologies of the modern hearing aid. We are privileged to have Peter and his business partner Elaine Saunders based Melbourne.

In late August, Dr Johannes Mulder gave a talk on sound level management and regulation. He pointed out that the European situation has been to progressively legislate on a country by country basis for a medium term average SPL A weighted limit to audience dose typically below 103dB over 15 – 30 minutes. This legislation has forced concert organisers to meet with performers prior to the event and arrange (negotiate) the program or risk being shut down by the “sound police” during the performance. Sound spill or trespass was also discussed. He expected similar guidelines to be introduced here. He also commented on the contribution to overall sound levels that an excited audience could make. His talk was punctuated with anecdotes especially from his time managing the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam he oversaw (under sufferance) the artistic genre changing from Wagnerian opera and string quartets to Pink Floyd and heavy metal.

Of particular interest to the audience was his description of managing the composer Stockhausen and the inaugural rendering of his concert for string quartet in helicopters at the Gebouw— a performance that the Germans had steadfastly refused to do!

In October we were privileged to have Peter Freedman managing director of RØDE microphones describe the riches to rags to riches history of this most successful company that he had originally inherited. Peter outlined the early days of the Australian company distributing Dynacord, establishment of Freedman electronics, establishing RØDE and the growth from a product range of one improved condenser microphone copy to a world-leading manufacturer. Peter outlined the core company philosophy of efficient, automated in-house manufacture, and hinted at a soon to be announced acquisition. This turned out to be the acquisition of the Soundfield company, originally of UK fame. Today RØDE is a major player in the audio game, exporting microphones to over 111 countries

In November Stephan Schutze gave a presentation on audio for interactive environments. Stephan first explained the differences between traditional generally linear audiovisual production and the new interactive highly non-linear and branching environments of online and interactive gaming. He observed that Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) are not just another format, but are a new medium. He also pointed out the litigious nature of the industry with rampant non-disclosures and that this was restricting his presentation though this did not seem to hamper the night.

In particular Stephan pointed out that Augmented Reality required the combination of timely presented material and real-time situational awareness that demanded new solutions for every part of the capture and delivery chain.

He also saw that the plethora of VR startups was muddying the true innovation waters.

He closed by observing that as in the words of Lucas and Boyle the audio experience was more than 50% of the puzzle.

The beginning of 2017 saw a flurry of activity on the AES Melbourne website – none of it desirable. The site gained a new master user ID through weaknesses in the older software package we had been using. Thanks go to Kostas Mitropoulos at ITsManaged Infrastructure Services, and Nicholas Dow at CBDweb for ridding us of this pestilence.

February 2016 saw a field visit to the newly equipped Kilsyth Baptist church where Frank Andrewartha of Quest audio demonstrated the challenges involved in providing premium quality, uniform coverage in modern architecture medium sized venues. The benefits of the new, Australian designed Quest HPI series of controlled directivity asymmetrical waveguide loudspeakers in delivering clearly intelligible voice were clearly demonstrated with uniform coverage combined with high fidelity delivered from compact units.

In April Frank followed up the field visit and demonstration with a presentation on the challenges in delivery of speech in reverberant environments and the technology used in his products. The end to end chain from the cabinet to the cochlea and the implications for audio delivery were explained with the use of informative video. The evolution from the simple column speaker to stereo systems with acoustic side splash and more recently laterally placed expansive shaped arrays intended to throw concert sound was explained in terms of energy delivery and better solutions given for each case. The practical issues of installing audio equipment where there has been little architectural planning were covered with examples.

The June meeting took a look at the present and future directions for radio microphones. James Waldron and Jason Grbevski of Sennheiser Australia outlined the evolution of products in response to changing market demands and gave an informative summary of the radio spectrum issues involved. It was clearly pointed out that radio spectrum is a finite resource under pressure from improved quality and reliability, increased channel count demand and allocated bandwidth reduction. This has forced development and deployment of new spread spectrum products.

These and other presentations and video available on our website are receiving consistent attention.

Committee activities

Your AES committee has been meeting regularly to plan the Section's activities with three committee meetings held in the past twelve months.

Web and Social Media

As well as planning the regular bi-monthly meeting calendar and attending to section general business, the Committee has ensured that the Section's website is continually updated with meeting notices, meeting reports (with useful resources like slide decks, audio recordings and videos on the meetings), and other audio-related material. With the events of January this year this has been a challenging time. A special vote of thanks goes to our secretary Peter Smerdon for doing the bulk of this.

We have maintained the Section's Facebook and twitter feeds and accounts with our Facebook page MelbAES showing steady growth, and currently having 210 followers.

Membership

The Melbourne Section continues to grow, and presently has 76 members.

Audio Legends series

Work continues on several biographies, and in particular some previously unreleased interview material with Neville Thiele. This video material provides many interesting and revealing insights into the people and culture of the Australian (and American) audio scene and should be of interest to members.

Long-time Section stalwart and Melbourne loudspeaker legend Mike Barabasz has decided not to accept nomination for the Committee this year due to pressure of work and other commitments. Mike has provided much input to the section and his stabilising influence will be missed. We will try and keep a chair free for next year.

I would personally like to thank all local members of AES, and in particular each member of the AES Melbourne committee for making 2017 a pleasurable success so far and look forward to continued and growing success. In particular thanks again go in particular to Graham Haynes - Treasurer, and Peter Smerdon – Secretary who, quite simply, make the Melbourne section the cohesive success it is.

Graeme Huon

Chairman