

Chairman's Report 2020/2021

In the past 12 months we have been able to continue and in fact marginally expand our operations of the AES Melbourne Section, at least geographically with online presence through our Zoom account.

This has proven invaluable for committee meetings as well as presentations.

We have been able to hone our online skills and the sessions are now working well. We have created our own online usage guide but find it helps to run through the usual check list before each presentation.

The presentation sessions also benefitted from some elements of virtual tour made possible by the format, and with a greatly expanded reach with convenience for attendees.

We have found that our online meetings have increased our reach and benefitted meeting attendance significantly. The convenience of at-home attendance, together with the lack of geographic barriers have seen meeting numbers increase by 50-100%, with attendees connecting in from the US, UK, Africa, and Europe – as well as local and from interstate.

Our Secretary (and online content administrator) Peter Smerdon reports that the recording of meetings via Zoom's in-built capability, followed by judicious editing, has increased the quality of the post-event Meeting Reports on our website and YouTube channel. This has inevitably increased the workload in the preparation of this material, however he is sure that the additional high-quality resources are worth the effort.

He has observed a significant increase in YouTube views of this type of material since moving to the all-video format.

Peter also reports that our social media accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram are still being used to promote our activities, and asks the members to suggest any other platforms.

In the last 12 months Melbourne AES Section also held five sessions on topics of interest to general and new members alike.

The September Annual General Meeting was made far more interesting with a presentation by Andy Stewart from The Mill recording studios in Gippsland on the topic "recording in a Pandemic". The session was in the style of a combination presentation and tour, punctuated with performance extracts. Andy explained the challenges of creating professional quality production works with literally hundreds of performers, especially where some performers do not have access to consistent recording facilities (or have facilities of variable quality). Andy made practical use of a 'recording pack' and brief instructions intended to achieve consistency including tips on recording at home. The results were nothing short of first class. The trials and tribulations of live performance were also exemplified by Andy's need to co-ordinate the evening's session from the local fire station 'where the internet was working'.

In November 2020, Committee member Fabio Marraccini gave an enlightening update on the tools, techniques and tribulations of online rehearsals and performances. Two types of collaboration were identified – on-line jamming and remote collaboration where techniques of solo performance and click tracks are needed for high quality production. Fabio indicated that whilst the streaming bandwidth might well be there, the real challenge for real-time collaboration is latency, giving guidelines for workable latency limits.

On 15th February, Charlie VanDongen presented on his work with the end-to-end audio chain – "From loudspeakers to Listeners". Charlie has been active in technology covering most of the audio chain, designing general format encoders and decoders, new and novel electrostatic loudspeakers and amplifiers.

Charlie covered Multi-channel surround sound from the early matrix encoders reliant on microgroove recordings for distribution through to modern multi-channel formats.

Charlie has added to this with his work that broadened the sweet spot and enhanced sound

field immersion. The difficulty here was that listening to his work on formats, although essential, was not possible with the visiting restrictions of COVID in place. A tour of the Mentone factory and demonstrations of his format work and products will be scheduled after visiting restrictions are lifted later in the year.

In April 2021 Dr Martin Koszolko's presentation "Remote music collaboration in the time of COVID 19" continued on with the topic of online music performance with a broader look at remote co-operation. Topics included composition and scoring co-operation, support materials production and distribution management. Three toolset areas were identified: the Virtual Studio, Live Jamming and Marketplace Networking. Examples for each were given and the growing dominance of cloud-based services emphasised, also identifying the underlying social networking requirements.

The Zoom session on the 21st June 2021 saw Martin Benge providing a fascinating and informative session appropriately entitled "From Grooves to Gigabytes". Martin took us through his experiences as Engineer, Producer and Studio manager at the EMI recording studios in Abbey Road London and in Sydney (Studio 301). The session was enhanced with rare archive snippets and sessions and is well worth a second look on the archive.

We have also welcomed AES members and other interested parties from around the world. The session registration process has also helped with any follow-up.

AES New York is also moving forward. The general interest Town Hall meetings, offered to Section Leaders, have been quite useful and it is good that these can be accessed after the event via video playback, as the East Coast USA timing is not necessarily friendly. As of July, we now also have a new International Logo to look out for.



Graeme Huon.