A photograph of a person sitting on a stage, looking towards a large array of bright spotlights. The scene is bathed in a blue light, and the spotlights create a strong lens flare effect. The person is wearing a dark jacket and is positioned in the lower center of the frame. To the left, a guitar is visible on a stand. The background shows the structural elements of a stage or arena.

**30 YEAR HISTORY OF
ROCK LIGHTING AND
SOUND IN AUSTRALIA.**

Story By

Grahame Harrison, Colin Baldwin & Julius Grafton.

THE PREFACE

The producers of 30 Years Of Rock Lighting and Sound - A Retrospective have put together this brief History of the development of the professional audio and lighting industry through the decades since 1972, in support of the exhibition.

The Seventies are regarded the most-influential decade of them all, because everything happened at virtual 'light speed', the changes and progress were astronomical. But the Sixties were where it all really began, so we had to sneak in a few tidbits about the sixties to create a platform for the seventies and beyond.

It's important to understand that there WAS audio and lighting before the 1970's. We are simply dealing with live production equipment in this exhibit. There were cinema and theatre systems in use at the time, and the recording environment also had a history, which is not dealt with here.

Those who responded to our requests were great, contributing information and photos which have helped enormously to create a history of our progress. The task of logging exact dates and other associated information has been extremely difficult and many hours of research and collating has gone into representing the most accurate history available, based on the information at hand.

If we missed out on mentioning any particular person or item we apologise, with limited resources and funding as our collective memories only go so far. And we are based in Sydney, where most of the material came from.

Please enjoy the memories and have an enlightening and illuminating experience. For the younger enthusiasts, we hope that you will find the exhibit to be informative and amusing, remembering that in 30 years from now, today's technology will seem just as historical...or perhaps hysterical!.

So let's have a look at the past.

It had to start somewhere. We visit long forgotten names like AWA, Magnavox and even Rola. How did we start? Was a rock struck against a flint and the spark made sound and lighting? Not so exciting...

THE SIXTIES



Pink Floyd monitors UK late 1960's - Billy McCartney, check out the tour jacket

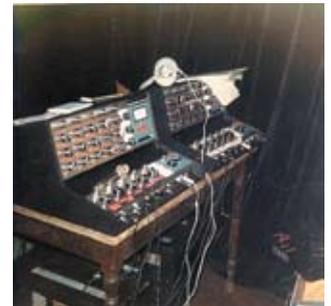
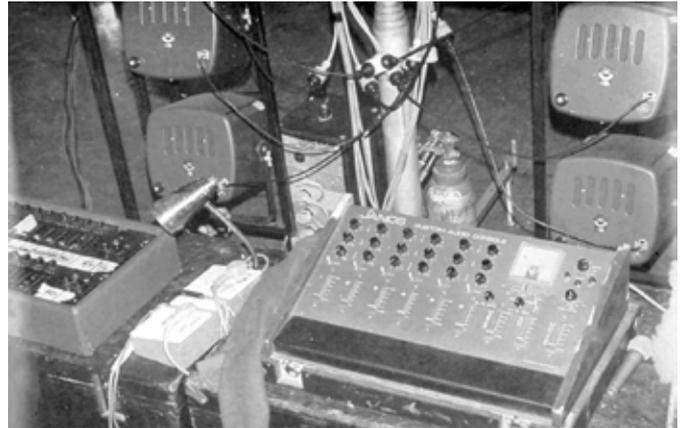
It is impossible to review the development of audio & lighting in Australia without mentioning the Sixties, because that is where it really started (yes, there was life before Jands, who dominated the live production scene for over two decades). Not much was going on in Sydney. AWA, Magnavox and ROLA (now known as Lorantz) dominated the local speaker industry. Extremely high import duty taxes at the time encouraged local companies to make speakers and public address systems. It is worth noting that modern audio and stage lighting systems were derived from cinema audio systems (such as Altec) and theatrical and industrial (building) lighting.

Bob Purvis in **Perth** was one of the earliest pioneers of audio reinforcement in Oz. He was the first audio hire contractor in Western Australia in 1955 (and possibly the whole country) with his company **Purvisonic Sound**. A very young Ian McLean was his apprentice. Ian went on to work for Seeburg background music systems. Purvis built amps and speaker boxes and was the first person to import the legendary SAE amplifiers to Australia.

Ian McLean moved to Sydney in the early sixties and started building column speaker boxes with 4 x 8-inch ROLA speakers in each, each tapped with a 5-watt (100-volt) line transformer. Ian built his own 50 watt mixer-amplifiers to drive them. He went on to build his own version of a self-powered box in 1974 by using a modified JBL 4530 cabinet made by WASP Industries with an Altec 211 horn. His hire company, 'Sound Affair' was very active during the Seventies and later changed its name to SAVI (Sound And Visual Innovators) in 1993. Ian founded the Sontec Group in the Eighties which has recently been absorbed by Chubb Industries. He now runs Tecsound, a sound contracting business.

Gary Nessel and **John Woodhead** founded the **Strauss** company in **Melbourne** in March 1962. They manufactured guitar and bass amps from day one and PA amps and boxes from late 1962. It soon became a

case of not who used Strauss, but who didn't! The mighty 'Warrior' and 'Hurricane' guitar amps and 'Bandit' bass amp were to become the prime choice of musicians across Australia. They built large-scale sound systems from Altec Lansing designs, powering them with huge Strauss valve amps and using Strauss active crossovers. They built their own mixers and were well in advance of their Sydney counterparts. In 1969, the company name was changed to **NOVA SOUND**.



In 1960, an RCA engineer named **Victor Kay (Snr)** moved to Sydney from Brazil and went to work for AWA. Import duties on imported speakers at that time was around 45%, so Victor made his own 12-inch and 15-inch speakers in 1963 under the name of 'Lafayette'. Victor formed the **ETONE** company in the late sixties to manufacture speakers. They still do to this very day.

In Brisbane, **Tony Troughton**, a former chief engineer for the Western Electric Company (U.K.), started building guitar, bass and PA amps under the name of **VASE** in the early sixties. Troughton had been a pioneer of active PA technology and recording equipment in England. Brisbane was actually the 'rock capital' of Oz in those days and **VASE** sold incredibly well. His apprentice was a young man called Jon Burnett. **Hans Overeem** was also developing a reputation in Brisbane and was the first person to build an aluminium-extruded amplifier in the world.

In 1965, **Jon Burnett** moved to Sydney where he worked with Bruce Brown servicing amps and organs. Organ

THE SIXTIES

companies were the first to develop and use solid-state technology and the Lowry company took solid state to its highest level of development. Bruce Brown was the most-knowledgeable man at the time and taught John about the new technology. These organs led directly to the synthesisers and computer-based technologies that we know today. John started the **LENARD** company (his middle name) in 1966 in Sydney. His first bass amp was built for the brilliant Duncan McGuire and the first PA system went to Doug Parkinson's band, the Questions, which was the first band to use all-Lenard equipment.

Burnett and the infamous, eccentric **Roger Foley** (a.k.a. LSD Fogg) started producing 'events' for venues such as The Arts Factory and gained a reputation for professionalism and ingenuity. Their audio and light shows were extraordinary!

Back in the sound realm, John Burnett employed **Jim Pye** (later to form CORD SOUND) as a retail financier to help bands buy equipment. Sales surged as a result of sponsoring the 2SM 'Battle Of The Bands' contest and the Ourimbah festival, where all stage and PA equipment was LENARD. Michael Dickson joined LENARD in order to work closely with Victor Kay (Snr) at Etone to produce high-powered speakers to drive bigger systems. As a result, the first speakers with 3-inch and 4-inch voice coils emerged (believed to be the first of their types in the world). An unfortunate association with a prominent Sydney family saw LENARD dissolve into a mess with John Burnett forced out of his own company and Hans Overeem brought in to run the business. Loyal company employees rebelled against the new owners and the company was internally sabotaged. LENARD ceased to trade in 1972.

Ian Johnstone (now at EVI) arrived in Australia in 1967 as a roadie from New Zealand and stayed to form **WASP** Industries with Doug Henderson (now at Powerhouse Studios), making valve amplifiers under the name of 'Holden' which was a New Zealand company owned by Ron Holden. Ian bought Doug out in 1968. The WASP 200 watt bass amp became an industry standard for many years, being used by bands such as Sherbet, Hush, Flying Circus, Blackfeather and Jeff St. John's Copperwine.

Gill McPherson formed **Phoenix** in Sydney and made amps and speaker boxes. He later joined forces with Jim Pye to form **CORD SOUND**. Their most-famous PA system was the 'Purple People Eater' which they built for Sherbet in 1972. They also built guitar and bass amps.

In June 1967, **Bruce Jackson** and **Philip Storey** began lighting parties in backyards with the help of some university friends. They had met at Vaucluse Boys High School, where Bruce built the PA system 'in a table top', which Connections publisher Julius Grafton later learned

how to drive. They later established J&S Research Electronics at Rose Bay, which became JANDS.

The Sixties were basically the 'raw' decade, when local bands became instant heroes and Rock'n'Roll took a grip on Australia. Glenn A. Baker fondly recalls seeing the Beatles at The Stadium (a boxing arena) in Sydney (around 1964) playing to a huge audience through two PA columns and utilising the house lighting only! Local bands carried small vocal systems (powered mixer and 2 columns) and their stage gear. Support personnel were usually a manager and a road manager (roadie - who looked after everything including transport, equipment and accommodation. An old term these days, not used). Any large outdoor or indoor shows usually featured multiples of columns stacked together. Microphones were basically Shure or AKG and portable lighting systems were virtually non-existent until the late sixties when Strand Electric introduced the Fresnel spotlights.



Sunbury - Billy Thorpe Backline



Early Jands Audio Mixer



Early Jands PA at State Theatre



THE SEVENTIES

By the end of the late 1960's, Rock and Roll was firmly established as a 'weekend pursuit' in Australia. In an unprecedented era, our most-popular bands were accessible to huge audiences on a regular basis in local halls in suburban areas. Under-18 venues were numerous and promoters usually had a minimum of 4 bands on view per night at each location. A typical Saturday night dance might feature four top-line acts such as The Easybeats, Billy Thorpe and The Masters Apprentices etc.. Each act would do a 30 minute spot, pack up everything and move on to another venue. They each carried their stage gear and small column-style PA systems. Nobody shared equipment unless an emergency arose. If the band had a roadie, they were considered to be very successful and were accorded serious respect. Transport was usually the good old Holden station wagon or panel van.

The most-common PA systems were still 'column-style' boxes with either 4 x 12-inch speakers in each or 2 x 15-inch, sometimes with a tweeter or a small horn! The boxes were usually made from pine board. They sometimes exploded when wet! Lighting was still non-existent, with the standard hall lights left on all night! Local audio manufacturing was starting to get serious.

The self-powered mixer was well and truly invented by 1970! The **Lenard** version had four input channels, each with the dreaded high-impedance input and primitive 2-band equalisation. It featured 150 watts of thumping power! A very early international show at Randwick Racecourse (circa 1971) featured Deep Purple, Free, Manfred Mann and Piranha (Oz support) had approximately 10 Lenard PA boxes per side mounted on trestle tables (you know, the ones with 'rocking horse' legs!) driven by 10 Lenard 'powered mixers' linked with guitar leads! No multicores, no huge audio consoles, no graphic equalisers; everything was done from backstage. You had to be there to believe it! But in those days, it was huge.



WASP Backline



"FREE" with Lenard Backline



Name this Band? Check out the lighting rig

It's time for psychedelia. Join us as we turn on and tune out. These were the wild eyed, dumb hair days. Cool, man?

A Sydney venue in the early 1970's called 'The Arts Factory' unleashed 'psychedelia' lighting on stunned Sydney audiences, using overhead projectors and pyrex dishes filled with oil and water based dyes. Eddie VanDerMadden created fantastic lighting machines, based on old slide projectors. An example: he removed the heat glass, allowing the full heat of the lamp to melt slides and boil coloured dyes in tiny thin glass chambers. He found that sticky taped on polarised plastic would effect when you rotated another polarised disk across the optical chain. These were wild, weird, and colourful devices!

The McSpeddon brothers also ran psychedelic lightshows in Melbourne, at the T.F. Much More Ballroom.

Lenard, Vase and Nova battled for market supremacy in Australia with PA systems. **Al Butler** had taken over **NOVA** and he and **Wyn Milsom** (later to shift to JANDS) changed

THE SEVENTIES

from using Altec to using JBL and made their own transistorised power amps in 1970. NOVA were building large-scale horn-loaded audio systems for concerts and their first audio console appeared in 1973.

Henry Freedman was importing **Dynacord** PA equipment from Germany by 1969 and had opened a retail outlet at Ashfield. He sold truckloads of PA systems to local bands and even provided one of the first portable reverb effect units. Henry was a gentleman and happily passed on his knowledge to young roadies and musicians. Dynacord had powered mixers and also sold column speakers. The build quality was (and still is) superb and these reliable little units were the mainstay of many bands. Many years later his son, Peter, achieved success with an Australian-designed studio microphone series called Rode. Dynacord survives today as a member of the EVI Group which includes Electro-Voice.

Strand Electric ruled the lighting industry. The Strand hire department in Sydney was run for many years by the legendary **Rob Nicholls** whose assistance to young lighting people was invaluable. The Pattern 243 Fresnel at 2000 watts was the brightest light in common use! Lights were operated by primitive switch boards, banks of ordinary household light switches set on a piece of wood. The Strand SP 40 was the lighting controller of your dreams in theatre and on the road. Strand released a three-preset version. Strand also released tungsten halogen powered luminaires, the Pattern 763 and 743! The Miniset 10 was the standard dimmer in an era when dimming was a luxury and straight switching was normal control at rock concerts. Three phase power wasn't commonly available in rock venues and some adventurous lighting operators 'hard-wired' cables directly to power sources. This extremely dangerous practice was to continue for some time before venue operators finally got the message and installed legal outlets.



Early Jands PA

In this section of our evolving history of the genre, we talk about how Jands was formed, amongst other things. The 1970's was a pivotal era in Australian road touring and concert production. There are more chapters in our 'History' section.

In 1970, Eric Robinson and Paul Mulholland purchased J&S Research. Bruce Jackson ran off to America to find fame and fortune. The Mulholland brothers, Paul and David, together with Eric Robinson and his brother, Eddie, joined forces with Phil Storey and **JANDS** started operating from above a chemist shop in Rose Bay.

Smart promoters like Phil Smiles (later to become a politician) and Donnie Sutherland were running new venues in youth clubs, surf clubs and community halls. The lighting in these halls was provided by small, part-time, independent operators like the fledgling MAC Lights (owned by **Phil Cullen**), Zapco Lighting (**Julius Grafton**) and Vibe Lighting (**Colin Baldwin**). Rarely were the bands lit, illuminated instead by overhead light bulbs on the stage. The creation of the 'ambience' of the venue was considered to be more important. The Strand Pattern 23 and Pattern 123 were the basic lighting equipment along with moving colour-wheels and/or 'flicker' wheels. These wheels usually featured 5 colours and revolved using a small motor. The first 'moving lights'! Rows of lights inherited from old theatres called 'groundrows' were often constructed from timber utilising 150 watt coloured mirror back floods. They sat on the floor and were used to provide a lighting 'wash' for the stage and later for illuminating walls for effect. Police-style beacons, ultra-violet tubes and 'dry ice' in fuel drums (for a fog effect) enhanced proceedings. Strand introduced the Pattern 23 mark 2, which featured a faceted reflector!

JANDS later introduced the first locally manufactured strobe lights and colour organs which quickly became the new trend in dance halls.

English lighting operator **Phil Burkinshaw** arrived in Australia in 1970. He had experience behind him from touring in the UK. Phil visited the lighting operator for touring English legends, 'YES', at the Hordern Pavilion. The operator was **Michael Tait**, a UK based ex Melbourne lad, at that time a fast rising LD to the stars. He is now USA based with his company "Tait Towers", and he used to work closely with Clair Bros productions. 'Yes' had steel framed containers, inside which travelled "trees", 8 x par cans and a gas driven genie tower. The wood panelling served to protect the lights, outriggers pushed in through slots, and the lamps rose out of the containers for use.

Phil did a deal with John and bought 10 lights at the end of the tour. He wired them in pairs to run at 240 volts and approached General Electric in Australia for more globes.

THE SEVENTIES



Colin's new rig at home/Krazy Maze Pars

They told him he was nuts and there was no future for 110 volt equipment in this country. That must rank with the dummy who thought that fast food chains like McDonalds would never take off in Oz and knocked back the franchise! Phil formed **Krazy Maze** Lighting and manufactured the first Par Cans in Australia. These bright-orange lamps changed the lighting industry forever. Push-up lighting stands were still the only support method available, so in order to lift these lights into the air, Phil then imported 20 Genie pneumatic air cylinders from the USA. Krazy Maze were now the premier lighting company in Sydney (and probably Australia), using Par Cans while everyone else was stuck with Patt 23 and Patt 123.

Existing Strand follow-spots could penetrate the power of the par cans, so Burkinshaw found a solution in America, the Strong 'Super Trooper' with a Xenon globe. It was huge and weighed a tonne or two! Burkinshaw promptly



The Hordern Pavillion "Super Troopers"

had five shipped to Australia. He now had the locals running scared and competitors quickly jumped on the bandwagon, trying to politically undermine Krazy Maze. By now, Burkinshaw had a host of talent working with him (including Colin Baldwin who purchased three banks of 8 par 64's and pneumatic towers) and secured the most-prestigious hires including local bands and lots of international shows. Without a doubt, Burkinshaw's contribution to our industry was probably the **most-significant lighting production achievement** of them all. He single-handedly ignored the politics of the amateurs and sent us on a path to the future. These days he lives in South Australia and makes innovative stage support systems.

By 1972, **WASP** had started making PA systems to compliment their backline amps and boxes. Whistler's Mother and Buffalo both purchased WASP audio rigs to add to their inventories. The members of Whistler's Mother apparently still own their complete backline and PA system which is stored in Mudgee and works perfectly. The Ted Mulry Gang also bought one of the biggest sound systems of the time from WASP, who by then had a thriving wood working business supplying boxes to other companies such as Jands and Roland. In 1974, Ian Johnstone and then-Hush roadie, **John Swiney**, designed a modified JBL 4530 cabinet with a JBL 4370 horn and called it the '**J**' box. In the same year, Ian sold a young Peter Ratcliffe (now a Director of Jands Production Services) and David Williams their first PA system.



Buffalo 2SM Concert



WASP created what was to become the largest-selling single 15-inch bass speaker box in Australia's history in 1978 the legendary (EV) **TL15**. The inspiration came from local musician Faye Reid, a bass player who had used an Altec/ EV theatre box called a TL606 in Germany as a bass box! Faye asked Ian to build something

THE SEVENTIES

like it for her own use and the TL15 was born. It officially became an Electro-Voice box in 1979. It also served as a low-end PA box and was complimented by a 3-way version, the TL15-3. By 1982, Ian had sold over 3,000 amp heads and 2,500 TL15 cabinets and he decided he'd had enough. He sold his wood working business to Jands, complete with contracts and staff. Ian left Jands in 1985 and went to Electro-Voice, where he is currently the Australian National Sales Manager.

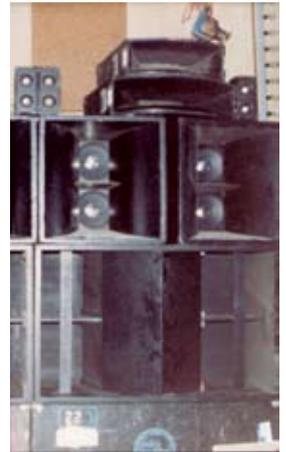
In **Adelaide**, **Lee Conlon** had grown from a service agent to a manufacturer with his company, **REVOLVER AUDIO**. By 1974 he was making his own amps, mixers and electronics to use with the standard JBL 4560 bins and 2482 horns. In 1977, two young South Aussie bands decided to tour Australia and bought a PA system together. By 1978, both Cold Chisel and The Angels had hit records and the time came to expand. **REVOLVER** left Adelaide and moved to Sydney but discontinued production of amps and desks because the Aussie dollar was at high-value, allowing superior imported products to sold at cheaper prices. Their hire business boomed and they supplied equipment to a host of 'heavyweights' including Chisel, Angels, Icehouse and the Divinyls. In **1981**, Lee imported the Martin Audio 'Phillishave' midrange (2 x 12) cabinet to Australia and impressed everyone. The JBL 4560 was on its last gigs.



Revolver PA 80's

By 1975, the Paul Dainty Corporation owned a **Clair Brothers** audio system which had been brought to Australia by Bruce Jackson in 1973 to be used for a tour by 'Blood, Sweat and Tears' and was left in Australia. The PA and Billy McCartney's lighting efforts was instigated by Ron Blackmore primarily to service the needs of the Paul Dainty Corp tours, this was well prior to **Artist Concert Tours** being formed. Ron had production bits and pieces in place all over the country, sadly the master story teller is no longer around to elaborate further. Ron passed away some years ago. Ron went on to form Artists Concert Tours (ACT). This PA was arguably the most-advanced in Australia at that time. Featuring RCA 'boats' for bottom-

end (7-foot long boxes with 2 x 15 speakers), Clair Bros 'Roy' (2 x 12) midrange bins, and JBL top-end, this PA was virtually 'state-of-the-art'. The console was built by Clair Brothers and designed by Bruce Jackson- the Australian co-founder of Jands. It featured 24 inputs, parametric equalisation and a unique 'foldaway' design into the touring flightcase. It apparently is now in Thailand!



DBX processing equipment, a Belden multicore, Phase Linear and SAE amps, an excellent monitor system and a very competent Melbourne road crew made this system the most sort-after in the country.



Name this gig?



Rocktober

Concert Lighting Systems was formed in Melbourne and manufactured quality par cans, truss and lifting systems. They did a lot of international concert tours, and today are still considered the quality manufacturer of concert truss.

Also in 1975, **Harry Lloyd-Williams** began a small manufacturing facility in Brisbane called **MATRA AUDIO**. They introduced mad amps and speaker boxes and, with the arrival of engineer/designer Richard Faint in 1978, significantly increased production to allow enormous expansion. Harry changed the name to **Acoustic Technologies** in the mid-eighties. This company is now one of Australia's largest manufacturers of quality speaker cabinets and has a healthy export trade.

Everyone was doing it! What made up a double 4 way PA. Where the RayLight came from. How the decade ended! This chapter in our growing history opus names some of the newly evolving regional players in the production industry. Those were the days, huh? There's plenty of unidentified people for you to name. Email us!

By 1976, production had evolved to the stage where everyone was building PA systems - common names are Cosmic, Cord, Nova, Phoenix, Jands, and Wasp. The most-common touring **PA systems were basically the same**. Systems usually had 2 x 15 "W" bass bins, JBL 4560 (1 x 15 speaker) or Clair 'Roy' for low-mids, JBL 2482 or 2441 horn drivers (mid-highs) and ring radiators (tweeters) for

THE SEVENTIES

highs. Power amps were likely to be Yamaha, SAE, Crown or BGW. Jands introduced the J-600 amplifier, which went on to be the most-popular amplifier ever built in Australia! Yamaha and Soundcraft were gaining market share with mixing consoles and Jands were making their own JM-series mixers. The Roland 'Space Echo' was the most popular effect unit made at the time. The Roland Corporation was producing graphic equalisers and in 1977, **Ian Rumbold** in Melbourne released what were to become classics, the **Sound Developments** range of crossovers and graphic equalisers.

Sometime in the mid seventies, **Colin Baldwin** purchased a SP-30 lighting desk from Strand and had them add 'flash' buttons and a pin matrix. This unit astounded competitors and allowed unprecedented control for operators. The development of purpose-built lighting systems had begun and the future was here! Baldwin formed an alliance with the fledgling '**SOUNDS**' PA company in Sydney, which was using and representing Cerwin-Vega equipment. Their clients included Marcia Hines, Jon English and even AC/DC and The Saints!



SP30 Strand Desk with Pin Matrix

Another seventies lighting innovation that forever changed the way Australian touring rigs were designed was originally used by Colin Baldwin in '77 as a feature of Marcia Hines set-up at Dean Park in Queensland. Baldwin Lights incorporated the first steel box truss that he had ordered constructed by Jands. Forty feet long this stage-front truss was supported by the first winch-up Super-stands to span an entire stage.



First generation steel truss lifters

Colin's company Baldwin Lights went on to develop it's own range of lighting desks affectionately known as

Trogboards. Later Rock Industries Richard White, who built the first 60 channel Trogboard for Baldwin Lights would design and build desks for Jands Electronics.

Roger Barratt formed the Barratt Lighting after buying Julius Grafton's Zapco Lightshows. Barratt Lighting serviced the theatre industry and crossed over into rock-forming an alliance with Rock industries and distributing its par cans and products. Julius was the general manager.

Jands released the classic JL36 desk - the first mass produced, dedicated 'rock' lighting desk, which became an immediate success. It was the standard touring lighting desk for years to come. Jands introduced the Aurora, the first automated desk of its kind.

In 1978, the 12" box truss and winch-up stand was invented by Rock Industries (formally Cietex). Rock groups quickly found the load limits for both; a lot of falling metal hit polished dance floors!



Prepping the rig

Lasers became an entertainment effects device. The 500-watt **Ray Light** was invented by **Ray Hawkins**, who now works in the lighting dept at the Sydney Opera House.

Jands introduced the JM12 audio mixer, which along with the JM6 (16 channel) went on to become a hit with local bands and installations. The quality choice was a Yamaha PM 1000 which cost 7 times more.

Mick Privitera established Pro Sound Hire in Brisbane, the precursor to Australian Concert Productions. **Balance Sound** was established in Melbourne by **Ernie Rose** and **Michael Wickow**. It later became Troy Balance Corporation.

In 1979, **Artist Concert Tours** formed an association with **Bronco Sound** in Sydney. Bronco owner, Peter Ratcliffe had been in partnership with Colin Baldwin

THE SEVENTIES

under the name of **Baldrat Productions**. Ratcliffe became A.C.T (N.S.W.) and a major player gained a stronghold in Sydney. Local bands such as The Radiators, Sunnyboys, Jimmy and the Boys and Dragon quickly became customers and the hire scene in Sydney was extremely competitive.



Baldrat Productions

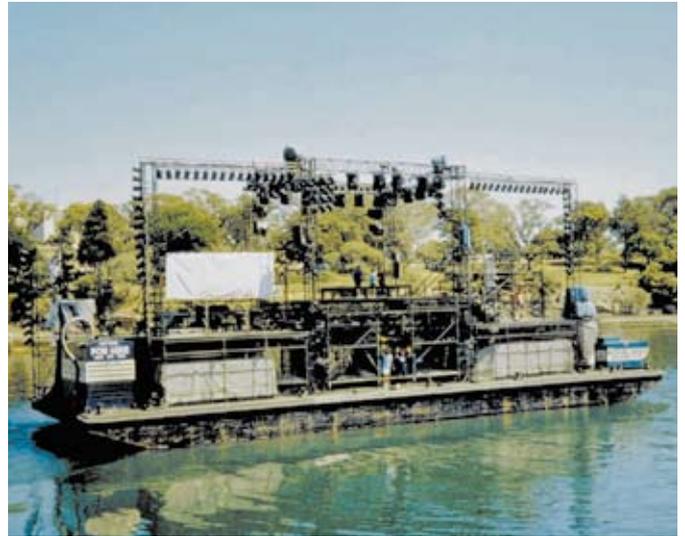
Also in 1979, **Michael White** expanded his operations at **Sound On Stage** to include PA hire. Already having a thriving backline hire section and retail shop, Michael hired fairly 'standard' double 4-way JBL rigs with Yamaha power amps driving them.



Unloading at Sound on Stage

The decade finished with the arrival of the Clair Brothers S4 speaker box, of which 16 were purchased by ACT in Melbourne. This box was to become a mainstay of the touring sound industry for over 20 years! Jands answered the need for a 'one box' flown modular PA by creating the Concord- a horn loaded four way loudspeaker cabinet designed by denim legend and belt buckle collector, Howard Page. Howard now works in a senior role for Clair Brothers, and engineers acts like Phil Collins and The Bee Gees.

Once the 1980's arrived, technology as we now know it was starting to arrive. Those double 4 way PA's were the breeding ground for more compact composite boxes. Moving lights came in the middle of the decade.



WOW!



ABC TV's Countdown



Sunbury 1975

THE EIGHTIES



Jands PA/horns & ring radiators

A new decade dawns. Everyone is using double 4-way PA's loaded with JBL 2220, 2225 and with 2482 or 2441 horns and ring radiators! Electro Voice Australia is established. Lighting is basically the same components utilised in standard formations with truss sections supported by 'trees'. Rock Industries built a memory board for lighting based on the Commodore 64 computer! The first great personnel tragedy of the decade occurs when the amazingly talented young lighting operator Jeff Merryweather dies unnecessarily when his gentle heart is broken by an undeserving woman. The whole industry is stunned and stays drunk for a month.



Monster Jands rig 80's

In 1981, Altec launch 'Main Air', an attempt to take on JBL in the PA market. It fails. The Space Beacon is the most sophisticated lighting effect available, until Vari*Lite is first used at a 'Genesis' concert in Spain.

A local Sydney genius, **Winton Morrow**, designed his famous **WRM-V4** PA system which is still in existence, some boxes owned by L&W Technical Services and some by Sound On Stage. An amazing design, which could be argued by some to be a basic 'line array' formation, this system had huge power from BGW amplifiers driven by specially-doctored BSS crossovers. Clients included The

Church and The Sunnyboys. Lighting in the eighties saw UK manufacturers, Avolites become the Rolls Royce of control and dimming systems with Celco a close second.

In 1982, the first **Meyer** sound system arrived in Australia, heralding the start of the composite PA era. The Sound on Stage warehouse burned down in Sydney. The Compact Disc player was launched onto the world market. Coemar made the 'Robot', arguably the first 'waggly' mirror moving light. Powerful competitors **Jands** and **ACT** merge to form a new company, ACT/JANDS, with offices in Sydney and Melbourne.

In 1983, Etone formed an alliance with the infamous John Busst and decided to import Renkus Heinz. The sound system was a success but blighted with quality control problems that cost the importer dearly, and eventually hobbled the Renkus Heinz brand in Australia.

In 1985, Jands made Ron Blackmore an offer he couldn't refuse and ACT was purchased by JANDS.

New Zealand theatre lighting manufacturer Selecon made inroads into the Australian market, where they are today market leaders. DMX 512 is introduced. LSC introduced the 'Precept', a small lighting board with memory, which went on to become a great success.



Cliff Richard - Apollo Stadium 80's

In 1986, Yamaha introduced the **SPX-90**, a digital multi-effect unit that would herald a new era of FX units. Local box-maker, **Ian Stewart** (Bonza Boxes), contracted Glenn Leembruggen to design the '**Cobra**' speaker box. A pretty basic effort, the Cobra used two EV DL15M speakers and Peavey 22A horn driver to produce a useful cabinet that enjoyed good sales and proved that really nothing much had changed from the sixties and seventies. Front-loaded boxes worked!

THE EIGHTIES

In 1987, ARX and Australian Monitor started exporting Australian pro audio equipment to the world. Australian Monitor went on to lose one million dollars for its original investor Julius Grafton. The first DAT recorder was released. Lee Conlon at Revolver releases his version of the popular colour 'Scroller', a rolling-gel colour-change system for lights. His Showcraft brand goes on to win export sales, and continues today.



Welcome Vari-Lite 1987

John 'Ossie' Vasey releases the first Australian technical book for rock touring technicians, now in its third edition.

In 1988, **Colin Baldwin** toured the first Vari*Lite VL-1 spot lumieres in Oz, as leased by Jands from Vari*Lite in the U.S. Colin remembers that during each show 1 or 2 lights would always lose their preset focus positions. That's why we carried several spares in those days!

Expo 88 and the Bi-Centenary produced the busiest year yet for Australian production companies. **Turbosound** sold hundreds of TMS-3 boxes into Australia, with most going to Mick Privitera in Brisbane, who does big hire business at Expo. Jands sold their Concert Productions business to **Samuelsons** of the UK for a rumoured 7 million dollars.

By 1989, the BOSE 802 is the best selling speaker system in Australia. The Golden Scan is the first commonly available DMX moving-mirror automated light.



Cool side-fill 80's

Pro Sound Hire in Brisbane changes its name to Australian Concert Productions with a huge inventory of Turbosound equipment. ACP run by **Rob "Fatcat" Eastick** has grown to be one of the country's largest audio hire companies, boasting quality equipment and staff.



ACP FOH rig/Rob 'Fatcat' Eastick

Denis Braham sets up Arena technical Services (funded by Arena management the operators of the Sydney Entertainment Centre) by purchasing huge amounts of lighting equipment from Expo 88 and First State 88. ATS soon became a thorn in Jands side, who made Arena Management an offer to good to refuse. ATS was sold to Jands in the early '90's. Denis Braham unfortunately passed away in 1996 after a heart attack.

The eighties ended on an unreal note, with frighteningly high interest rates approaching 17% and inflation exceeding 10%. The cost of finance was astronomical. Against this background the stockmarket was still an interesting place despite the crash of 1987. A Perth entrepreneur formed Star Capital and imported 2 concert PA systems consisting of Martin RS 1200 speakers and Turbo TMS 3 speakers, plus Soundcraft consoles, along with a huge lighting inventory including Avolights dimmers QM 500 desk and 300 fixtures, trussing, chain motors and rigging. Needless to say, the local market didn't respond to prospectus expectations, and the gear went to auction.

Trevor Lloyd's CLS imported at great cost a large Morpheus Pan Command moving light system, which produced competition against Vari-Lite at the time the only moving head moving light system available worldwide. CLS enjoyed moderate success with the system, as some overseas acts chose Pan Command instead of Vari-Lite. But, the Vari-Lite juggernaut prevailed, and Morpheus fell by the wayside.

This was the year that interest rates went past 20% while inflation was running hard at 12%. That sure stopped things! A very quiet start to the decade.

THE NINETIES TO 2002

In 1990, nothing much happened. Australia's entertainment industry had its quietest year as recession bit with a vengeance. The **Intellabeam** moving mirror light and alloy par cans are introduced into Australia. Electro-Voice (Aust) commissions designer Richard Priddle to build the '**Mongoose**', a (2x15 with 2-inch throat horn) front-loaded cabinet with a trapezoidal shape.

In 1991, the Jands 'old boys union' of the Robinson Brothers and Mulholland Brothers buy back their Concert Production business from Samuelsons for less than half of what they were paid for it. Eric Robinson starts wearing 'I Luv Kerry Packer' t-shirts and Samuelsons feel like Alan Bond! Strand Electric pull out of Australia. Etone released the **EHT** (Electron Handling Technology) self-powered audio system.

Big things happened with Electro-Voice when new owners added **Midas** and Klark Teknik to the stable. The amazing **Midas XL3** was released and stunned operators around the globe. Jands bought the first one in Australia as a monitor console for a 'Simply Red' tour. EV are now seriously in the 'sound race' with heavy artillery such as the Manifold concert system and the Klark Teknik electronics.

Lighting directors who had succumb to moving lights revolution, no longer had to rely on Jands as their supplier. With the arrival of moving mirror lights (hire and sales) with rotating gobos and a selection of colours and effects, LD's quickly introduced them to the local band touring circuit and starting installing them into nightclubs. High End released the Intellabeam. Everyone was using these 'waggly mirror' fixtures, but Vari-Light were the owners of many patents for moving head fixtures and protected these patents vigorously.

In 1993, the very-personable Chris Kennedy formed **Norwest Productions**. The company boasted a huge inventory of **EAW** equipment and excellent staff. With his distinct lack of ego, Kennedy quickly made life difficult for competitors and his staff remained loyal to a man who always remained loyal to them. Norwest went on to win several contracts with the prestigious Sydney Olympics and is now a major audio provider in Australia.

Intelligent lighting has dominated most LD's plots for the last ten years. In 1997 Martin released the Mac 600 later and Mac 500, which quickly became standards. Vari-Light moved quickly to assert patent rights and took action against Martin and High End systems for the Studio Colour, these court cases ran for years.

In 1995 Sydney Lighting Designer Roger Barratt dies of leukaemia, Roger had mentored Tony Davies and assisted in the creation of Chameleon Touring Systems, which today is one of the largest lighting production houses in Australia. Jands sell-out entire lighting inventory to Bytecraft

Lighting who now boast the largest ever lighting company in Australia with over 1000 moving lights.

The big audio console manufacturers such as Midas, Yamaha, Soundcraft and Crest continue to try to out-do each other, but with the exception of automation, live consoles are live consoles! The same with everything else. There are heaps of amps such as QSC and EV all vying for your dollar. Shure microphones, DBX processing, TC Electronics, Klark Teknik 'everything', Sennheiser radio systems...take your pick! While all these companies and myriads of others are defining certain technical areas, everything is pretty much common-place these days. It mostly comes down to personal choice rather than 'stand-alone' technology. The lower end of the market is absolutely saturated by Peavey, Yamaha, EV, Mackie, Behringer and hundreds of others. There is very little difference between products in any particular price group.

For lighting, the moving mirror and head has changed lighting technology for ever, and has perhaps gone as far as it can go, only the future will tell.

The producers would like to thank Graeme "Yogi" Harrison for his hard work in researching and writing this brief history.

- Stand by for future updates -



Sydney Olympics bid concert



Star City Millenium celebrations