

## Colourblind's Hippotizers Serve Video at The Logies

The Australian TV industry's biggest night, the 59th annual Logie Awards, were held at Melbourne's Crown Palladium on Sunday 23 April 2017, broadcast live on the Nine Network. Always a great opportunity for the broadcaster to show off its tech capabilities, fantastic visuals were spread across three huge screens onstage, a wrap-around screen surrounding the audience, and pixel mapped to onstage fixtures and LED chandeliers. Helming the mission-critical media server and console operation was Lynden Gare, director of Melbourne-based lighting and production company Colourblind, who relied on Green Hippo's Hippotizer media servers to ensure that the show went exactly to plan.

Green Hippo is no stranger to the world's biggest televised events, with their media servers used on The Eurovision Song Contest and The Academy Awards. At the heart of Lynden's set-up for The Logies were two Hippotizer Karst servers, Green Hippo's 2RU, three-out, tour-ready workhorse. The first server fed an image canvas 4884 pixels wide via SDI to stage to be displayed across three screens, and handled pixel mapping to a range of LED fixtures. The second Karst sent a 1920 pixel wide image to screens wrapping around the auditorium, and a 192x160 output to LED chandeliers. Another server, kindly provided by Australia and New Zealand Green Hippo distributor Lexair, was on hand as further back-up, an essential requirement for any live broadcast.

Terabytes of graphics packages were provided by the Nine Network, design agency Visual Playground, and the touring teams of musical acts Jessica Mauboy and Andy Grammer. Content wrangler Andrew Howie also directed and animated the content for James Blunt. On the night, Lynden operated a flawless show from his console of choice at the FOH position. "Green Hippo is my, and Colourblind's, choice," Lynden confirmed. "We like to drive media servers with a console, and Green Hippo has the best DMX profile for that. It's really easy to add a nice blur to content, slow it down, speed it up, or play it in reverse. Most importantly, the colour manipulation is perfect for TV. For example, if Lighting Supervisor Shane O'Dwyer needs me to remove 3% red from an image, or add 10% contrast, it's far easier and quicker on Green Hippo than any other media server. Colour correction from CTO to CTB is very handy too."



While the Logies are exhaustively prepared and rehearsed, Lynden and the video crew were ready for anything to happen on the night. "We expect the unexpected," said Lynden. "We're always ready for an eventuality where a performance differs slightly from rehearsals. Operating a media server from a console instead of a timeline works well for us. With a timeline, you're fixed to what was done in rehearsals, but with a console, we can change timings or move a fader slightly slower or faster. If one of the presenters walks out on a different side, we can very quickly recall a preset, or push up another fader rather than be locked in to what's rehearsed."



With a huge live television audience looking on, video performance was paramount. “Hippotizer has smooth and reliable playback,” reported Lynden. “All of our video backgrounds are 50 fps and run for about 30 seconds. We know that Green Hippo won’t drop a frame. When someone’s accepting the Gold Logie, you don’t want something stuttering or skipping and attracting more attention than the award winner. We also rely on Green Hippo’s colour averaging in our pixel maps. We were mapping to fixtures one pixel wide, and we didn’t want a jagged image. Using Hippotizers’ colour averaging got us a much smoother result mapping a narrow image to that many fixtures.”

With all seats taken in the Palladium, and a full complement of live broadcast equipment, production real estate was tight. “All the video equipment has to live at the back of the room near FOH, and there’s only three or four metres by one metre to fit all of it,” observed Lynden. “With some other systems, we’d be looking at a far bigger footprint to get this number of outputs. The beauty of our Green Hippo set-up is that we’re producing five video outs and three pixel map outs in just two machines.”



It wasn’t just during the show that Green Hippo made Lynden’s job easier, but also in the preparation and rehearsal leading up to the event. “One of the beauties of Hippotizer is that we can just open up the front panel and slot in larger drives for a project like the Logies, when we’re expecting terabytes of image sequences,” he explained. “We know it’s infinitely expandable with consumer grade SSDs. And in rehearsals, in the multi-user environment of the Hippotizer software ZooKeeper, we can have two of us working on different things on the same show file, on the same machines, at the same time. Media server supertech, Chris Lewis, can work on a new pixel map for a music act for me without interrupting what’s happening on stage.”



In the end, the 59th annual Logie Awards went off without a hitch for all involved, but support was there if needed. “Lexair went above and beyond to provide support and redundancies in Melbourne in case we needed it,” said Lynden. “It was a broadcast gig, and we needed to be protected in case of multiple points of failure. That being said, all of our support queries to date have been hardware related, but not about Hippotizer hardware, mainly questions of compatibility with third party equipment. It shows that Hippotizer is a reliable, mature product.”

