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**David Lee Captures the ‘Creative Tornado’ of Baz Luhrmann’s Elvis with Sound Devices’ Scorpio and CL-16***Academy-award winning production sound mixer on embracing new tools for complex productions and why dialogue is always king*

**SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, April 27, 2023 — Production sound mixer David Lee has seen it all. From the bombastic production cycles of blockbuster films like *The Matrix* Trilogy and *Pirates of the Caribbean* to more character-driven films like *Romper Stomper* and *Muriel’s Wedding*, the four decade industry veteran has been there ensuring that the dialogue that pushes these stories forward is captured on set in crystal clarity. Lee’s most challenging project to date, Baz Luhrmann’s *Elvis*, required an even more exacting approach to keep up with the whirlwind of era- spanning set changes and the celebrated auteur’s off-the-cuff directing style. To ensure that he wouldn’t miss a word, Lee built his recording rig around the** [**Sound Devices**](http://www.sounddevices.com/)[**Scorpio**](https://www.sounddevices.com/product/scorpio/) **36 track mixer-recorder and** [**CL-16**](https://www.sounddevices.com/product/cl-16/?_gl=1*14uebb8*_up*MQ..*_ga*MjY4NTE1MDUzLjE2ODIxMDk5NTM.*_ga_S18YMRS6X9*MTY4MjEwOTk1My4xLjEuMTY4MjExMDUyMi4wLjAuMA..) **linear fader control surface.**

**Dialogue is king**Despite being a period piece filled with vintage audio and musical equipment, Lee’s focus was the same as any other film he has worked on— capturing dialogue in the best possible quality with minimal noise. Doing so required extensive preproduction and cooperation to ensure that the set environments and his positioning were as favorable as possible, all while adhering to strict restrictions put upon the production in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “It involved working hand-in-hand with the art department and musical department to ensure that we were all in sync on what needed to happen,” said Lee. “Doing so ensured that I was able to be in the best room positions possible, with minimal on-set noise from all of the period-correct equipment that was used.”

Knowing the style of the film’s director quite well, Lee’s workflow on *Elvis* was designed to be ready for anything to change at a moment’s notice. Despite being an intricate production with ambitious period-correct set pieces that required multiple departments to work together at once, Luhrmann was unafraid to follow his muse based on how a scene should come together. Being prepared to follow this instinctive approach required everyone to be on their toes. “No matter what film you are working on, the dialogue is king and it has to be captured properly,” he said. “The fun of *Elvis* was that it was such a flamboyant production that you had to be ready to preempt whatever might be required and have all of your audio tools switched on and ready to go.”

“Knowing that and knowing how many tracks we would need to record each day — both dialogue and music on the same machine — was what led me to adopt the Scorpio for this production.”

**The right tools for the job**

Lee is a longtime fan of Sound Devices’ mixer/recorders having previously used the 744T and 833 on many productions. During pre production on *Elvis*, Musical Director Elliot Wheeler had expressed a desire to capture the musical performances and the dialogue at the same time on the same recorder for maximum authenticity. Lee saw an opportunity to take advantage of Scorpio’s large track count as well as its Dante connectivity for the task. “Having it all in one machine that’s as flexible and reliable as the Scorpio immediately made our lives much easier,” he said. “We tested it and the CL-16 control surface in rehearsals with 16 tracks of dialogue and 16 of music, and it worked perfectly.”

“It made the workflow much simpler and more straightforward, which on a production like this that moves so quickly is absolutely vital.”

All of these efforts culminated in one of the standout set pieces of the film – Elvis’s stunning performance headlining the Las Vegas International Hotel after the triumph of his 1968 comeback special. The scene included Elvis, his backing band, and a twenty-piece orchestra all using period-authentic equipment. “It was an incredible spectacle to witness and with the Scorpio setup we were able to capture everything we needed and then some,” said Lee. “The entire film was particularly unique in how much we needed to be able to do, and to have the technology to do all of that is beyond what I might have considered possible in the past. It’s really impressive.”

“The processes we were able to develop for the film with Scorpio were real game-changers for us. It’s a wonderful machine.”

For more information, please visit: <http://www.sounddevices.com/>

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**About Sound Devices**

For 25 years, Sound Devices has created premier audio equipment that helps sound professionals capture superior audio. The company’s multi-track audio recorders, field production mixers and related equipment have been used on the sets of award-winning movies, TV shows, and documentaries. Sound Devices designs, assembles and supports its products at their Reedsburg, Wisconsin headquarters and their Madison, Wisconsin and Watford, UK offices.