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## Northbridge Piazza Big Screen Revitalizes Perth Neighborhood

*New Entertainment Space Running with ToolsOnAir*



This city's Northbridge district has long been known for its diversity and its nightlife. Now the area is evolving to become a family-friendly community and cultural nexus, thanks in no small part to the recently completed Northbridge Piazza, home to the city's first Urban Screen.

Broadcasting a mix of video and interactive programming, the Piazza's Urban Screen is part of a growing global network of outdoor big screens focused on providing multimedia and interactive content within public spaces. As media director Damien Blythe explains, the screen's programming is designed to not just entertain, but to encourage participation and foster a sense of community.

"Much of what we bring to the screen is created by various local artists and cultural groups, and includes a fair amount of interactive multimedia content," he says. "We also share content and ideas with other urban screens worldwide. Our goal is to keep it interesting and unique, and to make it more than just a passive viewing experience you can get at home."

Blythe, a veteran of Australia's first urban screen at Melbourne's Federation Square, says one of the biggest challenges is simply maintaining the intensive schedule of programming. With a small staff and a limited budget, broadcasting from 7:00AM to 11:00PM seven days per week would be next to impossible without the aid of ToolsOnAir's just:play and Quartz Composer software.

"When I worked at Fed Square we tried a number of proprietary systems, none of which really did what they were supposed to," says Blythe. "I was looking for an integrated, Mac-based solution, and ToolsOnAir fit the bill." A single Mac Pro oversees the video playback scheduling via a simple Apple script applet utilizing just:play, seamlessly automating sources ranging from DVD, satellite and free-to-air TV to web-based video and in-house productions.

Much of the screen's most innovative graphics and interactive content is created by acclaimed video designer Nick "Pogo" Bertke. Bertke, whose Pogomix.net website is a top Internet draw, uses ToolsOnAir's CompositionBuilder software within Apple's Quartz Composer.

"My background is in Photoshop and After Effects, and it was a simple transition to working in CompositionBuilder and Quartz Composer," Bertke observes. "It's a very powerful and flexible application, and streamlines the workflow significantly. Before we'd always have to render files out of After Effects, which was tedious and time consuming. Using CompositionBuilder and Quartz Composer we can use motion-based images directly by dragging them into just:play."

In addition to creating studio-sanctioned "video mash-ups" of well-known movies, Bertke uses CompositionBuilder and Quartz Composer to design interactive graphics that encourage audience participation. Recent creations have included a photo wall where viewers can upload pictures via their Bluetooth-enabled phones and interface with whimsical "thought bubbles," as well as a piano keyboard graphic triggered by people walking across the keys.

"We're always experimenting with new ways to engage people," says Blythe. "Most interactive technology has been designed for individuals or small groups of people. When you get a group of 200 or so people involved in a large outdoor space, the interaction is amplified. It opens up the medium for people and facilitates expression."

Employing such a wide range of data-intensive sources could easily become a recipe for high maintenance, but Blythe says ToolsOnAir's technology goes a long way toward streamlining the workflow. "There is nothing better than watching a fully interactive program come through the scheduler without having to switch to another computer or requiring another A/V operator. ToolsOnAir is unique in that it goes beyond being a simple scheduler, giving us a single user interface to control the entire multimedia system. We've been able to shave off 20 to 30 hours per week of time we'd otherwise spend rendering and processing media, and that's time we can spend exploring creativity in Quartz Composer," he says.

"The promise of technology has always been about making things simpler so we can focus on the creative," Blythe concludes. "There's only x amount of time and budget available in any endeavor, and if we can limit the time spent on the process, we can spend more time on the creative. Ultimately that means a better experience for our viewers."

### **NORTHBRIDGE PIAZZA – DESIGNED AND MANAGED BY THE CITY OF PERTH**

Size: 1,800 m<sup>2</sup> of open space with a capacity crowd of 1,800 people

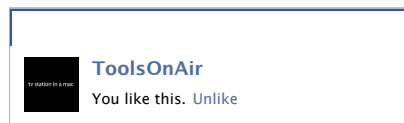
#### FEATURES

Community Building Rooms available for public hire  
Ground level retail space  
Control room for the Piazza screen

Piazza Screen Barco LED Screen Solution  
Dimensions 4.78 metre x 8.06 metre  
Available for hire by public groups staging events in the Piazza

Artwork 6m roundabout sculpture 'Arch' by Lorenna Grant  
Eastern Piazza wall mural by ololo

Green Wall Dimensions 8 metre x 5 metre  
Consisting of stainless steel and stainless-steel mesh elevated planter boxes



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