VERSION 8.0.1.XXX – DEVELOPED BY: AVOLITES MEDIA LTD. POWERED BY: SALVATION (TM) HARRISON DIGITAL MEDIA INC. DRIVEN BY: DAVE GREEN, TREY HARRISON, STEVE WARREN, J.B, CIARAN ABRAMS, SELVIN COOPER, ARRAN ROTHWELL-EYRE, SIMON GRAHAM, MARY, PRADS, GREG, ADAM, OLIE, ALL AT AVOLITES AND YOU. SPECIAL THANKS MARK CALVERT. LETS ROCK!
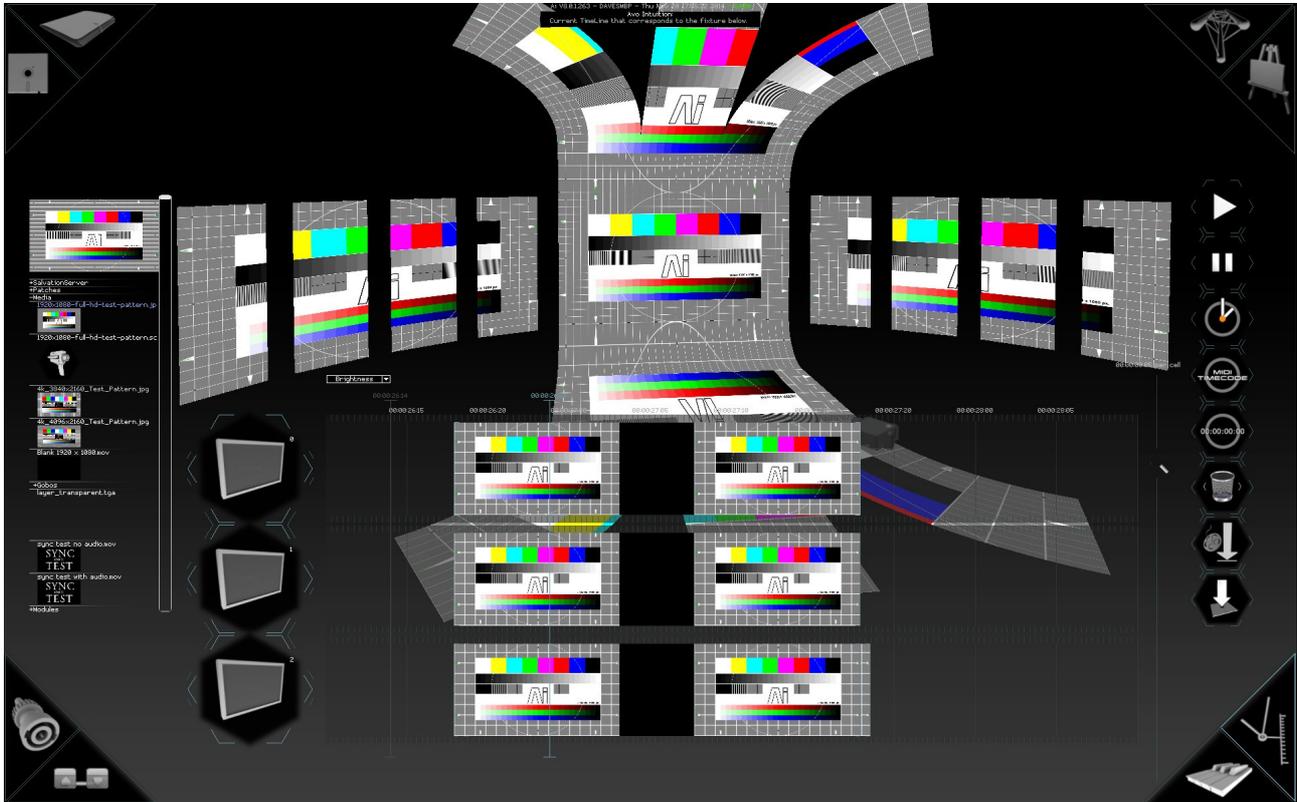
Timeline Page

VERSION 8.X

By Arran Rothwell-Eyre December 2014

with Additions by Dave Green & Ciaran Abrams

Timeline Page.

Pre-Sequence your show

There are many times when it becomes important to exactly reproduce a show from venue to venue – it could be that there are highly choreographed sections which require precise timing or simply because the performer wants to be able to deliver the same performance to all crowds across every show of a tour. This is where the timeline page can become a very useful tool, allowing you to create precise and measured shows which can be highly accurate to the frame.

Anyone familiar with the use of video editors or audio sequencers should find the approach familiar and understandable – the timeline is a sequentially ordered set of events running from the top of the screen to the bottom or from left to right depending on your chosen layout configurable within the system settings (see the system settings tutorial for more information), with the option to display up to 4 layers per timeline (pressing + and – will add or take away layers) and within those layers the ability to place media and control points which in turn control the parameters associated with the media.

Once created, a timeline file can be exported which can then either be triggered manually or locked to timecode to ensure frame accurate reproduction of any playback and automation you have created.

Lets take a closer look at the timeline window and the tools found on the page:

As you can see, the main work area for the timeline which is where we place the media and control changes runs either down towards to the fixture icon when on vertical mode or across to the fixture on horizontal mode – this makes it easy to tell which fixture the timeline belongs too. If we have more than one fixture, we can multi select them to display all timelines at the same time or we can select just one and it will use all of the space provided by the fixture icons (using some dummy fixtures can be a good way to expand your working area if required – just remember to delete them once you are done programming). In most cases, it is preferable to edit on a timeline which in timecode terms, starts at 00:00:00:00 and then trigger the timeline at the required time instead of trying to work out the precise timeline position to program and then all of the relevant offsets – in this way of working, the values in the timeline are essentially offsets from your original trigger time.

Media and patches can be dragged into the main section of the timeline from either the built in Ai browser or from the windows browser itself, and audio files can be dragged into the smaller section either next to or below the timeline (depending on the timeline orientation). Being able to import a .WAV file and work to that means that you can very easily create frame accurate video accompaniments for your show. To make this even easier you can input marker points by pressing the home either when the timeline is playing or static. The marker point which is created can then be used as a reference point for positioning media or parameter automation – the most common way to use this is to playback the timeline with the audio file and whilst it is playing give the home key a press at points you wish to have important changes such as verse chorus and once complete use these points as your placement markers.

Once marker points have been placed (if required) and media has been dragged onto the timeline, one of the first thing you might want to do is change the position of the media or how long it loops for. Firstly click on the media on the timeline and the ends of the clip should change to a lighter blue colour to confirm it is selected. Now press M (move) on the keyboard and the clip becomes locked to the mouse, letting you to move it to the position you require and then place it by pressing the left mouse button. If you have any marker points, you will find that the media will snap into these locations once it gets within a few frames of the marker. To change the amount of time that the media loops for, hold the Alt button and then drag the end using the left mouse button until it is in the place you require.

Once you are happy with the positions of the clips along the timeline, you may want to automate some of the parameters which control that piece of media. To access the available parameters, left click the media on the timeline and the to the left (or above in horizontal mode) you should see a drop down menu with the word Parameter List. Clicking this shows you what can be controlled, and choosing one of these options then allows you to manually enter automation points by right clicking within the timeline area covered by the media file itself. Its worth remembering that the value range for keyframes is from -1 to +1. The reason for this is that some parameters (such as rotation or position) require a negative value as well as a positive one compared to some values (such as intensity or hue) which will work within a 0 to 1 range. For this reason, regardless of the parameter selected, a value of 0 is always in the middle of the timeline. Once keyframes have been placed, they can then be selected and moved by either left clicking a single keyframe or by holding shift and dragging a box around multiple keyframes and then dragging them to their new position. When a keyframe is selected or moved, its current value is displayed next to it to allow you to precisely alter the value.

The tools menu to the right side of the timeline window gives you some options to control the playback both inside of the timeline page and when triggering timelines from the performance page. Working from the top down, we have the play and pause buttons which control the playback within the timeline page. Following those we have the system clock option which allows you to use the current time on your system clock instead of waiting for a timecode signal – this is very usefull for permanent installs that may have regular times to display advertising or to let people know the exhibition ends in 30 minutes, but don't have the requirement for true timecode. Following that we have the embed timecode option – if you are going to playback your timeline under timecode control then this option needs to be chosen. The fifth button down returns your playhead to 00:00:00:00 on the timeline – the timeline will remember the position of the playhead when it is exported – for most applications it makes sense to save your timeline at 00:00:00:00.
The trash can icon will delete the selected media or keyframes and the icon after that will set how the media performs after the timeline has passed – whether the media stops playing at the end of the programming or keeps looping the last file until a further command is received. The very last icon on the list is used to export the timeline so that it can be imported as a single trigger onto the performance page (remember to set the playhead to 00:00:00:00 and to activate timecode if required)

Once saved and imported into the performance page, a timeline trigger can be treated in the same way as media with the same trigger and control options available. It is also worth noting that whichever timeline is selected on the performance page determines the one which is shown on the timeline, which means that you can easily go back, edit and resave a timeline with minimum effort.

For a full list of keyboard shortcuts please see the Keyboard Shortcuts Section (See the Keyboard shortcuts Tutorial)