Bon Jovi Tour

AVOLITES & AVOLITES MEDIA

By Justin**Lang**

Three years ago, Avolites sent shockwaves through the industry with the launch of sister company Avolites Media. In that time the new company has delivered a host of award winning and industry milestone projects. We at PLSN feel the time is right to take a closer look at Avolites Media and the impact the company is having on the converging sectors of lighting and video control.

» A Look Back

For years, Avolites has been one of the console manufacturers that everyone seemed to know and love. The London

Those developments promise to build on the core features that already set Avolites Media and Ai software apart. "A clear benefit of using Avolites Ai servers is the 3D visualization of your production," Warren says. "The first step in any production is getting the client or artist to sign off on the design and, therefore, budget. Nothing makes this stage more likely to have a successful outcome than a true 3D representation of your design, complete with real time video. To the best of my knowledge, Ai is the only server that is able to render a 3D model across the entire network of connected servers, a feature provided in our new V8 software version. We are proud to be leading the industry in 3D visual-
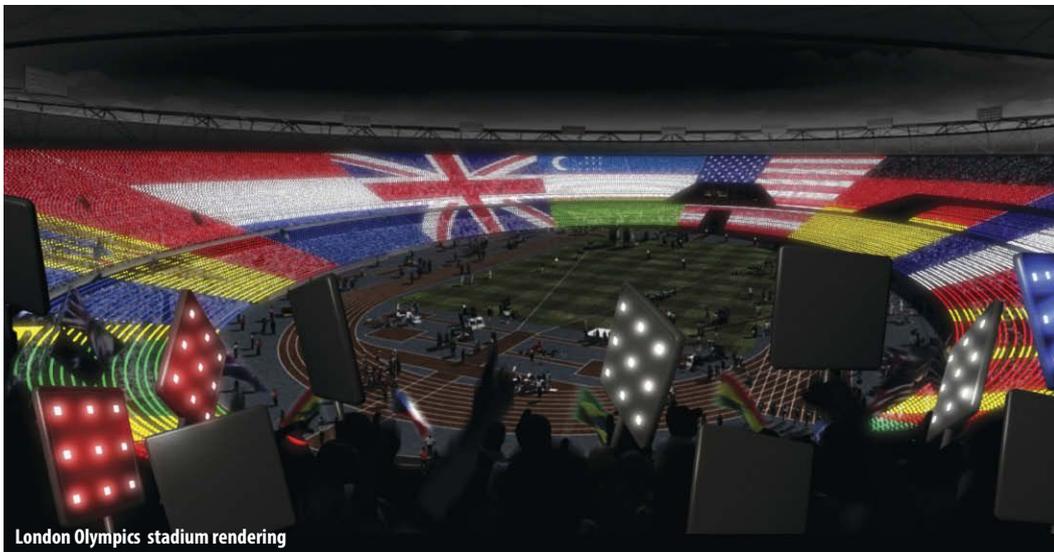
London Olympics stadium rendering

EDC 2014 in Las Vegas

based company enjoyed a loyal fan base from users that bordered on fierce devotion and dominated concert touring, with 17 of the top 20 acts touring with Avolites-controlled lighting rigs. Michael Jackson, U2, Tina Turner and Aerosmith were just a few of the top tours relying on Avolites consoles for control.

In the early 2000s, Avolites' touring dominance waned as a new crop of designers and programmers were lured away with rival desks with buzz-worthy features. Despite attempts to halt the erosion with new distribution agreements, the console brand continued to lose share of market — and share-of-mind. Seasoned veterans knew the console, but up-and-coming professionals began to ask, "Avolites…Who?"

In 2011, Avolites generated a lot of buzz of its own at the annual PLASA tradeshow at London's Earls Court exhibition center, not with just a new product, but a new

company — Avolites Media. Heralding the company's big push into media server and video technologies, Avolites Media was the outgrowth of Avolites' acquisition of Addict media server software developed by Immersive, Ltd. (previously Pixel Addicts). Under Avolites Media, the software was introduced as Ai.

Even as Avolites Media was being conceived and launched, Avolites' lighting control division continued to evolve. The lighting control portion of the business has deep roots, going back to the late 1970s when the company first emerged as a lighting production company before crossfading into manufacturing with such early products as the Avolites FD dimmer. In recent years, Avolites' lighting control focus has been on its Windows OS-based Titan software shared by the new Titan Mobile, Tiger Touch and Sapphire Touch control solutions.

» Looking Ahead

Avolites understood that the role of video in the lighting world would be increasingly integrated. "We didn't see a division between the two, but the joining of video and lights into one," says managing director Steve Warren. "Our control products running the Titan software and our media products running Ai are a natural fit together. We have designed them to leverage complete control with new features added constantly."

Avolites is now poised to take the convergence of digital lighting control and video processing to a new level in early 2015. "For the past year, we have been developing our next step in merging the technologies," Warren says. "In Frankfurt at Prolight+Sound next year, we will be ready to introduce what we think will change how lighting and video work together. Closer integration is all I'll say right now. You'll just have to be in Frankfurt for the big news," he adds.

ization, and we felt that we are delivering on our promise to 'Define the Future.'"

Avolites Media and Ai have already made an impact in the world of interactive visual design. For the 2012 Opening Ceremonies for the Summer Olympics in London, the stadium's entire seating area was filled with pixel-mapped visual effects made possible with more than 70,000 Tait pixel tablets controlled by the Ai Infinity Media Server, which was tasked with routing video in real time with the necessary spatial awareness of the seating. That project was recognized with a Guinness World Record for the largest landscape video display.

Industry milestones also include the Winter Olympics at Sochi, Russia, where Avolites Media entertained the world with a massive volumetric display, the likes of which has never been seen before. The Ai servers were used to run true 3D content to the massive "Forest of Light" aerial LED display during the closing ceremonies.

Other recent standout Avolites Ai applications include the 2014 reunion for Böhse Onkelz that rocked stadiums in Germany, the massive video displays for the main stage at the Electric Daisy Carnival in Las Vegas, the huge holographic effect created for DJ Eric Prydz at New York's Madison Square Garden, the video-mapped set and scenery for the arena touring production of Peter Pan and the ethereal projections of the acoustic tile "mushrooms" for Coldplay's concert at London's Royal Albert Hall.

Warren notes that the Coldplay visuals, conceived by lead singer Chris Martin and video director Ben Miles, are indicative of "a new era for live shows and presentations" that feature "video mapping, interactivity and fully immersive environments." He adds that the seemingly challenging project "was a breeze for Ai, where we used 32 discreet media server outputs to control 46 projectors simultaneously."

❯❯ Bon Jovi

For Bon Jovi's five-continent, 102-concert "Because We Can" world tour, supporting the band's 12th album, *What About Now*, eight Ai Infinity media servers controlled "what must have been the most complex video mapping show ever produced," Warren says. The tour incorporated 48 large hexagonal, telescopic columns designed by Moment Factory — 24 of them on the stage floor and 24 hung from the trusses. The columns rose and fell at the rate of two feet per second to create a myriad of eye-catching set shapes.

"Using the incredible power of the Ai Servers, these columns are mapped in real time, while they move," Warren says. "The

let the designers make it appear as though objects were floating around the performers.

The stage, set up to look like a home, was filled with furniture to create a house party effect. Childish Gambino, who played the role of party host, also had his own controller that let him manipulate certain elements of the setup from the stage, including strobes, dimmers for the chandeliers, explosions and fire bursts. These were all part of a highly choreographed and rehearsed show, performed to backing tracks that allowed for very tight audio-visual synchronization.

Representatives from Avolites and Avolites Media worked closely with Craig Mitchell, director of touring at LMG Touring's Orlando, FL location on the project to bring the visual content — a collaboration between Gambino (a.k.a. Donald Glover) and Moment Factory, which helped bring the script and story boards for the shows into digital fruition. Also playing key visual roles for the tour were lighting designer Sarah Landau and production manager Chad Taylor.

❯❯ Maroon 5

Avolites Media Ai Infinity servers also played a key role in the 2013 and 2014 legs of Maroon 5's Overexposed world tour, with a visual design by the late LD, programmer and production designer/creative director Demfis Fyssicopulos. The setup, which included extensive HD camera feeds and LED screen visuals, included two custom Avolites Media Ai Infinity servers with six HDSDI low-latency inputs and four DVI outputs.

Fyssicopulos turned to DMD Studios for a design that included numerous LED video elements, dominated by a rear video wall

Avolites and Avolites Media

ORIGINS: 1978 (as a lighting production company); 1983 (as a manufacturer of dimmers); 1995 (as a lighting console manufacturer). Avolites Media was unveiled at PLASA in 2011.

U.S. DISTRIBUTORS: Group One Ltd. (Avolites); Creative Stage Lighting (Avolites Media)

MAJOR PROJECTS: London Olympics, Sochi Olympics, Böhse Onkelz, Electric Daisy Carnival/Las Vegas, Eric Prydz at Madison Square Garden, Coldplay at Royal Albert Hall, tours for Bon Jovi, Childish Gambino, Maroon 5, Peter Pan; Billboard Latin Music Awards, Xbox One media launch, Memory Cloud installation at Texas A&M.

The team

nology, including permanent installations. "We fully embrace these unique spaces and designs and offer solutions that are customizable to their needs," Warren says, noting how Avolites Media's Orion rack system for the Ai media server is aimed at museum and other large-scale installation projects.
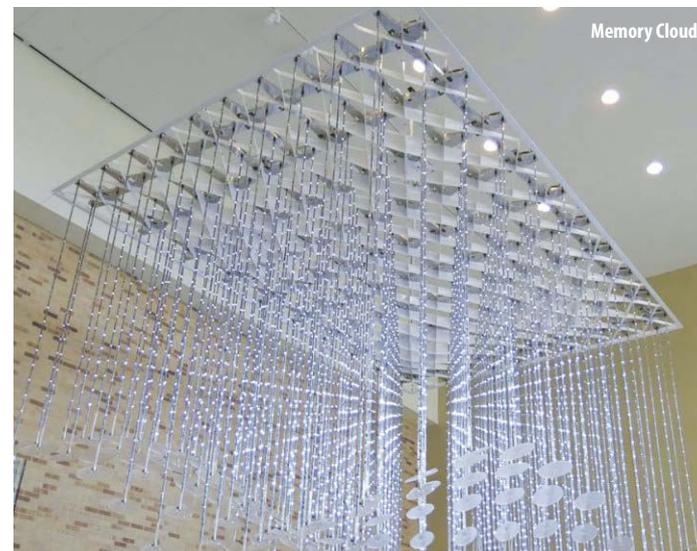
DMD Studios, a Miami-based design firm led by Digital Media Designs principal Scott Chmielewski, has taken media servers in general — and Ai in particular — to a new level with projects ranging from music tours and festivals to civic art installations and interactive media to nightclub designs and content creation.

A key advantage with Ai, Chmielewski says, is the ability to previzualize "every element of a project, no matter what the media type, from low resolution volumetric LED arrays to ultra HD resolutions, through dozens of LED or projection screens, edge blending of countless projectors and absolute synchronization across several servers.

"Ai has had a huge impact on the way we can work with, and deliver to, our clients," Chmielewski continues. "The open environment of the software enables us to push the limits of media and technology through the ability to merge, manipulate and ultimately control seamlessly so many formats," he adds, citing show control protocols, signal types, custom software and plugins developed in house.

Significant DMD projects using Avolites Media's Ai technology also include, Billboard Latin Music Awards, Xbox One Media Launch and the "Memory Cloud" installation at Texas A&M University. For the latter, DMD Studios provided

the lighting design and visual programming for a custom LED structure that is housed in the university's new student center. "The ability to previzualize and model this project before we even placed an order for custom product was invaluable to the client. We were able to accomplish true volumetric media playback of custom content. We were able to convert both custom created content as well as generative content and live interactive video to the over 5000 DMX channels needed to control the piece seamlessly."

For "Memory Cloud," Chmielewski credited Avolites and Avolites Media for their customer and technical support along with their commitment to advancing the status quo. "It's very clear that team is built around accomplishing cutting-edge projects, and the platform progresses constantly," he says.

❯❯ A Convergent Future

In mid-2013, Avolites named Group One Ltd., a U.S. distributor of lighting products and DiGiCo sound consoles, as the brand's exclusive U.S. distributor of lighting consoles. Group One, led by president Jack Kelly and national sales manager Brad White — who previously spent 12 years as director of technical services at Avolites America — are striving to fulfill Avolites' vision of "Total Visual Control from Rock to Opera" with hardware and software upgrades on the control side of their business. As Prolight+Sound 2015 approaches, Group One, Avolites and Avolites Media will be working towards the goal of restoring the brand's former dominance in a newly convergent future. **PLSN**

Peter Pan

Memory Cloud

show starts with absolutely nothing on stage and, to the audiences' amazement, the sets magically appear in front of them."

❯❯ Childish Gambino

Avolites Media's Ai servers also played a key role on the 22-show "Deep Web Tour" promoting rapper Childish Gambino's album, Because the Internet. The tour, which ran from February through May earlier this year, made use of a total of four computers — one EX8 Ai media server and three using Ai dongles. Two of these ran the show; the other two were used for backup.

The show's multiple layers of projection made for an interesting — and challenging — visual project. In addition to the upstage video wall, another layer of video imagery was projected onto a screen mounted between two front pillars on a Kabuki Curtain Drop system, and chopping between both allowed for an increased level of depth. This

divided into three moving sections — two side screens of WinVision 9mm LED product and a center screen of WinVision 12mm LED. Along with these rotating columns, which displayed real-time content and media files designed and directed by DFDesigns, the set design featured video wallpaper on the band risers and LED pucks integrated into the stage.

Before his untimely death on April 23, 2014 in a surfing accident, Fyssicopulos credited the Avolites Media servers and software. "Ai proved to be the right choice, allowing us to have multiple live inputs, audio reactive real time content, and being completely versatile at its functions set customization," he said.

❯❯ Installations, Too

Avolites and Avolites Media have expanded their horizons and looked into other markets and industries that utilize entertainment tech-