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Kitting out a new space at the University of Hertfordshire

When the University of Hertfordshire's Live Sound and Lighting Technology course had to relocate, Visiting Lecturer, Ross Freeman, specced Avolites at the heart of its new space.

Out of adversity comes opportunity is an adage that has become a bit of a theme in 2020, but for Ross Freeman, Visiting Lecturer - Live Sound and Lighting Technology at the University of Hertfordshire, his 2020 took a turn for the unexpected a month or two earlier than most with the news that the space in which he was teaching, The Forum Hertfordshire, was going to be closed for renovations.

"With the start of the new academic year approaching rather fast we had to get the ball rolling with sorting a new space," he explains. "Initially we looked into renting a warehouse space to set up a temporary rig until the renovation works are complete, however we were unsure if the new spaces would be suitable for us and also if the availability would be there for us. The option of the warehouse was quickly ruled out as it also raised too many logistical problems and the fact that students were off site at a non-university building. Following this we looked into one of our classrooms to see if we could transform this space into a training rig and prepared a bid to put forward to the University for Capital Expenditure funding."

The bid was successful and the Live Sound and Lighting Technology course is now housed in the University's Film Music and Media building (FMM), which also hosts multiple seminar rooms, the animation suites, a lecture hall, and also the Film and TV studio. One of the big opportunities that comes with the new space that Freeman is using is that he got the opportunity to design it and spec it from the ground up.

"We specified equipment that will incorporate other spaces we have also," he explains. "We are able to Link our Sapphire Touch to our machine running both Avolites Ai and Resolume Arena 7 for our projection mapping elements of the degree. We have incorporated Capture visualization software into our space and have four machines running Capture Symphony with a Titan mobile at each station along with an Akai APC Mini. The scope we now have with this space has opened up so many opportunities to the students on the course and I personally feel like this new space has actually shaped the degree for the better.

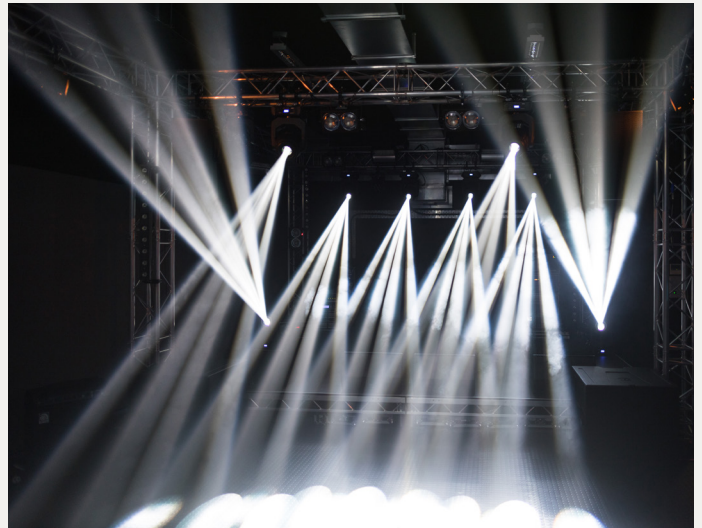
"My personal view on Avolites is that the workflow through the console is very user friendly," he continues. "However, that doesn't come at a compromise of performance of a lighting show. This is great from an education perspective as some people on the course I teach may not have done lighting before.



There were some challenges to overcome in becoming a resident in such a multi-use space. One was the sheer power consumption that the course requires when underway, another was ensuring that it is adaptable enough to be reasonably future-proofed, something that the Avolites console undeniably helps with. And then there was the problem of haze.

“As we all know trying to teach lighting design without the use of haze is like telling a brick layer to build a house without cement, it’s just not really a thing,” says Freeman. “We have had to install our own independent airflow system to this space so that we are self-contained within it and won’t trigger any smoke detectors around the building causing disruption to the other courses.”

One of the main reasons why Freeman specced Avolites for the new facility is that not only did the venue where he used to work have a Tiger Touch II but, as he says, “The majority of the companies I do work with all have Avolites consoles.” That makes not only teaching on it easier for him but means that the students already have valuable experience on industry-standard equipment for when they finish their degree and start to make their way in the workplace.



“The team at Avolites have been incredibly helpful along this whole process especially Gordon, Ron, Koy and Kully,” says Freeman. “Gordon specifically has been incredibly helpful with all aspects of this build. He has given his advice on equipment, helped us with the introduction of Capture, and just always been at the end of the phone when needed. Gordon, I am sorry for all the phone calls but I’m even more thankful for all the advice you have given us. I have had discussions with Gordon for us to be a Titan Academy at UH and this is something he is very keen on and is supporting us on this process.”

It may not have been the year Freeman had planned, but with the help of Avolites, students at University of Hertfordshire could continue their education and prepare for their future careers.