

Vectorworks Spotlight 2017

Exertis Unlimited, the UK distributor for Vectorworks software, teamed up with LSi to host an audience of lighting professionals at a Vectorworks Spotlight product demonstration day in central London. Lee Baldock went along to find out more . . .



UK - Vectorworks software has been around for many years, and is perhaps most widely known for its leading architectural design package, Vectorworks Architect. For outdoor spaces, Vectorworks Landmark is a powerful tool for landscape and garden design, while for entertainment, there's Vectorworks Spotlight. All, however, share key features and resources: for example, many of the elements of Architect are available through Spotlight. And, for those multi-talented souls whose designs encompass built, natural and entertainment environments, there's the complete package in Vectorworks Designer.

For Spotlight users, the big news for 2017 is the new integration of ESP Vision as the system's proprietary 3D visualiser, following ESP's acquisition by Vectorworks last year. Integrating two complex software packages from different manufacturers is an understandably tough task. While the first phase has been to ensure that Spotlight's export to Vision works seamlessly,

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users admit that the two are still recognisably distinct packages: ongoing development will see the relationship much further refined, say Vectorworks. It makes good sense that Vision has had its design features removed, so that Spotlight provides the sole creative interface while Vision is purely a previsualisation tool, which allows control from a light board for previewing lighting cues.

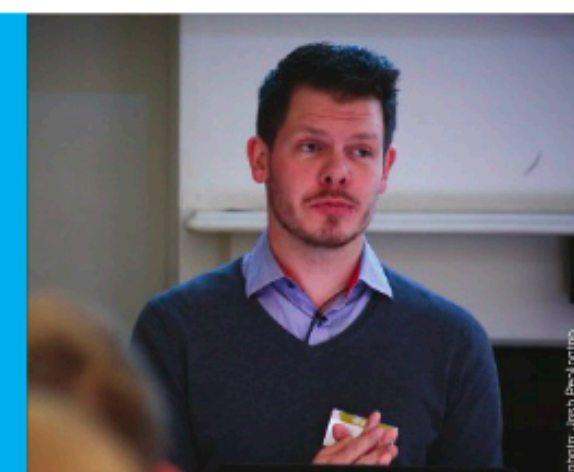
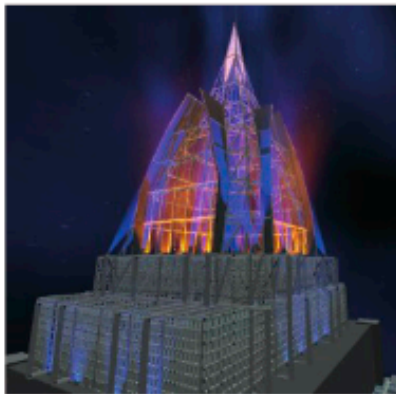


Photo: Josh Peckington

In an event co-promoted with LSi, Vectorworks chose the office of The Theatres Trust in Charing Cross Road, in the heart of London's theatreland, to present Spotlight and its new Vision capability to lighting designers. Three presenters gave their insights into the system, beginning with Steve Brann, a long-time Vectorworks user who runs Cadschool, a specialist Vectorworks reselling and training company, who

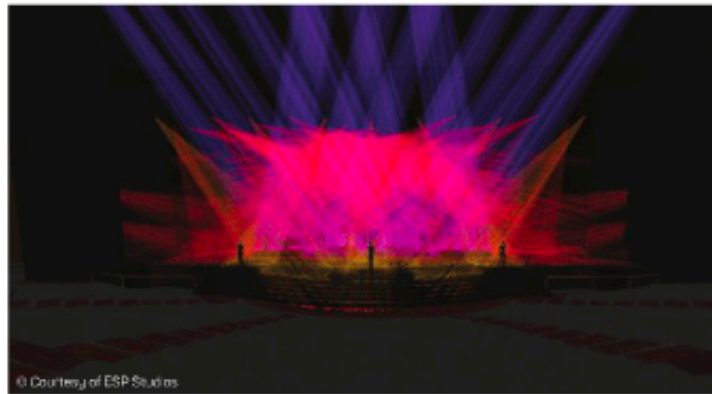
gave a general introduction to the software, from drawing a basic 2D stage, through to 3D views of a finished design and paperwork. Brann also discussed a few tips and tricks for those already familiar with Spotlight (which was in fact most the audience) and drew attention to a major new addition for 2017, the Resource Manager, which uses an online database to simplify the management of objects,



1 Above, ESP Vision rendering of an architectural lighting project

2 Above, right: ESP Vision rendering for Faith Hill at the Colosseum

3 Facing page, the three presenters who gave insights into their use of Vectorworks Spotlight - Steve Brann, Fridthjofur 'Fiffi' Thorsteinsson and Vince Foster (photo: PLASA Media)



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including lighting instruments. Other improvements for 2017 include lighting label legends now being shown in 3D orientation, and vastly improved rendering speeds.

Brann was followed by lighting designer Fridthjofur Thorsteinsson (more conveniently known as 'Fiffi'), who went into more detail of a lighting designer's use of Spotlight, with examples from several real-world live performance projects. He advised on organising workflow, and the value of getting to know keyboard shortcuts, as well as reiterating Brann's praise of the new Resource Manager, which he called "an incredible tool". He also highlighted the very comprehensive import/export capabilities of the software, and tackled specific questions

about the use of system which had been posed by attendees when they registered for the event. Of the power of Vectorworks, he said: "People often don't understand the 3D capability of Vectorworks - they draw in 2D without realising that they are also drawing in 3D already."

Fiffi's insights were followed by a rock and roll design perspective from LD Vince Foster (whose impressive design resumé includes Jessie J, Jess Glynne, Duran Duran, Blur, Janet Jackson, Kylie Minogue and George Michael, among many others). Foster has been using Vectorworks Spotlight for years in his set, lighting and video design work, although, as he pointed out, he is of the generation which drew its first plots with stencils. Foster demonstrated how he draws set and stage, adding risers, stairs and ramps etc, as well as tips about classifying and organising the elements, and setting a series of default views to ease workflow. He continued to lighting trusses, fixtures, labelling and more, before the finale - previewing the design in Vision and running cues from his Road Hog 4 console.

This was an informative and well appreciated event, clearly valued by the attendees I spoke to. One of them was James Simpson, who as head of lighting visualisation at The Royal Opera House is familiar with Vectorworks Spotlight, but keen to keep tabs on its new features. He

thought the event was "a great opportunity to meet other users where we could discuss and share our experiences working with Vectorworks and Spotlight. For many people, it was the first time they'd seen the newly released Vision 2017... and everyone was scribbling copious notes of tips and tricks that would improve the way they work with Vectorworks which you could see was a real benefit for them. I hope there will be more events like this in the future where users can come together to listen to experts, share knowledge with each other and provide feedback to Vectorworks."

Jacqui Smith, group marketing manager for Exertis Unlimited, commented: "This event has been a great opportunity to work with LSi magazine and to meet lighting designers to help them improve their lighting designs with various tips and new features available in Vectorworks 2017. It was great to have so many designers comment how beneficial this event was and we look forward to hosting more." ●

For more information...

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photo: Josh Peal/region