



VECTORWORKS CASE STUDY



VECTORWORKS SPOTLIGHT LIGHTS UP METALLICA ON TOUR



VETERAN LIGHTING
DESIGNER AND
VETERAN VECTORWORKS
SPOTLIGHT USER BUTCH
ALLEN RELIED ON THE
INDUSTRY STANDARD
SOFTWARE TO LIGHT
UP METALLICA ON
"MADLY IN ANGER
WITH THE WORLD" TOUR

With more than 20 years of industry experience and a Parnelli Award nomination for his work on this tour and the recent Garbage tour, lighting designer Butch Allen knows a thing or two about concert lighting. His client list includes Black Sabbath, BowWow, Garbage, Ozzy Osbourne, Ozzfest, Def Leppard, Hole, Motley Crue, Seal and Kelly Clarkson.

ENTER SPOTLIGHT

When a series of stadium dates for Metallica called for some down and dirty lighting designs, Allen relied on his old standby, VectorWorks Spotlight. And Allen knows a thing or two about the program, having been a VectorWorks Spotlight groupie for nearly 15 years of his concert-lighting career—back when VectorWorks was known as MiniCAD.



BEST CROSS-PLATFORM SOLUTION

He originally selected VectorWorks Spotlight because of its 3D capabilities, as there weren't many choices that offered 3D functionality for his profession.

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"VectorWorks Spotlight offered the best product with 3D capabilities for my platform when I started as a Macintosh-based operation, and it still does now that I've switched to PC," he says. "It's the best cross-platform solution out there. Whether you're a Mac guy or a PC guy, you won't get lost or confused with VectorWorks. It doesn't matter what computer you're sitting at—while it's open, and you're in the working environment, it's easy to keep moving."

MASTER OF LIGHT PLOTS

For Allen, there is no other option.

"Everyone I know in the industry uses VectorWorks Spotlight," he says. "It really is the industry standard for concert touring. I can turn drawings around in an instant. And the fact that VectorWorks Spotlight gets it done so quickly is a big help to me, because I don't have time to be sitting at my desk all day."

He adds, "It's all about how you set up your drawings in VectorWorks Spotlight. If you set them up correctly in the beginning, the rest is easy. While it's very simple, it's a huge benefit for me that I have a standard template I can always start from. When I open it up, it's set up with all the layers the way I like them, and all the instruments are set up to work with the classes. So when I sit down, it's ready to go to work. I'm not wasting a lot of time searching for things."

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SEAMLESS IMPORT/EXPORT

Doing DXF exchanges with other vendors is not a problem for Allen, either. "I just got a huge DXF of a stage that included 2D and 3D layers, and I was able to import it perfectly," he says

While Allen likes to keep up with the technology, working with vendors who have older versions of VectorWorks hasn't been an issue. "I like moving ahead with products, so as soon as a new version is released, I'm always right on it. Although some vendors are a version or two behind, I can still send my drawings to them without a hitch."



MANAGING REVISIONS— NOTHING ELSE MATTERS

The biggest challenge for Allen is managing revisions while staying within budget and on schedule, and, at the same time, striving to maintain the wishes of the artist he's working with.

"Revision is a fact of life, with drawings in a constant state of change often right up to when we actually show up at a concert venue, but I can turn drawings around quickly with VectorWorks Spotlight and keep a project moving along," he says. "I might change my mind, a client might have an idea, equipment availability is going to change, the time period I have to work within might change...and it becomes a daunting task to keep track of it all. VectorWorks Spotlight easily keeps up with all my changes. I delete lights, move them around, change the addressing or control channels, and VectorWorks Spotlight follows through on all the paperwork."

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VectorWorks Spotlight helps keep everyone on the same page. Allen presents drawings and fly-throughs to the artists and production management he works with on projects sometimes several times a day.

"Whether I'm working on a bigger, more involved tour or a quick hit and run performance, everyone has their input," he says. "We need to put on the very best show we can within a very short time frame," he says. "And VectorWorks Spotlight always comes through."

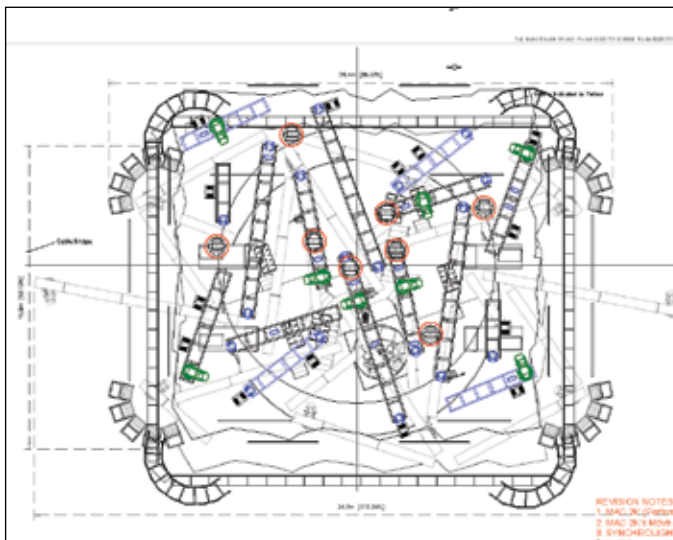
ONE-STOP SHOPPING

Allen finds VectorWorks Spotlight to be a solution that meets all his needs, saving him the effort and expense of having to use more than one program.

"For one-stop shopping, VectorWorks Spotlight gives me everything I need," he says. "You tell me this product doesn't do good renderings? It absolutely does. Cinema 4D is a stand-alone that only does one thing. It can't draft plans."

And now that VectorWorks Spotlight can plug in to ESP Vision, Allen can go one step further.

"With VectorWorks Spotlight, I can generate ESP Vision drawings in the same software I generate my 2D plans and save a whole step," says Allen. "If I'm drawing for ESP and knocking out drawings in Studio Max (Autodesk® 3ds Max®), that means I'm drawing in another 2D program to generate a plan view. So I'm doing the same drawing twice. With VectorWorks Spotlight, I generate a drawing once and send it over. It's so much easier."



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JAMMING WITH ESP VISION

When ESP Vision came on the market, Allen was interested in its visualization capacities.

"ESP Vision is phenomenal," he says. "It's amazingly realistic, it's detailed, it's accurate. As a long-time user of VectorWorks Spotlight, I am comfortable with and committed to it, especially as it continues to improve and address user desires in a timely fashion. Now that I can send VectorWorks Spotlight drawings directly to ESP Vision for visualization, I am ecstatic."

He explains, "I was completely lost in Studio Max (Autodesk® 3ds Max®). It was a completely different mindset and difficult-to-use set of tools from good, reliable VectorWorks Spotlight.

"The fact that I can take the advanced lighting and presentation tools in VectorWorks Spotlight to another level by interfacing with the latest version of ESP Vision, which can output an AVI and capture screen shots, makes the combination of products very much a one-two punch," Allen says.

PLUGGING INTO THE VECTORWORKS USER COMMUNITY

Allen finds the network of VectorWorks users worldwide to be a valuable resource.

"VectorWorks has a very involved user base," he says. "If I get to a point where I'm completely baffled, I post to the list serve. Right away there's a responsive community of dedicated users ready to help."

CLOSING THE SHOW

"In a business that's based on ideas, VectorWorks Spotlight gives me a quick and easy way to get those ideas down on paper without missing a beat and carry them through to production without a hitch," says Allen.

UPGRADING TO VW DESIGNER 12

Allen upgraded to VectorWorks Designer to take advantage of all the tool sets the VectorWorks Design Series offers. He's a big proponent of the updated interface, the new menu structure and the variety of tool sets in this latest version of VectorWorks. Not to mention the new and improved lighting and rendering capabilities.

"The new interface and menu structure in VectorWorks 12 are just incredible," he says. "Everything is organized far more logically than ever before, which saves me an immense amount of time. Now that I have VectorWorks Designer, the tool sets are just huge; it's a big benefit to be able to move around between all the different workspaces and have all the tools I need right at my fingertips."

Allen is also impressed by the speed VectorWorks has picked up, especially rendering.

"I'm rendering out really big models, and they're popping right out," he says. "I wasn't prepared for how quickly I could produce renderings."

He's also pleased he now has the option to turn lights on and off within each instrument.

"In terms of rendering actual lighting instruments, I used to have to insert a light source for each Spotlight instrument to render," he explains. "Now I can turn the light on or off. It'll pick up whatever color I assign the light. And it does exactly what you'd expect a light to do. It's more like working with real lights than working with software."

Plus, he says light aiming is "absolutely easier," and he loves being able to draw a line and create curtains.

All this adds up to much more realistic models and renderings in much less time, according to Allen.