



CASE STUDY:

NAKED EYE LIGHTING
LONDON, ENGLAND



CUTTING-EDGE DESIGNS FOR ENDURING NAMES IN MUSIC

Max Conwell works with some of the biggest names in the music industry, but before he started designing shows for artists like Morrissey, No Doubt, and Incubus, he was pushing the boundaries of what would become modern concert lighting. “When I started freelancing as a lighting technician, it was the infancy of moving lights and scrolling color changers,” Conwell remembers. “I always wanted to try my hand at design, so I took any opportunity to light the opening acts of shows, anything to get experience.” As lighting technology continued to evolve, Conwell advanced professionally alongside it. In fact, the convergence of lighting and video, as well as the emergence of 3D pixel and video mapping, plays a role in the shows that he currently creates.

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- Max Conwell

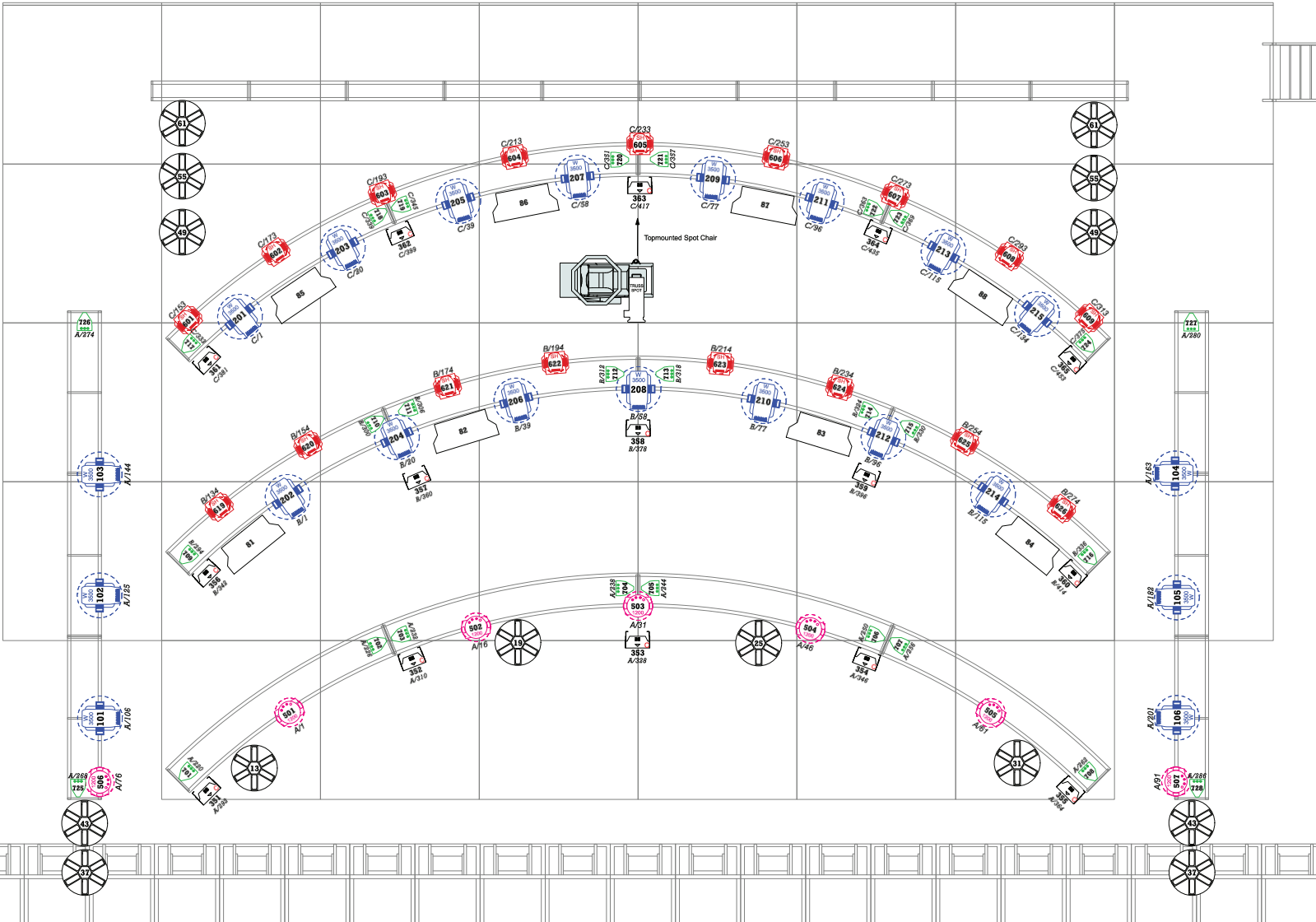
This dedication to innovation and experience as a technician led Conwell to establish Naked Eye Lighting in 2005. “I envisioned an independent design consultancy without tie-ins to particular vendors or suppliers that would allow me to focus on picking the right equipment for the customer and the project.” This client-centric approach is a driving factor behind the success of Naked Eye Lighting, which Conwell describes as being constantly busy. And while his initial concept of the company included concert, fashion, and event work, it’s grown to encompass architectural and television lighting, as well. Despite the breadth of his portfolio, Conwell views his achievements as only the means to continue doing what he loves: “We work with interesting people on interesting projects, and that’s all I need to feel successful.”



LIGHTING FOR A ROCK STAR

If Conwell uses his clientele to define the value of his work, then he is a wealthy individual. He's designed lighting for many famous acts in the industry, and one of his most frequent clients is English singer and lyricist Morrissey, whom he worked with in 2004, 2007, 2009, and 2014. "Morrissey is very involved in the visual look of his show," Conwell explains. "Each tour's design usually starts with a chat face-to-face or via email, depending on where he is in the world." Conwell sends Morrissey drawings and images to comment on, creating a collaborative environment. As their partnership grows with each successive tour, so too do the lighting techniques Conwell uses in Vectorworks® Spotlight software.

Video projection technology is at the forefront of the latest Morrissey tour. All of the show's backdrop images are projected, and Morrissey performs tracks like "I'm Not a Man" and "Meat is Murder" with synchronized videos. Even the preshow has a montage of film clips and music. "With both static images and films now being an integral part of the show, the Vectorworks Video Screen tool is vital to working out the positioning of screens and projectors," Conwell says. "And of course it's easy to update plans to cover the range of venues we play: from theatres and arenas to outdoor shows."



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This wide range of venues presents challenges when it comes to the lighting materials involved, especially when the tour moves internationally. However, Conwell fully utilizes Vectorworks Spotlight's libraries to create designs that can function on any stage. "Since different countries often require a different set of lighting fixtures, I use Fixture Replace a lot in Spotlight to quickly swap one lamp for another and update patch information, so the local supplier and the touring operator have the same, correct information for each show."



Conwell uses a combination of moving lights and tungsten sources for Morrissey's shows, contrasting the cold white of automated fixtures with the warmth of conventional ones. His current design also incorporates film spacelights hung in vertical arrays, as well as SVOBODA batten light curtains and white LED panels that wrap around the band at the back, which he pixel-maps onto a media server and uses as a low-resolution video wall. Morrissey's classic, unmistakable profile is captured by two followspots and a rear truss spot, and the band is lit by three curved overhead trusses that include VL3500 washes, Sharpys for beam looks, and LED pars as toners. Conwell's dedication to his clients extends from the musician to the band, as well as to the people viewing the show, which is why he also designs lighting with fans in mind. "The Morrissey crowd is passionate about him, so I use a fair amount of audience lighting, including spacelights as blinders and overlaying the moving lights and Phillips Nitro strobes, to connect them to the show."

INTEROPERABILITY IS THE KEY TO CREATIVITY

Just as Conwell strives for collaboration with his clients, he also looks for collaboration among the software programs he uses. "One of the great things about Vectorworks Spotlight is that it talks to everything. I can import and export to pretty much any format, and any changes that I make to my design get automatically updated to the various third-party programs that I use." For example, Conwell considers connectCAD, a Vectorworks software add-on designed for linking broadcast, audio-visual, and IT systems, to be a go-to tool, letting him generate necessary schematic diagrams, layout drawings, and lists of connecting cables without the need to deconstruct his Spotlight model. "In the earlier days of lighting design the control part was very simple, but these days it's a lot more complex with multiple control and signal protocols. ConnectCAD is perfectly integrated into Vectorworks Spotlight, and it makes complex system designs very clear to technicians and installers, which is essential when you are sometimes working on the other side of the world."

The Lightwright® partner product tool further facilitates the documentation process by allowing Conwell to generate and reconcile paperwork through the Lightwright-to-Vectorworks data exchange, as well as export information into Moving Light Assistant to create more detailed breakdowns of the moving features of his shows. "I love that it works seamlessly in the background because I can quickly get what I need," he says. "It's always accurate, and it's always up to date."



Vectorworks software's 3D modeling capabilities are also integral to Conwell's collaborative process. "The old saying that 'a picture's worth a thousand words' has always been true, and today's clients expect full renderings. With Vectorworks Spotlight, I can produce renderings even from the very early stages in the design process." The speed at which Spotlight allows him to work is part of what sets him above the competition, Conwell says, but it's also the effort that he puts into his designs. "You've got to support your clients, not just through the good times when there are big budgets, but you also have to make things work for them when there isn't enough money."

Conwell describes his career as a constant learning experience, one that he continues every day. And while the variability of his work is part of what keeps his life exciting, he already has plans for a tour with rapper Professor Green, the UK Military Awards, four ongoing television shows, and an event for Audi once he finishes the Morrissey tour. Wherever his work takes him, Conwell will continue to rely on Vectorworks Spotlight. "It's the only product like it out there. It's packed with features, which is why it's our first-choice CAD system."

BE INSPIRED

Read about more designers who transform the world with Vectorworks Spotlight software at www.vectorworks.net/success-stories.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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