

Reprinted from the Jul/Aug 2006 issue of Church Production Magazine



Jands Vista T2 Lighting Console

By Greg Persinger

If you have ever read any of my past Church Production articles you know I like to develop a good lead-in to my subject. With the Jands Vista lighting console however I am forced to get straight to the point because of the limited amount of space I have to highlight its unique features.

With the Vista the Jands design team has taken a whole different approach to lighting control by integrating time-line editing into the Vista console (think iMovie, Final Cut Pro, or Pro-Tools) as well as a graphical interface that uses a graphics pen (think Wacom graphics tablet) to give you control of all of your lighting parameters.

As the story goes, there was a lively and vocal group within the Jands company that felt the level of technical knowledge required to run the average moving light console on the market had grown to the point where most people could no longer walk up to a console and intuitively program the lights. Instead, a complex series of numbers and button presses were required to create even a basic lighting look. The Jands team felt there had to be a better way.

After much research and discussion they decided to break lighting cues up into components and place them on a timeline like you would in non-linear video or audio editing systems. If you want to shift part of the cue around, all you would do is slide the part of the cue you want to change to a different place in the timeline and your edit would be complete. With the vision laid out the Jands Vista console was born.

Having heard about this console I thought that the concept was very intriguing, especially since I have a good grasp of the timeline editing concept from my own use of audio and video editing software. Of course, seeing is believing, and when A.C. Lighting, the North American distributor for Jands, gave me a chance to demo and review the console I jumped at the chance.

First I was skeptical that I would like the pen screen interface, which is a Wacom Cintiq tablet display built into the console, but after a few minutes of working with the pen screen you get a feel for it and you find that it is very intuitive. So with the pen firmly in hand,

I moved on to patching in some fixtures.

Patching, which is usually a confusing proposition on most consoles, was a breeze on the Vista, using its extensive generic fixture model library. Patching was also made easy as it is a drag and drop operation. If you should need to move the starting address of a fixture to a different location you just grab it with the pen and drag it to where you want it. If you need to access a different universe of DMX all it takes is a pen click on the proper universes tab to select the universe and then drag your fixture to the correct starting address.

Another feature of the generic fixture model library is that it allows you to program with one type of fixture and then later substitute a different fixture into that programming. Once you tell the Vista what the new fixture type is it will attempt to match the functions of the substitute fixture as closely as possible with the original fixture. This means the console will automatically find the closest match for color, gobo, and other beam parameters. Although you are not assured of a perfect match and some updating will have to be done, it beats having to start from scratch. This is a great feature if you rent fixtures for a special program or event to add to your existing fixture inventory.

Once patched, fixtures show up as icons in your programmer window. Here you can graphically arrange your fixtures in a variety of ways. For example, you can have all of your moving lights on a page or a layout, and all of your conventional lights in another layout, and all of your lights in yet a third layout. What you look at when you are programming depends on what layout you have selected. Layouts are changed via a pull down menu and are virtually limitless.

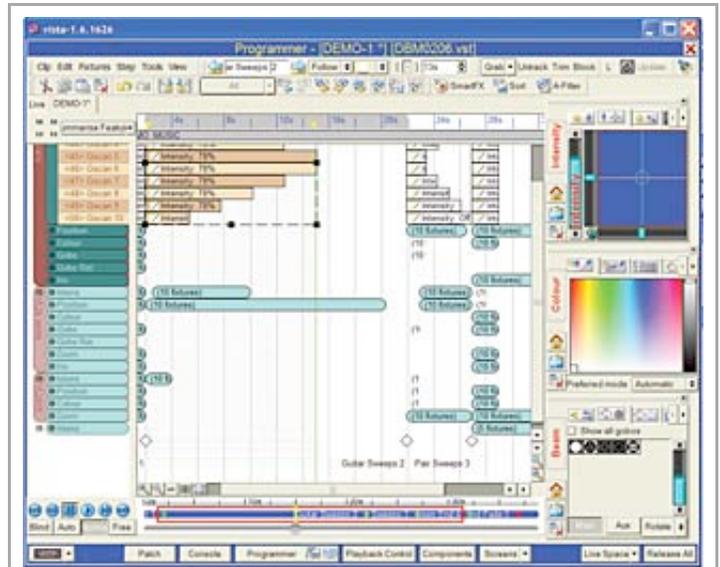
In a layout, individual fixtures can be placed in any order and in any place on the screen allowing you to set up whatever layout makes the most logical sense to you. I really liked this feature as it gives a high level of customization, and if multiple people run the same show you can save multiple layouts, customizing them for each operator.

The fixture icons also give feedback as to the intensity, color, gobo, and position of the fixtures. I found this to be useful as I could do the bulk of my basic programming offline on a PC and then use the console with the lights for touch up and final tweaking, speeding up programming in the venue.

Once you have the Vista patched and your layouts created, you are ready to program. You do this by opening up a new blank clip, (think video or audio clip) which is somewhat equivalent to a cue stack in other consoles and begin to manipulate your lighting fixtures.

The process of building lighting looks on the Vista is not much different than any other moving light console. You set up your focus positions, intensity, color, gobo, and any other parameters that your lighting fixture has and save it as a step in the clip. However, from this point, the way that you edit parameters on the Vista deviates from every other lighting console that I have ever used.

Once you have saved a step, it shows up in the timeline view of the clip. Here you can use the pen to highlight various parameters of the step, allowing you to drag and drop them wherever you want them. For example, if you want the color to change before your lights move, you could drag the color information to the beginning of your clip and the position information toward the end of your clip and when your clip plays back the color would change before your lights would move.



The Vista lighting console is unique in applying a timeline paradigm to lighting cues, allowing the user to easily visualize timings and sequences.

You can also drag fixtures to where you want them to come on or move within a step in your timeline, easily “fanning” the fade in or the movement of the fixtures. Because all of this is done on the clip’s timeline, editing these features can take less than a minute — unlike doing the same thing on traditional consoles where it takes much longer and a lot of button punching to program the sequence.

As you would expect from a sophisticated console, you can have multiple steps in a clip and steps can automatically follow the step in front of it or wait for you to execute the next step manually, changeable for each step.

I am just scratching the surface with the Vista’s editing capabilities, but I can tell you that with the graphical interface, the timeline, the drag and drop features, and the common shortcut keys, the Vista has a very easy to use and powerful clip editor that allows you to create and customize your lighting looks quickly and easily. For me, what sets the Vista apart from any other moving light console is that editing is so fast and easy.

For playback the Vista T2 has 15 playbacks with 10 Intensity faders and bump buttons and one “super playback” which gives you go, pause, back, skip functions and additional time features. Of course all of these playbacks can be customized to play any clip or set of clips you want in any order.

The Vista also sports three encoder wheels for adjusting functions such as Pan, Tilt, Intensity, Gobo, Gobo Rotation and the like. It also has 12 function keys that can be set up to be additional playbacks or preset buttons or other console functions.

Other nice features in the console include an MP3 player that allows you to play the music you are programming to and mark key transition points in the song. When you do this the Vista generates steps of appropriate length for you to program to. It also allows you to hear your music as you program.

A couple of things I didn’t like about the console were the modifier buttons, which seemed flimsy to me. Every time I used them I felt like I was going to pop them off, but users of the console have assured me that this is not the case and that they hold up well under heavy everyday use. I also didn’t like that the Grandmaster was a rotary dial instead of a linear fader. Call me old fashioned but I like to slide and not twist. Both of these are merely minor issues.

Overall I was very impressed by the console. The timeline editing and the console’s drag-and-drop approach made it easy to master the console basics with minimal instruction. The average technically minded church volunteer could grasp the concepts of basic programming and operation of the console quickly and easily and would be comfortable using the console. This would be especially true if they have had any experience with a timeline based video or audio editing program.

The Vista comes in a wide range of versions, from the PC-based Vista PC (\$899), to the reviewed Vista T2 (\$26,000), up through the T4 (\$33,894).

I would recommend giving serious consideration to this console if you are looking at making a moving light console purchase. Head over to www.jandsvista.com and download the PC demo or contact A.C. Lighting for the name of a dealer in your area that can provide you with a demo.

Greg Persinger is the owner of Vivid Illumination. He can be reached at greg@vividillumination.com



This article Copyright 2004 - 2010
by Production Media Inc. All Rights Reserved

For Subscription information go to
<http://www.churchproduction.com/go.php/subscribe>

To view Church Production Magazine online go to
<http://www.churchproduction.com/>