

On 5 & 6 Nov 07, Minnesota-based moving light provider **Ruehling Associates Inc. (RAI)** celebrated 25 years in the business with a two-day open house that was like a Christmas wish list showcase for Lighting Designers.

The event highlighted their entire line of products and services, including a large moving light rig with a sampling of almost all of their intelligent fixtures, a large display of LED products, scrollers, color changers, and the complete line of Hog consoles. Ruehling also showcased their digital lighting inventory of DL.1 and DL.2 fixtures and media servers doing edge-blending, live video switching, and laser-like aerial effects.

Their classroom featured individual product displays of their LED products - including fixtures, strings, and tubes - as well as a demo area for their new entry - level console, the Road Hog. It also included a lounge area where visitors could sit and watch a 15-minute slideshow loop of projects completed over the past 25 years, many of them highlighted by *wysiwyg* renderings.

Travis Slyter, Digital Media & Lighting Designer/ Sales Support & Marketing at Ruehling spoke to us about the event, the company's history, and his *wysiwyg* experience. Hired two years ago to launch the new department of digital lighting and design services, Travis has 12 years of experience in broadcast television and corporate/education video production. His *wysiwyg* and virtual design background have helped RAI to expand their production and programming services to include computer-aided drafting and design, design, pre-cueing, and even complete off-line programming for turn-key solutions.

Travis is also counting on using his background in educational media and technical training to help the company provide hands-on training and to minimize the amount of rental inventory required to conduct training sessions.

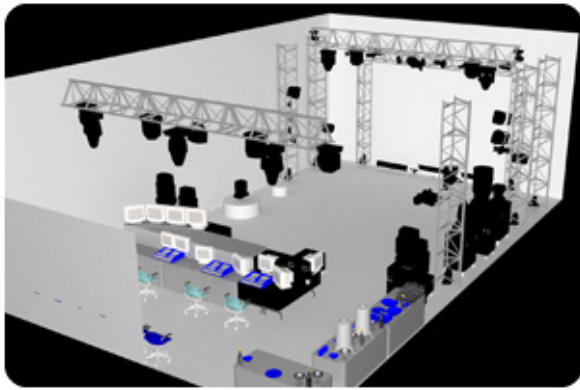
Q: Congratulations on marking 25 years. Was the open house a success?

A: We were very pleased with the event and it was a nice way to wrap up another busy year. We look forward to the New Year and the new opportunities it will bring to continue existing partnerships and develop new relationships, some of which were kindled at this spectacular event. Our warehouse featured a 31' x 9" widescreen video system, a 24' x 12" fiber optic drape, a demo of our outdoor enclosures for our moving lights, a hazer/fogger demo and another refreshment area.

Our service center featured a recreation of SMPTE-triggered LED system we recently designed and programmed for a tradeshow booth. Finally my office housed the programming suite featuring the WholeHog III and *wysiwyg*. The two-day event drew independent designers, techs, and stage hands from across the region, as well as staff members from about 30 different companies and organisations. I'd say it was a success!



Ruehling Associates Team



Ruehling Associates 25th Anniversary Open House (Virtual View)

Q: Why did you decide to hold such a big event?

A: We try to host two or three demos or open houses a year in addition to a lot of informal customer- or product-specific demos. Usually we highlight a particular type of technology. For example, last spring we did an all-LED demo. However, for this event we wanted to celebrate our 25th anniversary by showing off our newly remodeled front offices and service center and also to introduce some of our newer services to our customer base.

We've noticed that local attendance at LDI is down when it's held in Orlando like it was this year, mostly due to the timing (the Orlando date conflicts with a lot of our clients as they are already in Christmas productions or rehearsals). So, in 2005, we did an open house and showcased the new DL.2 and Studio Command fixtures from High End Systems (HES) just prior to LDI. Since HES wasn't attending LDI this year, we again had new products to show and saw an opportunity to reach both those who were not able to attend LDI and those who were attending but would be unable to see new HES products like the Showgun and Road Hog.

We also wanted to showcase some of our "custom" products and services which we feel separate us from other "dry hire" rental houses. These include our digital lighting and design services as well as some custom hardware and case solutions for some of our rental and sales products include cases for HES fixtures, CK Led fixtures, and Axon and Catalyst media server packages. We are also trying to expand our design services to include 2D and 3D CAD, paperwork creation, photo renderings, pre-cuing, and turn-key programming solutions.

Q: Is this where wysiwyg helps your business, in the design services area?

A: wysiwyg is key to so many areas of our business! One our biggest rental and design/programming markets is local dance studios. We have several clients who use the same space for annual recitals each spring, so I created a 3D version of the high school auditorium that hosts several recitals and I use wysiwyg to configure a lighting system that is flexible and scalable for all the clients using the space. Each studio has a run of rehearsals followed by the shows, which run back to back, so again I use wysiwyg to plan logistics to maximise efficiency and flexibility during these changeovers.

I also create renderings and important custom images of painted backdrops to give clients a preview of what various rental packages will look like so they can choose between different equipment options and price levels. It's much easier to sell a client on a package if they can see what elements it will add or subtract when compared to a different package with a different price tag. It also helps me plan how a smaller studio's configuration will integrate into a larger design and vice versa. Again, maximum efficiency of space, equipment, and people on-site is where the investment in wysiwyg pays off.

I've also used wysiwyg as a design tool for some of our digital lighting projects. While the visualisation of digital lighting products is still limited, wysiwyg has been very useful in determining fixture placement, trim heights, projection angles and other logistical details. Often the client won't request a wysiwyg drawing or simulation, but we will do it in-house just to help us iron out details. We have found it really saves time and on-site labor costs.



Ruehling Associates 25th Anniversary Open House (Rendering)

A: Finally we've also used *wysiwyg* to create turn-key programming packages. We have some clients that have very limited time in the venue and/or they have limited programming knowledge. We'll create their venue and rig in *wysiwyg* and then pre-program scenes and cue lists using our Hog consoles. The lighting designer literally walks into the venue with their show already created. They simply adjust the position pallets for the moving lights, maybe tweak a few timing settings, and they're ready to go.

We can also create submasters and groups for them ahead of time so they have live tools to use should they need to improvise. Those designers have the added bonus of being able to see their work and send renderings to their clients. Again, they are often able to upsell customers on different equipment or packages by showing them enhancements. For example, we sold a custom gobo package to a client because their customer was able to see how much they added to project in *wysiwyg* and visually quantified the financial cost of the upgrade.

Q: *Any other wysiwyg features that have helped you out in the past?*

A: We also use *wysiwyg* to get the most out of our on-site training sessions. A couple of weeks prior to the open house, we had a demo suite set up in the center of my office for a training class for University of Wisconsin theater students. The students were doing an intro class on the Hog 3 console family, and we were able to split them into two groups. The first group did programming tutorials in the actual showroom and the second group did them in the *wysiwyg*. This group would just transfer show files from one console to the other when it came time to play them back in the showroom. This setup really helped maximise their time during a tight two-day weekend workshop. It also allowed more students to get their hands on the console. We were able to get every two or three students on their own desk, a number that would have doubled if it weren't for *wysiwyg*. The class would have been far less practical. For the open house, we just kept the *wysiwyg* studio configured in an open room so that customers could come in and experiment with either the Hog III or *wysiwyg* or both.

It's important for the rig to be flexible and changeovers to go smoothly. *wysiwyg* helps with both.

Q: *How did you get started with wysiwyg?*

A: I became familiar with *wysiwyg* in 2003 through my brother who, at the time, was working as a technical director for a large church and also doing some freelance lighting/design and programming for some Christian music groups on the side. He was using *wysiwyg* to precue his programming off-site and would then touch up his focus points at the venue. He had a very simple set-up with a Hog 500 console interfaced to a PC running *wysiwyg* via a *wyg-it* box. He would get photos and architectural drawings of the venues ahead of time and then create the venue and rig. Then he would listen to demo recordings of the music and program the entire concert ahead of time.

I was running FOH sound for one of the groups he was lighting and I was amazed at the complexity of programming he was able to achieve with relatively little time at the venue. Once he showed me "his secret" I was blown away. I had taken architectural drafting classes in high school and had done set/scene design for both stage and studio by hand for several years. The idea that you could design a venue, rig and set in 3D space fascinated me. The ability to see the creative results of your lighting design and programming ahead of without having to rent rehearsal space, equipment, and labour seemed ground breaking.



Ruehling Associates 25th Anniversary Open House (Photo)

A: In 2004, I was hired as the Lighting Designer and Production Manager for a small private university. We had two permanent venues and several seasonal spaces used for concerts, theater performances, and other events. In addition to all of the campus events we also functioned as road house-style performing arts center hosting national touring productions. We housed everything from concerts and off-Broadway plays to comedians and even a Russian circus.

I purchased *wysiwyg* for the school's event production department to help manage all the changeovers and create paperwork for our house plots to give to my student tech crews. I also used *wysiwyg* to virtually test different lighting configurations prior to hanging and patching the actual lights. I learned the basics of paperwork and design modes during that time and was really pleased with the ability to create concepts (scenes) without a console right in the software and experiment with different looks. *wysiwyg* greatly improved the efficiency of my student crews and allowed me to continually update our house plots and paperwork to keep pace with the incredibly demanding production schedule.

Q: *So how did you go from university productions to designing open houses at Ruehling?*

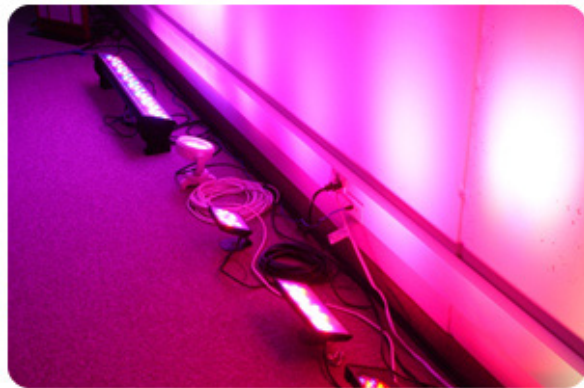
A: I joined Ruehling Associates Inc. in 2005 and, shortly thereafter, we purchased a Wholehog III from HES, which came bundled with *wysiwyg* CE. Once I started exploring the Live mode and actually programming in real space, I saw the full potential of the software as a design and training tool. Almost immediately we upgraded to the full version of Perform and began using it to reconfigure our on-site showroom and create renderings of upcoming projects to use in sales presentations to some of our production clients.



wysiwyg powering the Ruehling Associates Open House

A: My first use of *wysiwyg* was to create a virtual version of our showroom, a 25' x 50' multi-purpose facility that we often reconfigure for open house events, training workshops, programming and production system assembly, and rental/service testing and inspection. Having an accurate 3D model of the space helps us experiment with our different layouts so we make the best use of space, labor, and equipment.

Since much of the equipment we use in the showroom is our rental stock, most of the gear is often out on shows and continually coming in and out of the room, which makes programming and design opportunities short and unpredictable. It's important for the rig to be flexible and changeovers to go smoothly. *wysiwyg* helps with both. Since I have created the virtual showroom in *wysiwyg*, I have updated it several times and we are in the process of remodeling and redesigning for some future events.



Ruehling Associates 25th Anniversary Open House, Lighting Display

Q: *Do you have any future plans for wysiwyg?*

A: Our future plans for *wysiwyg* include creating some training workstations to use during console training and setting up *wysiwyg* for customers to rent for programming and pre-cueing their own events. We also hope to do more turn-key programming solutions and offer drafting services to existing *wysiwyg* customers.

We have many clients who love to use *wysiwyg* for pre-cueing, but they don't have the time or knowledge to create the venue and draw the rig. We can offer them drafting services, a programming suite, and event console rentals to pre-program their projects. I'm looking forward to integrating *wysiwyg* into more of our projects and services in the future.

For more information, visit www.ruehlingassoc.com.