

grandMA

Case Study

Blue Man Group, Berlin



■ grandMA – total control



Blue Man Group

A unique,
powerful network –

grandMA multimedia consoles & NSPs for the
Blue Man Group Show, Berlin

It is virtually impossible to put into a few words the incomparable musical and acting performance of the three blue, bald-headed protagonists of the Blue Man Group, because the show stimulates all of the audience's senses at the same time. The performance actively involves the audience and is not restricted to the stage area. The show pulls out all the stops; sometimes it moves ahead at full speed and sometimes it slows down, sometimes it is loud and sometimes quiet, sometimes bright and sometimes dark. The show has captivated audiences in New York, Boston, Chicago, Las Vegas and Berlin. TV commercials for Intel's Pentium processors have made the Blue Man Group more widely known, and ever since the show opened at the "Theater am Potsdamer Platz" in 2004, it has achieved a cult status in Germany similar to that it has in the USA.

The idea

Such a varied and energetic show not only calls for a creative lighting design, but also places high demands on the technical equipment. The intent of Blue Man Group Productions Inc. was for the Berlin show to be even larger and more innovative than its Las Vegas counterpart. In addition to the extensive use of different types of moving lights, video was to be included as an equally important design element. The projection of some typical Berlin city scenes added a special kind of flavor to the show. Lighting & production designer Marc Brickman (also known as Pink Floyd's lighting designer) and associate production designer Marc Janowitz were in charge of the stage and lighting design. The technical equipment was supplied by the Dutch company Flashlight, acting as the general contractor.

The requirements

A large number of DMX channels had to be managed for this comprehensive show concept. During the preparation phase, the specifications called for a grandMA multimedia console with 4,096 channels, largely because programmer Marcus Krömer had achieved excellent results when he used a grandMA console for a press event of the Blue Man Group during the run-up to the show. The system design was expanding, with additional equipment being specified for the show so that the number of channels quickly exceeded 5,000. However, splitting up the lighting control system was out of the question.



Project team

Lighting & Production Designer:	Marc Brickman
Associate Production Designer:	Marc Janowitz
Lighting Design Assistant:	Maren Hergt
Lighting Programmer:	Marcus Kroemer
Video Design:	Caryl Glaab
Associate Video Design:	John Ackerman, Scharff Weisberg
Video Design Assistant:	Brian Harrison
Head Electrician:	Juergen Becks
Senior Artistic Directors:	Michael Quin, Caryl Glaab

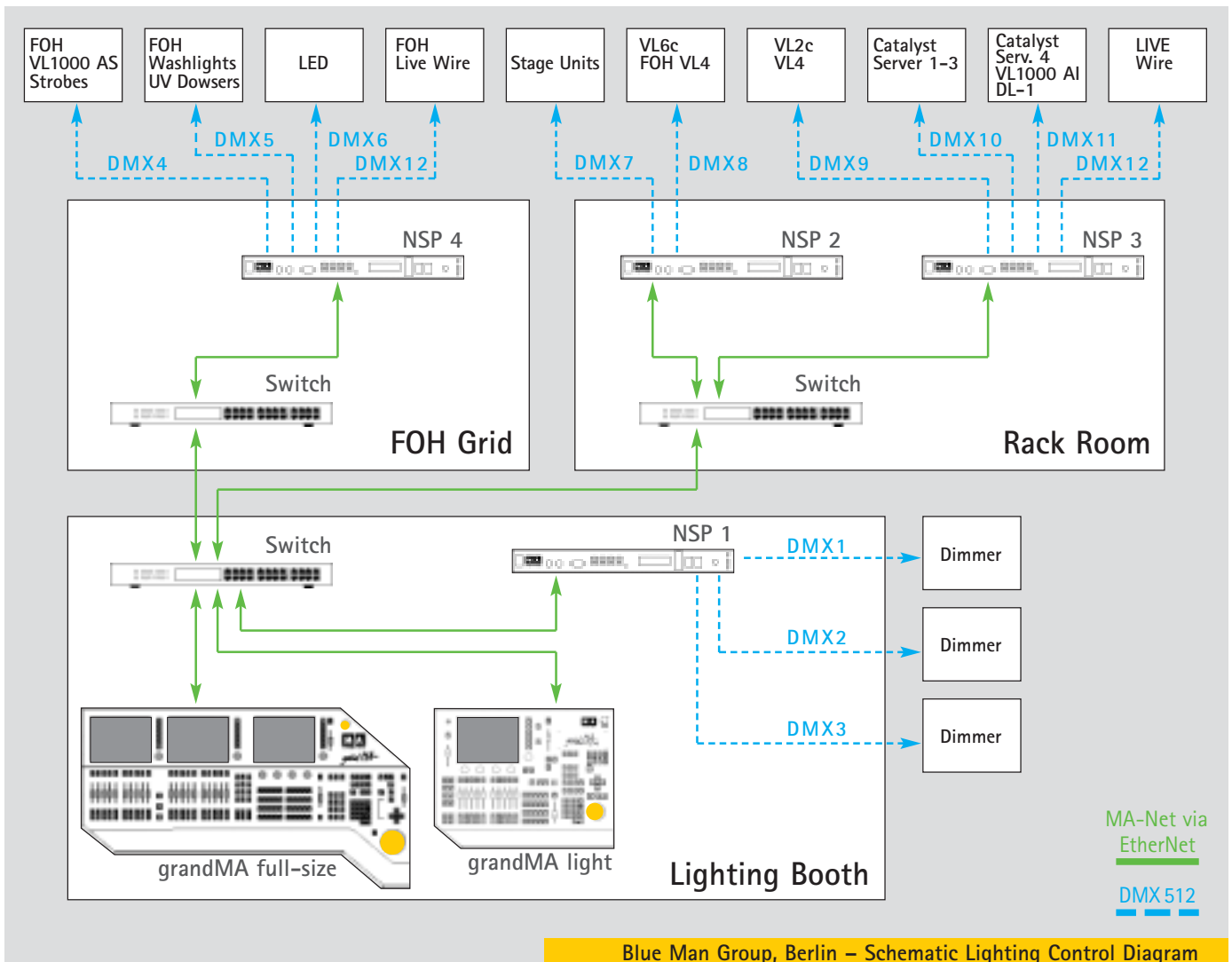
The grandMA network solution

In order to meet these requirements, NSPs (network signal processors) were used in substantial numbers for the first time on the Blue Man Group show in Berlin. Four NSPs were used in different locations around the theatre, in order to increase the number of DMX channels (a total of 12 DMX lines were used on the show) and to distribute the DMX signals via MA-Net Ethernet protocol. Adding an NSP to an interconnected system also means expanding the processing capacities and increasing the computing speed of the entire system. Each NSP is equipped with its own CPU and, in a network, such a multi-processor system takes over the data processing load of a grandMA console. All data of the 12 DMX lines are available in real time and remain fully synchronized. That was an absolute requirement in order for video sequences from different sources to be used simultaneously and integrated seamlessly into the lighting design.

The show was programmed with two grandMA full-size consoles in Multi-User mode. Rik Schoutsen, programmer for Tenfeet b.v., could preprogram the presets and sequences for the media servers on the one console, while Marcus Krömer programmed the moving lights, conventional lighting, numerous strobes and "live wires" on the other. During the show's previews, a grandMA full-size console located on the balcony was used for live updates of and corrections to the programming, while the show itself was controlled by the theatre's own operator from the control booth. This was possible, because both consoles were connected together in a network running in Multi-User mode. For the subsequent run of the show, one grandMA full-size was later replaced with a grandMA light as a backup console.



Blue Man Group on Promotion Tour



Company Profile

■ MA Lighting International, based in Paderborn, Germany, is the dedicated sales, support and service entity for the renowned grandMA control systems, digital dimming systems, networking tools and media servers of MA Lighting Technology, based near Wuerzburg (GER). The product range offers cutting-edge solutions for control and dimming and contains the award-winning grandMA consoles, the renowned Light- & Scancommander, but also the reliable digital dimmer racks and packs. With its media server grandMA video MA bridges the lighting and video worlds and integrates media servers like a fixture into lighting control.

Today, MA Lighting is well known for its technical know-how and has achieved a unique international reputation for its operational philosophy. The company looks back with 25 years experience. MA Lighting strictly follows a professional user-centric approach and is getting as close as possible to the market via its own international offices as well as competence and support centres in the UK, North America, Latin America, the Middle East/India and Asia Pacific – supported by a world-wide distribution and service network.



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