

WEST AUDIO & DESIGN LTD

bespoke audio visual solutions for houses of worship and public spaces

CASE STUDY

Alien Wars, Arches Theatre, Glasgow. 2008-2009.



In 1992, the Arches Theatre in Glasgow hosted the first-ever “Alien Wars”, which became the fastest growing, highest grossing walk-through experience in the world. Based on the “Alien” Trilogy of movies, it involved members of the public being led through dark, smoke-filled tunnels by a “Marine” and ultimately being scared witless by constant “Alien” attacks. It was recreated in The Arches over the winter of 2008 and ran through until the end of Summer, 2009. The show went on to run in Spaceport in the Wirral and on Blackpool’s promenade during 2009 and 2010.

While the original show relied on CD playback to create the soundscapes which gave the show its atmospheric and unsettling feel, West Audio’s John Turner was approached to give the soundscapes and effects a 21st Century makeover.



All of the background atmospheres were created in Cubase, using high-end sound effects libraries, and re-recorded and looped onto an Alesis HD, 24 track, Hard Disk recorder, programmed to loop “endlessly” and carrying the core stereo and quad soundscapes which were fed via 3x Stageline 8-channel, 100Watt/channel amplifiers into Studiospares full-range, 3-way loudspeakers in each of the 6 operational zones. A total of 1.5Km of 1.5mm loudspeaker cable was used in the Glasgow show!



The spot effects (gunfire, alien attacks, briefing room and evacuation messages) were all triggered manually (via discrete switches) off an Akai S6000 sampler, running at 48KHz/16bit, and utilising a seriously adapted Novation Oxygen 28-note midi keyboard. The switches also fired off the lighting and strobe effects, which were programmed by our good friend Phil Haldane of Black Light, who also supplied the control desk, dimming and luminaires for the show, as well as around 500mtrs of festoon lighting. A total of 8 Martin programmable smoke machines kept the atmosphere dark, dingy and damp.

Triggering the gunfire, and creating a directional feel for this was a real challenge. 4 Alesis HD channels were used to constantly play back the effects, and each “gun” was installed with a 3-channel, wireless fob, which, when triggered, opened up a number of loudspeaker circuits in each of the 3 attack zones. A bit of “out-of-the-box” thinking here, and another use for garage door-opening technology – cheap as chips, simple and effective – and it just works!