



PHILIPS LightVibes™

immersive cinema lighting

Jim Slater watched a demo at **CineEurope**

I had read about Philips LightVibes™ as a new cinema entertainment lighting solution which can create immersive light shows in cinema auditoria, so it was interesting to experience a short cinema performance plus a number of short demos using the system in a special room at CineEurope.

LightVibes uses programmed LED illuminated wall panels along the sides of the cinema auditorium, plus additional ceiling and back wall lighting. The panels couldn't be seen when their lighting is off and the room was darkened for a show. It was interesting to see how the Philips LightVibes screens ran automatic and scripted light shows that provided a palette of options for the cinema space, synchronising the lighting with the screen content. I spoke with the guy who was running the show, and he explained and showed me how a simple computer programme allows you to achieve the effects that you want by writing 'light scripts' to drive the lighting fixtures. A cinema system would normally be supplied with a range of 'standard' effects, but it is simple enough to programme your own custom effects to match any particular show.

The system combines LED ceiling lighting, moving light spots, back lighting and the low resolution large LED wall panels that can host dynamic media. I was surprised at

just how low-res the side panels were - the LEDs aren't numerous enough to provide much detail, so you couldn't sensibly show a 'Warner Bros' or 'Coca-Cola' logo, for instance. It really is a case of providing 'ambience'. Philips suggests many uses for its "immersive lighting" concept, including lighting enhancements for important moments in feature films, with the lighting perhaps enhancing the special effects on the main screen, and that did seem to work well in the demo I saw. But their publicity material had suggested that they envisage the wall panel displays being used for everything from cinema logos to ads promoting concession sales, and I couldn't really see how the low-res images could achieve that. What certainly did work well were the pre-show moving graphics that could get the audience 'in the mood' as they wait for the movie to appear on screen.

The system certainly works well, and for music shows and live cinema events it could definitely have a positive effect, with the extra lighting significantly enhancing the happenings on the main screen. But I have to say that as something of a 'purist' when watching on-screen images, the last thing I would want when watching a serious movie would be to have the contrast effectively reduced as a result of the extraneous ambient lighting scattering on to the screen. The

coloured 'background' effects would also mean that you really weren't watching the same movie that the director intended you to see, in terms of colour and contrast. But Philips have plans to work with movie makers to see how they could develop special lighting programmes that would amplify the 'wow' factor at the moments when special effects take place on the movie screen, and this could provide some very interesting possibilities with specially prepared movies that have been designed to work alongside the LightVibes effects.

I could appreciate how many Event Cinema showings could be enhanced by the new lighting system, with different background lighting for everything from rock concerts to sporting fixtures, and there really is something different about the light shows coordinating with the on-screen content.

A whole new experience

There is no doubt that in this age of 'immersive' cinema, exhibitors need to reach out to broader audiences by creating engaging entertainment experiences, and the Philips LightVibes system should help them to enhance, differentiate and repurpose their cinema spaces, creating exciting experiences for viewers of alternative content and event screenings from live operas to rock concerts and sporting fixtures.

The financial case?

Philips market research found that 58% of viewers said that they would be willing to pay a one dollar premium for attending a show enhanced with LightVibes. They also claim that the system can help exhibitors make more money from on-screen advertising by creating dynamic and engaging pre-show theatre ambiances, with the LightVibes system enabling them to offer advertisers an interactive connected platform. This could allow for the creation of 'second screen' and completely new 'third screen' immersive advertising concepts, in addition to the benefits of traditional media screens.

I tried hard but failed to get some examples of equipment costs. Each of the large panels will cost 'a few thousand dollars' and a typical cinema is going to require at least six of these plus the extra ceiling lights and the control kit, so it won't be cheap. I guess that initial 'early adopter' cinemas will need to come to some sort of financial agreement with advertisers to recoup their investment, but there is no doubt that for some performances LightVibes will bring the drama and emotion of a fantastic light show to the cinema theatre-setting, complementing the content on the silver screen.

For more info: lightvibes@philips.com