The Design Explorer
The Ashlar-Vellum User Newsletter

Third Quarter, 2013

New Pricing, New Bundling
Introducing Cobalt™ & Xenon™ Solo

In October, Ashlar-Vellum is introducing new pricing for our 3D modelling products.

- Cobalt and Xenon will both be optionally sold without the courtesy Graphite™ license. These will be known as Cobalt Solo and Xenon Solo.
- The existing 3D modeling products will continue to be sold as is, but with a slight reduction in price.

Prices for new permanent e-only licenses include:

- Cobalt v8 (*Plus Graphite v8*) $2,495
- Cobalt *Solo* v8 $1,495
- Xenon v8 (*Plus Graphite v8*) $1,995
- Xenon *Solo* v8 $ 995
- Argon™ v8 $ 695

Upgrade prices from Cobalt and Xenon v6 and v7 to regular Cobalt and Xenon will be adjusted somewhat accordingly. Prices will be reflected on the website, but the underlying web store infrastructure, handled by a less agile third-party developer, may take a little longer. Please call Ashlar-Vellum or your Value Added Reseller to make sure you get the most up-to-date price.

Graphite v9

Developer Andrew Patlan is busy working on Graphite v9 and has recently completed the integration of Unicode.

Unicode allows international customers to change the language of the user interface more easily and supports fonts from alphabets other than Latin in the pull down list.

Version 9 will also include a new set of tool icons (with options to use the old icons) and tool tips.

Ashlar-Vellum & AlphaCorr™ Teams to Switzerland

Five members of the Ashlar-Vellum and AlphaCorr teams were in Switzerland this quarter to finalize the Zünd Design Center software and to discuss features for the SP1 update and v2 release. The Zünd Design Center is an Adobe Illustrator plug-in that offers a library of parametric designs, 3D visualization and 3D PDF export. Zünd customers can simply choose a design, change the dimensions, add graphics, and the sample or custom box is ready for the Zünd Cut Center machines.

From left to right: Fedor Lyamchik, Robert Bou, Michael Collins, Lars Bendixen and Vladimir Karpenko at Zünd's headquarters.

Cobalt v8 SP4

It has come to our attention that a couple of features that were working in SP2 of Cobalt, Xenon and Argon were out of order in SP3. The following issues are corrected:

- Certain combinations of views in Model-to-Sheet, such as, wireframe and Phong, were incompatible and would cause one or the other to disappear.
- Project files containing Model-to-Sheet with Perspective view would crash when loading.

Both issues are now fixed and should be available for download soon.

Ashlar-Vellum Explores Database Front-end Development

Our product management and development staffs are working together to outline a new consulting service for database interface development. Customers have expressed a need to manage large databases of drawings. Of the products already available on the market, few integrate with the Mac. None provide the look and feel of Vellum® software.

The functions of this front-end database will allow users to search for and develop reports on Ashlar-Vellum files, including:

- What's in the drawing.
- What layers are defined.
- What symbols are defined.

Each interface will be customized for your company, working on top of the database engine of your choice, including:

- Oracle
- Microsoft SQL
- MySQL (semi-open source owned by Oracle)
- PostgreSQL (Postgres) (open source freeware)
- FileMaker Pro (from a subsidiary of Apple)

This new database interface can integrate with your corporate website, allowing you to create a catalogue of customizable parts built on parametrically specified components in a configure-to-order system.

The database front-end will be compatible with v9 of Ashlar-Vellum software, including Graphite precision 2D/3D drafting software, and Cobalt, Xenon and Argon CAD and 3D modelling software.

The cost will include heavy customization and consulting by one or more of the following:

- Coordination with a customer's internal database gurus.
- Expertise provided by Ashlar-Vellum.
- Expertise by our network of Channel Partners.

Typically, customized applications are priced by:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Server cost \& number of users} \\ + \text{ Customization, consulting \& training} \\ \hline \text{Total database front-end cost} \end{array}$$

Industry rumour has it that a typical Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) system like this includes 30% for software, 70% on services and starts at about a quarter of a million US dollars. We're looking for ways to make that more approachable. The sweet spot in any market it to deliver 80% of the functionality for about 20% of the cost of competitive systems. We don't know yet if we can hit this exactly but that's the idea.

If you know of any good examples of database front-ends that we should look at, let us know. Send an email to Robert.Bou@ashlar.com with your suggestions.

More details will follow in future publications as we explore this idea. If your company is a candidate for this type of system, let us know. We'd be delighted to explore this idea with you.

Dear Ashlar-Vellum...

Dear Ashlar-Vellum: Does Ashlar-Vellum software come only as a 32-bit system? If so, why? The reason I ask is that some animation software, like Simlabs, offers both, and states that the 64-bit handles large models better than the 32-bit system. This just got me thinking why is Cobalt just 32-bit? I'm just curious. And would I have unique issues running Ashlar-Vellum software on my 64-bit system?

<div align="right">

—A Technically Curious User
</div>

Dear Curious: Believe it or not, 32-bit software is actually faster than 64-bit…especially on a 64-bit system. That is, until it dies because your project gets too big and you run out of the 32-bit memory assigned to it. (This is 2GB on Windows and 4GB on Mac.) This is because the vast majority of applications are 32-bit and Intel spent a lot of money optimizing their 64-bit chips to run multiple 32-bit apps as fast as possible.

So far, we've only ever had one customer run out of memory on a Windows system, and no customers, that we know of, run out of memory on a Mac, so 64-bit has not been pressing for us. We're going to need to do more development to support multiple processors and then our software will run faster on 64-bit systems. We'll probably release the upcoming v9 versions of Cobalt, Xenon, Argon and Graphite as 64-bit.

Please note that big animations, such as those made in SimLabs, can eat memory faster than static engineering models in Cobalt. Today Cobalt, Xenon and Argon v8 have camera animation, but the models are static. In v9 this will change so we'll use more memory then also.

The recommended system for Mac is OS X 10.7 or 10.8, both of which are 64-bit only and our 32-bit app works well on these. The recommended system for Windows is Windows 7 Professional (or Ultimate) x64. Again on this, our 32-bit application works fine.

Bottom line: we advise running 32-bit Graphite, Cobalt, Xenon or Argon on a 64-bit computer whenever possible. This way, the software gets a full 2GB just for itself and its own "virtual" memory space so that no other program can "accidentally" corrupt it while its running. So, if you're wondering, you're next work computer should be 64-bit.

<div align="right">

—Ashlar-Vellum Product Management
</div>

Interactive Version

Simplicity Pays Off

Andy Marshall's focus on simplicity has led THD Electronics to award-winning recognition in the field of guitar amplification. THD amplifiers have attained a level of flexibility and quality no other manufacturer can reproduce. Cobalt™ 3D modelling software has significantly helped Andy as he designs with his musician customers in mind.

The THD line of amplifiers have drawn a world-wide fan base which includes well known musicians Eric Clapton, Peter Buck, Bob Dylan, Mark Knopfler, Jimmy Page, Ben Harper, and Eric Johnson, just to name a few.

For over 19 years, Andy's work has built a reputation for quality that enabled THD to initiate the American "boutique" amplifier market. As a result of his efforts in this market, Andy hears daily from guitarists who are pleased with the consistent quality in the 3- and 4-channel guitar amplifiers. All channels provide a distinctive sound—extremely important for recording artists and sound aficionados.
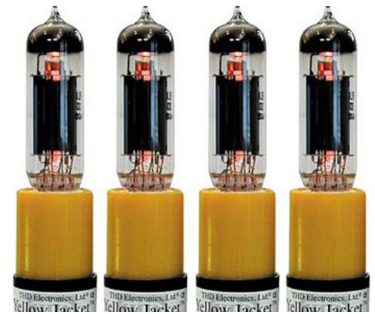
With current projects in mind, Andy looks to Ashlar-Vellum's Cobalt CAD and 3D modelling software to provide ease of use in design. Andy states that Cobalt has enabled him to catch errors early in the design phase.

"As our products grow more complex, Cobalt's ability to show me what a product and its component parts will look like helps me to completely visualize the product and 'turn it over in my hands' before we ever stamp a piece of metal or machine a piece of plastic or wood."
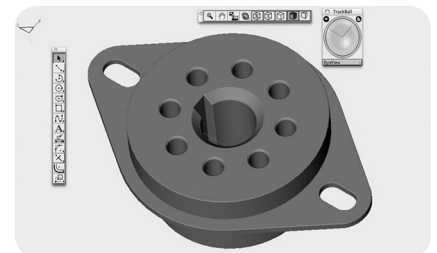
Because of his years of experience in the music world, Andy designs with an artist's ear and touch. His amplifiers have a distinctive sound, yet an uncommon ease of use. Andy can't imagine "ever designing another product without Cobalt." His experience with Cobalt has proven that this 3D modelling software substantially shortens his time-to-market. Overall he credits Ashlar-Vellum Cobalt with saving him "a stunning amount of time, money, and general grief." Ashlar-Vellum is happy to be part of the THD success story and we look forward to being a part of THD's growth in the future.

Providing a distinctive sound for their customers as well as an uncommon ease of use is something Andy has achieved through years of experience in the music industry. Now he has turned to Cobalt 3D modelling software to provide him with the same ease of use for his current design needs.

These Yellow Jacket converters allow for the use of different types of tubes within the same amplifier, one of many design innovations from THD.

This Cobalt screen capture from THD Electronics, shows a 3D model of a phenolic octal relay socket that is essentially a copy of the old Amphenol tube socket from the '50s.

Background/Contact

For more details on this project contact:

Andy Marshall Designs
10804 24th Ave NE
Seattle WA 98125

andy@thdelectronics.com