

Entertainment Design & Technology

Jeromy Hopgood – Design for the Entertainment Industry

Drafty Interview – part 2

Welcome back to the second installation of my interview with Lucas Krech, one of the creators of Drafty, a new online CAD application. If you haven't read Part One, you can do so by clicking [here](https://jeromyhopgood.wordpress.com/2016/05/18/tools-of-the-trade-drafty-part-1/). (<https://jeromyhopgood.wordpress.com/2016/05/18/tools-of-the-trade-drafty-part-1/>)

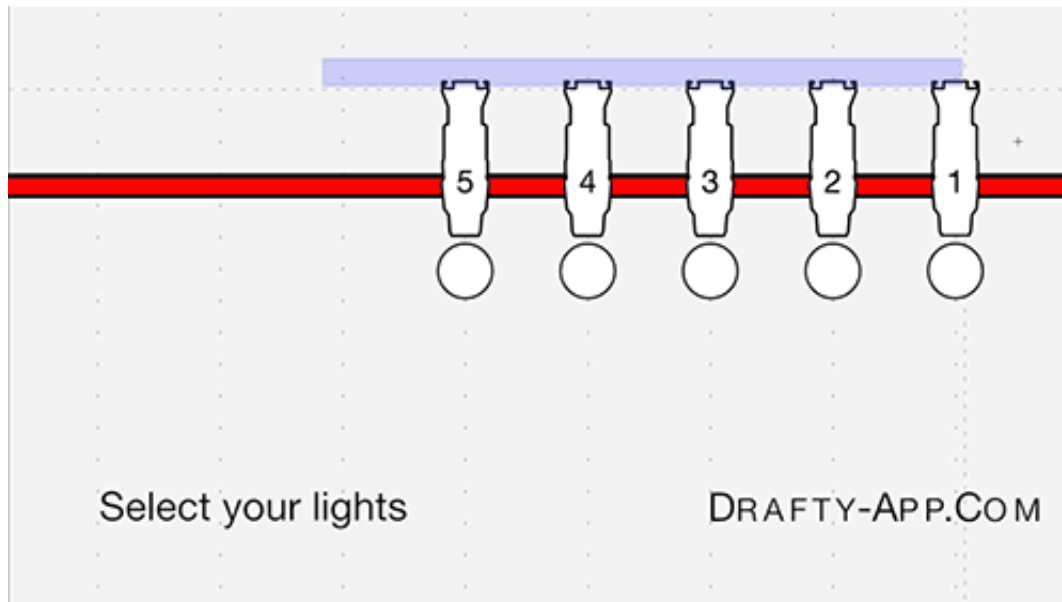
4. I notice that the program is delivered as a web app through your web browser. Why did you take that route?

Ease of deployment.

Our first paid customer was the Technical Design program at Bath-Spa University in the UK. We were still in Beta and had a ton of bugs. Being web-based we could see errors appear on our server logs and analyze the problem in real time. Fix the problem in real time. Deploy a software patch to our servers that the browser picks up automatically in real time. And then watch the errors disappear from the logs as each work station grabbed the new code. All in real time. 20 plus users every Tuesday working hard with Drafty for like two hours. It was amazing.

There are also a ton of ancillary benefits. Imagine your fancy computer crashes the day before you are about to go on tour with a ballet company (happened to me once). Or worse you are on tour and have no time to get to a store. Currently you are out at least a \$1000 on hardware and better hope your software works with the current OS or you may be out thousands there too. With Drafty you just grab any old laptop, open an Incognito window in Chrome to keep all your info private, and keep drafting. Also, because it leverages the web you don't need to pay for those top end graphics cards to support the 3D engine you are never going to use anyhow. So Drafty works as well on a \$400 laptop from Best Buy as it does on a fully tricked out MacPro Tower. Just another way we can save our users a few dollars.

Also cloud sharing. All the Google Drive file sharing tools work for Drafty. Make a pre-plot and share with your assistant to finish off the data entry. Share the plot with your electricians and let them enter all the dimming and circuit information. No more “Passing the football.” You just work.



5. Is there a mobile app for Drafty?

It is on our development list but currently you need a laptop or desktop. That computer can work on or off-line and Drafty syncs to the cloud as soon as it has an internet connection again.

6. I know that the program is still quite new. Do you have any “big names” using it yet?

Richard Pilbrow (http://richardpilbrow.com/Richard_Pilbrow/RPWelcome.html). I met him at USITT this year. He’s a real advocate for new technology which is wonderful to have in a field so reliant on technological advancements. When we met, he seemed almost more excited to meet me than I was to meet him. “You’re Lucas who made Drafty? Brilliant!” His enthusiasm is so infectious I forgot to be nervous.

He really put us to the test. The largest file I had tested with Drafty before he got on board was in the 400-450 unit range. He was putting out a plot well over 600 units. We added a bunch of symbols for him too. The Robert Juliat 700 Series? You can thank Richard for wanting those.

7. How does the program deal with generating paperwork? I know it creates lighting paperwork, but are there other applications for sound or video?

Our Signal Flow tool is getting a fair bit of attention. Simple drag and drop interface for doing all your signal routing diagrams. We have a rack builder on deck but it may be a couple months yet to really get it right.

We just partnered with Sam Kusnetz of Team Sound NYC, makers of Go Box for OLab (<https://jeromyhopgood.wordpress.com/2015/08/27/indispensable-products-go-box/>), to deliver high-quality real-world accurate speaker symbols available as an in-app purchase in Drafty. Those ought to go live very soon.

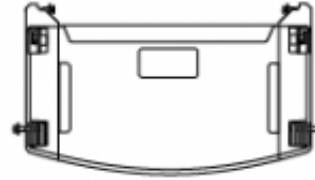
Team Sound Sample Symbols



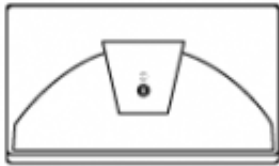
d & b audio E12 top view



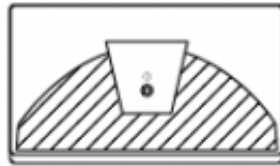
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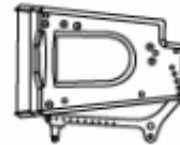
EAW KF720 top view



d & b audio E12 side view



d & b audio E12D side view



EAW KF720 side view

A few examples of the Team Sound-generated speaker symbols

We will be deploying a Screen tool for Projector calculations with our next revision at the end of May. Again, simple drag and drop to resize your screen and move the screen and Projector independently with a real time readout of the minimum lens necessary.

We have a one-click Hook-Up generator for lighting that outputs a pre-formatted Channel Hookup and Instrument Schedule. On our development list is a similar set of paperwork for Audio. I hope to see it live some time this summer. We have a long list and a small team.

The application is in very active development. We are on a monthly revision cycle and try to provide a solid combination of performance enhancements and feature additions with each release. Sound and video design paperwork tools in general are not as sophisticated as what lighting designers have available to them. We are actively closing that gap.

8. What is process like to transfer work from another CAD program?

You can import PDF currently. Most CAD programs have some kind of 'viewer' tool that will let you format the native file into a proper PDF to draft a plot.

DXF I/O is on the list. But honestly redrawing a plot is probably your best bet because it really is that fast. Chances are you would spend more time on cleanup of an old file than just drafting it new. There's a learning curve as with any piece of software but it's a shorter curve with Drafty than most other graphics programs, and once you get the swing of it, making a lightplot is at least 3-6 times as fast as other CAD programs.