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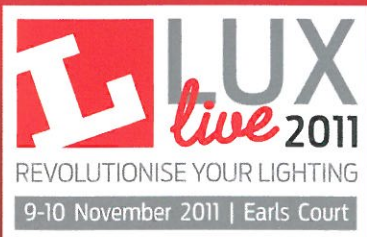
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Silent controls

The BBC cuts its carbon footprint while improving sets for forensics drama

Lighting plays a vital role in TV production where it affects the mood and atmosphere of scenes. The BBC has been updating its studios to ensure appropriate lighting is in place. One drama to benefit is *Silent Witness*.

The sets for the show are in a large warehouse converted specifically for filming the series. On-set lighting was upgraded to include Dali controls with a Helvar Digidim Router system.

The scheme was designed by Joe Burke Lighting Design in conjunction with Littledown, a Dali lighting control specialist, and installed by Moonlight, a TV lighting supplier and installer.

Joe Burke says: 'Traditionally, incandescent lighting is used on set and would be controlled from a DMX lighting control desk and dimmers.'

The brief from the BBC was to update the on-set lighting while reducing the show's carbon footprint. Burke says: 'I decided to replace the majority of the fittings, both on and off-set, with high-output dimmable fluorescents.
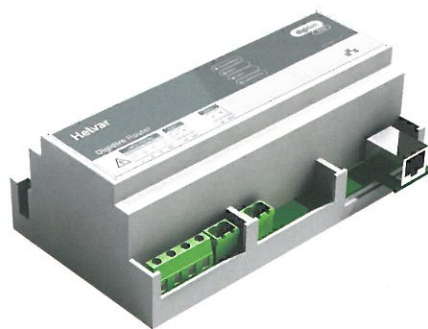
'I needed a control system that would be cost-effective, reliable, user friendly and provide a similar level of control as the DMX systems provide.'

At the heart of the system is the Helvar 910 Digidim Router, which uses an Ethernet connection (10/100 Mbps) to combine all the Dali networks.

Helvar's Designer Software is used for advanced configuration and programming. A PC can be connected to the system for diagnostics and remote logging.

Burke says: 'I incorporated Digidim keypads into the dressed set so the crew could have local, individual control of all the on-set lights. The keypads were programmed with a number of preset scenes that the actors could operate in vision.'

After the installation, the system was commissioned by Littledown. During this process, all devices on the Dali network were identified, tested, named and grouped to ensure a smooth handover of the system to the client.

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