disguise xR delivers the first virtual AIM Awards

In this case study you will discover why EVOKE Studios chose the disguise xR workflow, powered by the disguise gx 2c media server, to deliver the first virtual ceremony for the AIM Independent Music Awards.

Produced at Creative Technology's Deep Space Studio in Crawley, England and broadcast live on August 12 via SBTV's YouTube channel, on its 10th anniversary the AIM Awards became the first awards show in the UK shot in xR.

At a glance

The creative concept

The AIM Awards champion industry-leading innovation and performance by independent artists, labels and individuals.

"The main goal for the project was to use Extended Reality to transport musical acts to newly imagined environments that would support their songs in ways conventional broadcast wouldn't be able to and to create on-brand presenter states that would elevate production values and increase viewer engagement," said Vincent Steenhoek, Managing Director at EVOKE Studios.

The vision for the artist performances

The inspiration for the environments created for Little Simz's live performance was "heavily based on oceanic underwater views, sunken statues, striking blue hues and swaying movements," Vincent continues. "For 'Dinner Guest', performed by AJ Tracey feat. MoStack, Bronski from TAWBOX proposed a 'Honey, I Shrunk the Kids' vibe, which we translated into a park and city surroundings made of larger-than-life donuts, deep fried chicken and other fast food."

At a glance

The virtual awards stage

For the virtual awards stage, the main theme elements included exploding shards and a large robot with glowing eyes and headphones; the mascot for the AIM Awards.

A minimal palette of colours – greys, purples and a hint of white – were part of an ident created by DesignScene. "We took the lines in the ident and turned that into the red, or in this case purple, carpet going off into the distance," Vincent says. "We placed floating, glowing shards throughout the scene for the camera to interact with and create a large sense of depth and visible parallax.

"The scale of the scene allowed for sweeping camera moves and for the vision director to find the awards logo up in the air before pulling it down into the scene to find the presenter."
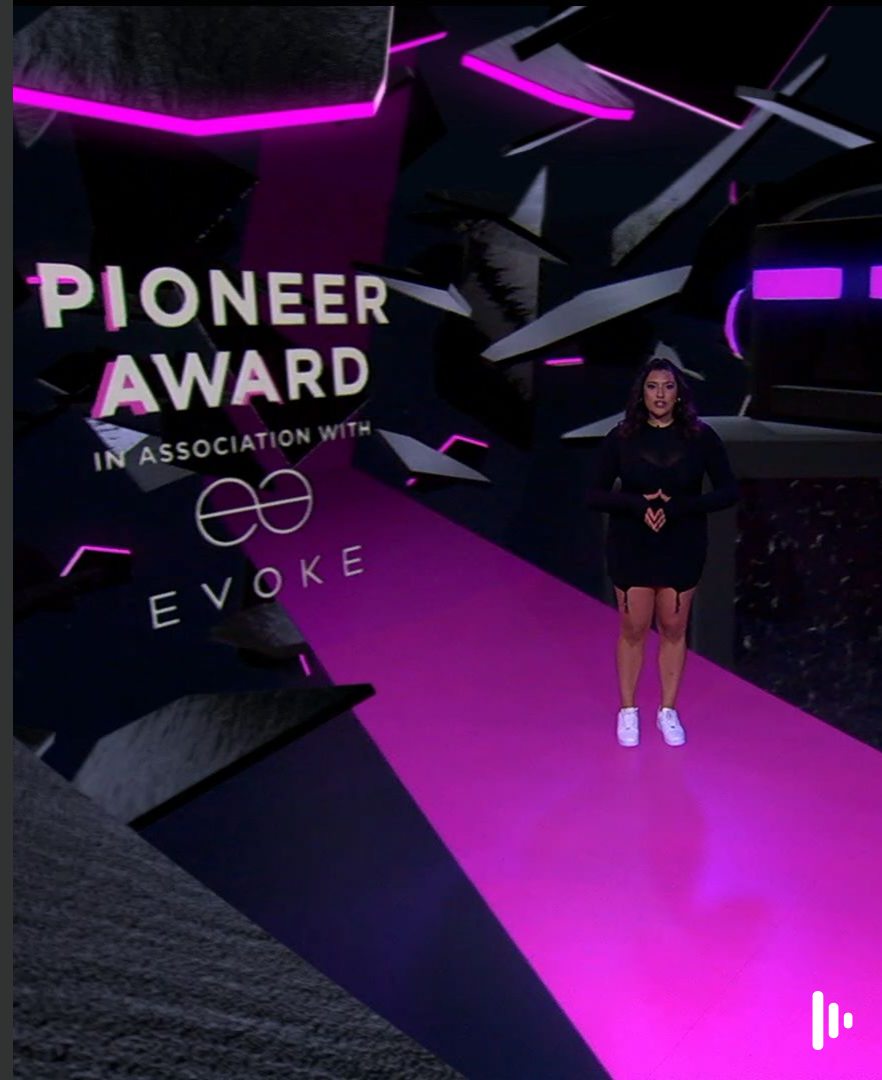
The challenge

Blending the 'real' with the 'virtual'

The main challenges encountered were mostly of a technical, physical nature. "Namely moiré patterns, clean set extensions, colour accuracy between the front and backplate and delays, which needed to be set right to glue the scene together," said Vincent. "After a lot of calibration, testing distances to the LED screen from the lens, and using environments with plenty of negative space, we successfully worked through all of these issues."

Other challenges included the artists' movement in the space and the lighting of the xR stage in order to avoid breaking the content and accurately blend the performers into the virtual scene.

In addition, the artists were recorded live in single takes. "This was more a challenge for the vision director and camera operators because our scenes just ran. Getting the right shots during the performance takes, meant lining everything up during the recording. We wanted to retain the live quality of the performances which meant we couldn't fix anything in post."

The solution

"The most user-friendly xR workflow"

In order to meet the need for perfectly calibrated front and backplates, set extensions and workflows for the awards, EVOKE chose a disguise solution. "disguise has the most user-friendly xR workflows that combines the different plates and desired set extensions in one integrated package. No other system does that right out of the box," Vincent explains. "For us, that meant we could build on a proven platform to deliver a new video format and help bring alive our environments reliably."

For the show production, the team integrated the disguise gx 2c with the Notch real-time content engine and a Mo-Sys StarTracker camera tracking system. "Notch was great for its pre-vis, flexible programming and quality of graphics while disguise gx 2c delivered plenty of headroom for xR applications to run scenes at high resolutions and bit depths combined with its integrated workflows," says Vincent. "Mo-Sys StarTracker delivered super accurate and ultra-low latency tracking data to us that we didn't have to think about twice."

"

xR speaks to people. Everyone who walks into the space and sees themselves in the environment is immediately captured by it. And to hear vision directors and camera people say they can't tell what's real or not, is really an achievement.

Vincent Steenhoek, Managing Director, EVOKE Studios

Results

Visual Chemistry

EVOKE Studios were pleased by several unexpected achievements accomplished by the groundbreaking production. Vincent remembers a particular artist performance that stood out to him.

"It might be a tiny detail, but the way we used lighting to mimic ocean floor caustics to blend Little Simz into the last scene of her performance was particularly successful. The way the camera moved the chains in front of her and how it played with the virtual light, it just worked so well. That was a bit of xR magic and the one scene that came closest to our aim of Visual Chemistry, where all the elements used to create a scene lined up most naturally."

Seamless set extension

Vincent also cites the colour accuracy and seamless set extension of the presenter states. "The invisible moment the camera panned from the end of the LED stage ended and the extension was magic. It created the coherency of image that allowed people to believe they were in the scene, no matter how far the camera moved out."

Success

3 weeks	4 days	2 days	1 day	200,000
content creation	pre-production	shooting	rehearsal and live broadcast	livestream viewers

"With xR still in development, the concerns we had mostly surrounded how clean our set extensions would be. As it turned out, we managed to get very clean results. The disguise and Notch workflows were well known to us and took most of our concerns away, even for a complex production that relied on Extended Reality environments.

"In addition, the collaboration between EVOKE Studios, DesignScene and CT London was fantastic and we're very proud of the level of finish we managed to achieve together. It gives us confidence for future productions and the application of xR."

Watch this behind-the-scenes video from EVOKE to see how the show came together.

disguise equipment used

Designer software r17.3
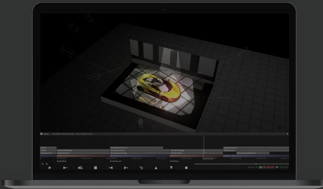
gx 2c

Release 17.3 is optimised for fast and efficient working, enabling the team to deliver the show quickly and with minimal crew on site.

Find out more.

The gx 2c media server powered playback of the virtual backdrop for the show and real-time graphic updates as the show progressed.

Find out more.

In partnership with:

Artistic Direction & Volumetric Design: Vincent Steenhoek
Creative Director: Chema Menendez
xR Producer: Urs Nyffenegger
xR Design Artists: Alex Tetsch, Ted Pallas, Ulli Thiemann and Hugo Zarate
Motion Graphics Artist: Daniel Fernandez
Real-time Content Rendering: Notch VFX
Camera Tracking: Mo-sys StarTracker
Content Design: TAWBOX, DesignScene
Studio: Creative Technology Deep Space
Images: EVOKE Studios

powered by
disguise
xR

EVOKE

Get in touch!

Curious to know more about us? Want to master our production toolkit? Need support on your project? Our team will be happy to speak to you, whatever your query:

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