

# ESTA's Control Protocols Plugfest offers manufacturer-to-manufacturer testing for compliance and interoperability

BY MICHAEL LAY

THE ANNUAL SUMMER ESTA conference is always a plethora of activity, especially for the Control Protocols Working Group (CPWG) members. Besides our main CPWG meeting, our dedicated volunteers and staff organized seven individual task group meetings for upcoming standards development, broadcasted two educational round tables, selected a new co-chair (Milton Davis, Doug Fleenor Design), and hosted another extremely successful Plugfest event.

Attendees . . . seek out and resolve . . . interoperability challenges, instead of waiting for their users to be surprised during a technical rehearsal.

Plugfests are an outstanding opportunity for manufacturers to gather together, in person, in a non-judgmental space and test their products for compliance to the latest ANSI-accredited CPWG standards. Attendees bring controllers, intelligent lights, control protocol analyzers, and other components in an effort to seek out and resolve manufacturer-to-manufacturer interoperability challenges, instead of waiting for their users to be surprised during a technical rehearsal.

The July 21 – 25 event in Dallas, TX was attended by five architectural manufacturers who had not attended a previous Plugfest event—a positive sign that ESTA's CPWG protocols are gaining acceptance outside the entertainment industry. CPWG

ESTA's CPWG protocols are gaining acceptance outside the entertainment industry.



Discussions about the standards and how to implement them take place constantly during the Plugfest.



Vinney Worley, The Light Source, and Peter Willis, Howard Eaton Lighting Ltd.



Red Walter, Elation Professional and Acclaim Lighting, and Bob Goddard, Goddard Design



Testing always starts by connecting two devices together isolated from all other pieces in the room. This allows engineers to verify basic operation and compliance with standards before connecting to a larger system.



Products appear for testing in their most early stages of development. Here we see circuit boards that will eventually be in end-user products, but the software and the protocols they support are ready for interoperability testing now.

members were on hand to answer their questions and help explain the nuances our ANSI-developed industry standard protocols.

The CPWG Plugfest is a free event sponsored by the ESTA Technical Standards Program (TSP). The TSP encourages interested members and non-members to attend this industry beneficial event.

For additional information on attending our next Plugfest, please email [plugfest@esta.org](mailto:plugfest@esta.org), or visit us on the web at <http://estalink.us/plugfest>.

*The CPWG greatly appreciates the loan of an assortment of moving lights for our testing laboratory by VER. Event photography courtesy of Bill Ellis, Candela Controls. ■*



**Michael Lay** is a Senior Project Manager with Philips Lighting. A 32-year veteran of the lighting industry, Michael is Co-Chair of the ESTA Control Protocols Working Group. Michael can be reached at [michael.lay@philips.com](mailto:michael.lay@philips.com).



A number of devices are connected at the same time to test their interoperability with each other. The Plugfest offers an opportunity to connect equipment from a number of manufacturers at once. This is how many subtle design issues are discovered.