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Meow Wolf Powers Immersive Art Experiences with Intel Technology

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Encouraging Artists to Provide Art Experiences

Founded in 2008, Meow Wolf creates large-scale immersive art installations and produces arts and music festivals, music videos, and streaming entertainment. The organization encourages its artists to share abilities and processes to create elaborate maximalist art installations providing interactive and enveloping art experiences.

Meow Wolf has over 700 employees and annual revenues of $10 million to $15 million. Its flagship attraction, House of Eternal Return, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is a 20,000-square-foot facility built by a collective of 135 artists. It includes an immersive art installation and concert venue. Multiple musical acts have filmed music videos there.

Meow Wolf's second installation, Omega Mart, opened in Las Vegas in 2021 as the anchor attraction at a new retail, art, and entertainment complex. The 52,000-square-foot multisensory facility blends narrative storytelling, technical wizardry, and commerce to examine such themes as American consumerism and corporate responsibility.

Its third and largest facility opened in Denver in September 2021 and features immersive art projects from hundreds of artists covering a wide range of media, including architecture, sculpture, painting, photography, video production, music, narrative writing, costuming, and performance.

Unified Network for Audio, Video, and Control

To enable its artistic experience while optimizing its production operations, Meow Wolf decided two years ago to deploy a unified network audio and control platform from QSC, a global manufacturer of audio, video, and control solutions. The Q-SYS platform leverages Intel Xeon Scalable processors with Intel Core processors and Intel Atom processors combined with the robustness and mission-critical reliability of a Linux operating system and the interoperability of networking standards from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers to deliver a robust, feature-rich audio, video, and control experience.

"With Q-SYS, our team doesn't have to manage disparate components from different manufacturers," says Les Stuck, senior sound technologist at Meow Wolf. *"A single platform lets us serve all the audio and control requirements across our complexes."*

Intel technology provides the hardware base for Q-SYS, with all processing happening inside the Intel chipsets. Those chipsets allow Q-SYS to deliver a full-featured, software-based audio/video experience with much less hardware than traditional audio/video solutions.

With this kind of IT-centric, layered approach, Q-SYS can evolve with new features and functions via simple firmware updates. Since the control engine runs on that same Intel platform, the amount of control processing power available in Q-SYS far exceeds anything found by combining disparate processors, which helps streamline both the integration and day-to-day operation of the system.

Meow Wolf's use of Q-SYS reflects its broader use of Intel-based solutions, with most of its exhibits also leveraging Intel platforms. Stuck says, *"We use Q-SYS in all of our installations as the processing hardware based on its ability to manage our audio DSP, control programming, and GUI creation in a single piece of software."*

Because Q-SYS is fully integrated in a single processor, the organization's staff spends considerably less time integrating the system, as less hardware means fewer interconnection points (and fewer potential points of failure). *"The ease of deploying this solution is really a testament to the power of Intel and Q-SYS,"* Stuck says. *"There is so much functionality in a single processor, and it really helps to streamline our workflow to easily create the experience we want."*

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Complex Systems Simplified

Building around an open, IT-friendly infrastructure also means that integrating non-QSC devices into the system is much simpler. *"It's not just Q-SYS devices that we need to bring our experience to life,"* Stuck explains. *"For example, we also have complex lighting systems that need to sync with Q-SYS audio playback for performances. That open-platform approach really helps us bring all of the pieces together to deliver our vision."*

Meow Wolf does one or two large projects per year, so the system's reliability is important. *"We want our people focusing on the next project rather than fixing problems with the projects we've completed,"* Stuck says. *"Having an integrated system greatly reduces the amount of time we spend supporting the system. Now when we are done, we can essentially just walk away. We've had zero downtime with the Q-SYS platform. Once we get it up and running, it simply keeps on working."*

Overall, Q-SYS allows Meow Wolf to complete projects faster and end up with a superior final solution. *"By choosing Q-SYS, we easily shave two weeks off of a three-month installation,"* Stuck says. *"We're also able to implement the adjustments quickly when we have collaborative artistic feedback sessions and critiques. In addition, controlling the whole system, including audio controls from a mobile device, adds to the efficiency because we can make last-minute changes on the fly."*

Stuck concludes, *"The QSC solution has saved us time and given us better performance and reliability with less hardware. It's perfect for us."*

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