

Linz-based drone swarm to appear in Rio de Janeiro this September

Ars Electronica SPAXELS[®] Flying at Rock in Rio

(Linz, April 10, 2017) Lady Gaga, Justin Timberlake and the Red Hot Chili Peppers are among the superstars who've been booked for Rock in Rio 2017, one of the world's largest annual rock music events. And this year, in addition to the class acts on stage, the entertainment lineup also includes a Rock in Rio premiere: a drone show in a class of its own! Every evening of the event's run, the Ars Electronica SPAXELS[®] will take to the sky above Rio de Janeiro's Barra Olympic Park to get the audience fired up for the headliner. The Linz-based swarm of LED-studded quadcopters will be conjuring up spectacular light sculptures in the festival's airspace—a majestic 200-meter-long sine wave, a gigantic electric guitar and as the grand finale, of course, the Rock in Rio logo.

Video Teaser Production near Neulichtenberg

The Spaxels crew began preparations for this shoot in mid-February. The next phase included several days of test flights in early April on a field near Neulichtenberg. The final sortie was accompanied live on-site by the Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität's Symphony Orchestra—a rendition of composer-arranger Hermann Miesbauer's adaptation of the official Rock in Rio anthem. The Spaxels swarm and the 60-piece orchestra were the featured performers in a video teaser and reportage shot for broadcast on Brazilian TV. "Pretty damned thrilling! The Spaxels are undoubtedly the way of the future as far as visualizations are concerned," was the obviously delighted reaction to the drone swarm's aerial artistry by Rock in Rio Production Manager Nuno Sousa Pinto.

The Ars Electronica SPAXELS[®]

The Ars Electronica Futurelab's Spaxels (space pixels) debuted in 2012, when the Linz-based media art lab's crew succeeded in rendering a huge eye-in-the-sky above the Danube with a formation of 50 autonomous drones as the spectacular centerpiece of that year's *Klangwolke* [Cloud of Sound], Linz's annual outdoor extravaganza. This production created a global media sensation and also brought in the first commission—and that from an extraordinarily prominent client. Paramount booked the Linz-based drone swarm to form a gigantic StarTrek logo in the night sky directly above London's Tower Bridge as part of the promotional campaign leading up to the premiere of "Star Trek – Into Darkness." The upshot: The Spaxels project took off! There followed appearances in Bergen (International Bergen Festival 2013), Ljubljana (Ljubljana Festival 2013), Brisbane (QUT Robotronica Event 2013), Umea (opening festivities of the 2014 European Capital of Culture), Sharjah (opening festivities of the 2014 Islamic Capital of Culture), Hannover (2014 official celebration of the 25th anniversary of German unification), Dubai (2014 National Day celebration in the United Arab Emirates), Linz (2015 Eurovision Song Contest), and the USA (Las Vegas in February 2015; California in March 2016). For Intel in late 2015, the Ars Electronica Futurelab put on a performance featuring a

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formation of 100 drones, an achievement that has gone down in history. What came to be known as “Drone 100” landed Intel in cooperation with the Ars Electronica Futurelab a Guinness World Record in the category “Most Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) airborne simultaneously.” In June 2016, the Linz-based crew reprised their performance—once again, on assignment from Intel—but this time around the airborne feats were executed above Sydney Harbour and its world-famous opera house before the eyes of 100,000 delighted spectators. Ars Electronica SPAXELS[®] GmbH, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Ars Electronica Linz GmbH, was incorporated in July 2016. The extensive R&D that goes into the Spaxels project has remained the purview of the Ars Electronica Futurelab, while Ars Electronica SPAXELS[®] GmbH handles the administrative side of the Spaxels’ appearances.

Rock in Rio

Rock in Rio is one of the world’s largest rock music festivals. It kicked off in 1985 and rang up attendance of 1.5 million right off the bat. Queen, Iron Maiden and Tina Turner are among the many bands have released videos or live albums of their Rock in Rio appearances, some of which are now coveted collectors’ items. And the lineup of bands and musicians who’ll be performing at Rio de Janeiro’s Barra Olympic Park in 2017 includes some of the world’s top acts—Lady Gaga, Guns & Roses, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Justin Timberlake, Bon Jovi, The Who and Aerosmith.

Rock in Rio: <http://rockinrio.com/rio/en>

Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität: <https://www.bruckneruni.at/>

Ars Electronica Spaxels: <https://www.spaxels.at/>

Ars Electronica Futurelab: <https://www.aec.at/futurelab/en/>

Feature on the Ars Electronica Blog: <https://www.aec.at/feature/en/rockinrio/>

Video: SPAXELS[®] goes Rock in Rio 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScmBLYPGhvM>

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