



The Wally Russell  
**FOUNDATION**

## PRESS RELEASE

August, 2017

**The Wally Russell Foundation  
Awards the 2017/2018 Lifetime Achievement Award to:  
Dave Higgins**

DAVE HIGGINS ANNOUNCED AS THE 2017/2018 "WALLY" LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT WINNER



**The Board of Directors of the Wally Russell Foundation is pleased to announce the winner of the 2017/2018 Lifetime Achievement Award is distinguished innovator, entrepreneur, and industry pioneer, David G. Higgins.**

***To Promote Innovation & Leadership In The Entertainment Industry***

**Directors:** \* Phil Bernard \* David Cunningham \* Tom Folsom \* John Howe \* John Wiseman \* Paul Vincent  
Phil O'Donnell \* Richard Pilbrow \* Robert Bell \* Brian Russell \* Robert Schiller \* Jennifer White \* Peter Rogers \* Van Rommel

16458 Bolsa Chica Street, #221  
Huntington Beach, CA 92649  
[www.wallyfund.org](http://www.wallyfund.org)  
[wallyfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:wallyfoundation@gmail.com)



The award will be presented at the annual USITT Conference and Exhibition in Fort Lauderdale, Florida on March 16<sup>th</sup> at a breakfast celebration. (Time and location TBD).

Dave Higgins has been a valued member of our industry going on 44 years and made his reputation as the driving force of concepts such as interoperability between different manufacturer's proprietary products, open lighting controls protocols standard, robust mechanical/electrical equipment designs and ease of use.

Dave moved to Calgary, Alberta in 1974 and found work as a panel wiring technician at the Electro Controls factory. Within 6 years, he had moved up from factory floor to first systems design, then heading up service & installation and then sales for Canada.

In 1981, Dave was recruited by Dilor Industries to lead their sales effort and he moved to Squamish, British Columbia. Dave held that position for two years before returning to Calgary where he began working for Interlalia, a leading data communications company. Here Dave expanded his knowledge of electronics and microprocessors, but never left the theatrical industry as he maintained a field service and technical support business on the side. In this capacity, he designed and built several products, including:

- A moving sidewalk controller for a touring production of 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat';
- An AMX192 splitter network for the 1988 Winter Olympics
- An Analog to AMX192 splitter network for touring control desks.

In early 1987, Dave left Interlalia when Strand Lighting contracted Dave to be the factory representative for Southern Alberta. As he began to sell projects, Dave saw the continuing and growing need for lighting control protocol converters and developed a product that enabled customers to break down the barriers imposed by proprietary control protocols. Why shouldn't a Strand console control a Kliegl dimmer rack or Colortran control Electro Controls and so on? Gray Interfaces was formed to commercialize this enabling technology. Early products were:

- An AMX192/DMX512 to analog interface (1990);
- The "**Protocol Converter**" an AMX192 to DMX512 interface (1991).

The market for interfaces began to explode and Dave was guided by a philosophy of a manufacturer should first be willing to listen and then willing to produce. The 1990's was a decade of transition for the lighting controls industry and under Dave's leadership, Gray Interfaces introduced:

- OEM DMX512 controllers for Douglas and GE relay panels (1992 to 1993)
- First generation DMX512 opto-splitters (1993)
- OEM DMX512 controllers for Lutron "3-wire" dimmable fluorescent ballasts (1994)
- The "Ultimate" Protocol Converter (1998)

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It soon became apparent that DMX512 could be - and would be – used for far more than controlling dimmer intensities and relay ON/OFF states. DMX512 routing and patching requirements could no longer be adequately supported with patch panels. This led Dave to introduce **DMX Pathfinder** in 1995, an electronic patch matrix that was programmed by a PC. Early adopters were CBC, Cirque du Soleil and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. 1998 saw the introduction of follow on products, **Pathfinder LR and MR**. Many **Pathfinder** systems are still in operation today.

In 1999 Dave saw that hardware based distribution of DMX512 would soon be rendered obsolete by Ethernet technology and the **Pathport** product line was developed and launched.

Very few tools for coding Ethernet stacks, if any, were available to small developers. Those that were available were supplied with proprietary chip sets and were prohibitively expensive. For Dave, it was time to decide whether or not to ‘bet the farm’ on a product. Dave decided that the risk was worth it and so, after developing Ethernet stack from the ground up – line by line – the **Pathport** DMX-over-Ethernet product line was launched. **Pathport** won the ESTA Software Product of the Year award at LDI in 2000. It is worth noting that **Pathport** “gateways” were the first ever non-telephonic product to utilize 802.3af Power-over-Ethernet, (POE).

Beginning in 2004, Dave focused Pathway Connectivity on developing additional **Pathport** devices as well as the eDIN modular interface product line. eDIN changed everything in the way DMX512 interface products were utilized in the market. The use of dip switches for the addressing and mode-of-operation selection was replaced with on-board user interfaces and compatibility with E1.20 RDM.

Dave sold the Pathway Connectivity business to Acuity Brands in 2011, but not before introducing the VIA line of Gigabit Ethernet switches. At last, the industry now had a complete systems backbone designed, manufactured, distributed and supported by a single manufacturer and Dave’s original vision had been realized.

Now “retired” Dave lives in Calgary with Mary Lou, his wife and partner of 32 years. Their children are Andrew, born 1990 and Allison born in 1993. In 2014 their first grandchild Benjamin was born. He loves his Papa and they spend a lot of time together. Family, hiking, skiing and motorcycling are Dave’s passions.

Dave continues to be an active volunteer for many civic and church-related organizations.

The Wally Russell Foundation was created in 1992 to celebrate the vision and life of Wally Russell, a true mentor to the industry. For 26 years, the Foundation has been supporting

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Lighting Interns for the Canadian Opera Company and the Los Angeles Opera in his memory.

For further information regarding the activities of the Wally Russell Foundation including:

**The Wally Russell Lifetime Achievement Award**  
**The Wally Russell Lighting Intern Program at the Los Angeles Opera**  
**The Wally Russell Lighting Intern Program at the Canadian Opera Company**  
**The Wally Russell Foundation/USITT Annual Mentoring Award,**

**or**

to contribute to the Wally Foundation, please contact:

Tom Folsom  
Board Member  
The Wally Russell Foundation  
16458 Bolsa Chica Street  
Suite 221  
Huntington Beach, CA 92649  
USA

714-699-3573  
[wallyfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:wallyfoundation@gmail.com)  
[www.wallyfund.org](http://www.wallyfund.org)

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## Wally Award Winners

- 2017/2018** – David Higgins
- 2015/2016** – Gordon Pearlman
- 2013/2014** – Jules Fisher
- 2012** – Imero Fiorentino
- 2011** – Rusty Brutche
- 2010** – Dave Cunningham
- 2009** – Joel Rubin
- 2008** – Richard Pilbrow
- 2007** – Fred Foster
- 2006** – Allen Branton
- 2005** – Richard Belliveau
- 2004** – George Izenour
- 2003** – Sonny Sonnenfeld
- 2002** – Jimmy Fuller
- 2001** – Jim Bornhorst
- 2000** – Stan Miller
- 1999** – Don Stern
- 1998** – Bran Ferren
- 1997** – Fred Bentham
- 1996** – Francis DeVerna
- 1995** – Tharon Musser
- 1994** – George van Buren
- 1993** – Charles Altman
  
- 1992** – Wally Russell

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