

AVA Dialogue

OS X special issue, featuring the full AVA Quality Questionnaire report, Web Wise Part II, CST Course, Archive and more...

Issue 1, Year 2001

Generation X

As Apple say themselves: "welcome to the future of Macintosh". The launch of Mac OS X – their stunning operating system is a revolution in computing in terms of stability, simplicity, elegance and looks.

At AVA, we've had a version running on Developer Beta copies since June 2000, and we've included some screen shots to demonstrate the fantastic difference just the looks are going to make to our customers' working environments.

Although our advice would be to not upgrade yet (especially as it is likely that a lot of the third party suppliers are not yet ready with other important elements of the system), we will have a full version for demonstration by September, and in January 2002 the AVA software will be released with full OS8.6 – 9.x compatibility, along with whole scale adoption of OS X.

We'll discuss the striking "Aqua" user interface later in this article, but what of the underlying development that forms the base of this incredible operating system?

Darwin. Mac OS X's UNIX-based foundation delivers the highest levels of performance and stability

to the operating system. Darwin provides powerful, advanced features which add up to a more responsive and more reliable Mac, and when you're pushing your computer as hard as the high end graphics professionals that use AVA do, it couldn't be more important.

The **protected memory** feature allows applications to run in their own isolated memory space, meaning if one goes down, you don't need to restart your computer. Darwin automatically shuts off the offending application's memory space and allows you to continue working in the other open applications.

Automatic virtual memory management means that setting memory allocations is a thing of the past. When an application needs more memory, the Virtual Memory Manager allocates exactly the amount of memory

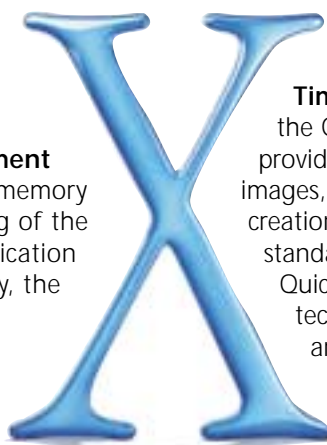
needed to perform the particular tasks asked of it.

Pre-emptive multi tasking is Darwin's way of watching over the processor and prioritising its use by the various simultaneous commands it is capable of, dependent upon the importance of the task. So what does this mean to you?

Activity levels are always at maximum, so if you want to print and design at the same time, Darwin ensures you get the resources you need.

Another feature that benefits high end graphics is Mac OS X's incorporation of three cutting-edge technologies: **Quartz, OpenGL and Quick Time.** All are utilised by AVA – the Quartz graphics engine provides super sharp anti aliased images, as well as on-the-fly PDF creation, Open GL is the industry standard 3D graphics engine and Quick Time is the premier technology for digital media and is used in AVA's gamut mapping and rendering.

Aqua. Fluidity, liquid colour and translucence – Aqua has got it all and is a revolution in terms of aesthetics and ease of use. . .



Mac OS X (continued)

... Glowing and dimming buttons indicate active and non-active status and icons made up of over 16,000 pixels provide almost photo quality detail for today's high resolution displays.

Aqua also helps provide a clean and uncluttered workspace with the adoption of relational dialogue boxes and removing the deep structure file systems so typical of a standard OS. **How do you benefit?** Quicker, simpler navigation and a neater way of working.

The Quartz engine is used to create Aqua's translucent controls and menus, and provide the visual depth and drop shadows on the individual windows. Because AVA is a key Apple developer, we have had access to development betas of OS X since early 1999, and this has allowed us to develop our software for early release later this year.

AVA software instantly takes advantage of all the native design of OS X, so menus, dialogues and windows continue the Aqua look throughout the application.



AVA already has a software version that's not only capable of running in OS X, but looks amazing too!

Requirements. Check here to confirm that your hardware can run Mac OS X: www.apple.com/macosx/requirements/ There is a huge amount of further information and on-line help available from the Apple website, and every Macintosh

magazine has pages about the new operating system, but if you require any further help, you can always **contact AVA**, as, like our partners, we will be gradually implementing the operating system throughout our company.

It's not just your machine you will need to check, but your peripherals (printers, scanners etc) and their drivers, so it's worth planning ahead before taking the plunge.

So, whilst it's a big step to a brave new world, our experience of OS X is that not only does it work (in terms of running your existing AVA software and the majority of other OS9 compatible applications in "Classic" within OSX), but it looks fantastic, adds a whole new depth of functionality for new and revised applications and will certainly have a massive positive impact on the way we all interact with our computers – not just in the future, but now! ☐



Feature Packed 2.18 Release

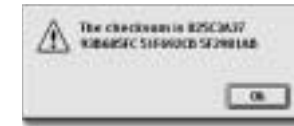
A available from May 2001, AVA 2.18 contains over thirty-five significant and powerful new features.

With the features spread across the various modules, there are improvements for every type of user, and the benefits of getting version 2.18 installed and in use straight away are significant.

For more details, our partners will receive detailed illustrated Release Notes, an overview datasheet and instructions, as well as the full freephone telephone technical support, so if there are any questions – please give us a call!

So what's in 2.18 to add to the already impressive feature set?

Not apart from the major OSX compatibility development which has led to the inclusion of 'hot scrolling' on all windows, resizable window thumbs and the adoption of the navigation services dialogue within the "save" window, there



Check the difference between two files with the new "Checksum" feature in AVA 2.18, generated using the "RSA Data Security, Inc. MD5 Message Digest Algorithm"

have been a whole host of new additions. These include significant brush and toolbox modifications, enhancements to the gamma feature, a revised and updated combine / merge separation

technique and additions to the gripping function (within Technical Separations) as well as the brand new Archive release (see separate article below), file accuracy checking technology and some new Weave and Materialize features. It's easy to see why we're so excited!

Why do we think that the 2.18 release is so special?

Because, like the vast majority of our development, it has all come from listening to what our partners request and basing our development around their needs. This ensures that the software remains relevant, pertinent and specific to the requirements of the people who use it. So, as always, there's something of real advantage in there for everyone! ☐

New AVA Archive V2.0

The new release of AVA Archive 2.0 is now available, and all current users of the standard Single User Archive will be updated to Version 2.0 as part of a free upgrade programme. The software can now be purchased with web-browser and multi-user functionality, and boasts many new features.

The software now forms part of the feature release cycle and is included on the same installer as the rest of our software modules. AVA Archive Version 2.0 is included in the 2.18 release, and to enable you to take advantage of it as soon as possible, we will be in contact with individual companies in order to discuss the one-off process of converting the data file to the new format. ☐

Working with CMYK layers and images

Have you ever wanted to split the CMYK layers and still see a similar display as the CMYK image?

4: Go to the "Layers" menu and then select "Layers into CMYK".

5: Now add four new layers.

Here's how, from AVA's Allan Warwick and Ian Beirne.



1: Create a 100mm x 100mm CMYK image.

2: Split the CMYK from the "Layers" menu using the "CMYK into Layers" command.

Step 5: Add four new layers

3: Draw a block with 100% tone in the top left corner on the Cyan layer, in the top right on the Magenta layer, in the bottom left on the Yellow layer and in the bottom right on the Black layer.

6: Sample the colours off the blocks and drag the colours to the new layers.

7: Drag these colours to your normal colourfile and call them Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black accordingly.

Next time you split the CMYK into layers, the layers will be displayed using these colours; but please note that there may be some slight shift in the way it looks due to different overprinting techniques. ☐

Digital Datasheets

If you've visited the AVA website in the last couple of months – and we know from our recent **Quality Questionnaire** that about 60% of the respondents head there regularly – you may have noticed a proliferation of **pdf documents** designed to speed up your information gathering pursuits.



The great thing about these documents is that they take seconds to download and give you

information on all our products and services at the click of a button. If your email or web access is on a PC then they will still work perfectly, and the Acrobat Reader software is available free of charge from Adobe's website.

Alternatively, we have a link from our "New & Noteworthy" page (head to avacadcam.com and click the button on the front page) direct to the Acrobat Reader download page. It couldn't be easier – and if you've got a recent Apple Mac or PC, then the chances are that you will have it installed already.

This is a technology we're making more and more use of, and if there's something you're after that's not on the website, then we can easily email it to you as well.

With OS X's inclusion of pdf writer and reader software, it's adoption in the mainstream of the industry seems complete, but if you've got any queries, please get in touch with your **Regional Co-ordinator**. ☐

New from Apple. For the full story – and to find out what it is: see the back page!



The AVA 2001 Quality Questionnaire

We asked, and you told us! The most important piece of customer research we've ever conducted – reviewed in full.

Thank you very much to all of our partners who responded to the recent Quality Questionnaire

– we were delighted with the quality and quantity of all the feedback we received. The winner of the iMac and two days training was Kirsten Reiss from Texas based wallcoverings and laminates company, **Decor Gravure Corp**, second out of the hat was the design team from **J Josephson** in New Jersey, winning two days training, and third, with a prize of one days training was Norberta Van der Straeten from **Ideco** in Belgium.

We were pleased to receive not only the large amount of positive feedback, but also some pointers for areas where we have room for improvement. Suffice to say that we have read and re-read every single response, and where necessary, positive action plans are already in place in a number of areas.

This article looks at all the fifteen areas in the questionnaire important to your business, a summary of the findings and an honest and frank look at the action points we either are, or will be taking.

1 Your original investment in AVA CAD/CAM

Customer responses showed a wide range of reasons for choosing AVA with our **degree of specialisation** and the **software demonstration** being the most frequent response.

It was great to find **95% of respondents considered that AVA had matched or bettered their expectations** at the time of initial purchase with a similar percentage stating that **AVA would, in most cases be their first choice again** if they were

to invest in further CAD software.

We'll be following up individually the 5% of respondents who were not sure that AVA had

matched their expectations and see what we can do to improve their level of satisfaction with AVA.

2 Contact with AVA

When questioned about our level of contact with customers, **95% of respondents felt that AVA contacted them enough**.

A wide range of preferences as to favoured method of contact were expressed with telephone and e-mail being the most popular.

Our actions included recording contact method preferences in our customer database, and we'll ensure that we use their preferred method whenever practical.

3 & 4 Customer Service and Technical Support

Does AVA succeed in delivering "the very highest levels of customer service in the industry"? That's our stated aim, and the survey reported that **93% of respondents felt that we either usually or always achieve this**, and a similar response was given to the more specific questions regarding the **speed, quality and manner** of response.

Although the overall level of satisfaction is very high, there is clearly room for improvement here – in particular we need to be more consistent in the quality (technical level) of our response in order to increase the percentage of customers who feel that we 'always' attain the highest levels of customer service.

Over 40% of customers have regularly used AVA for advice on a range of issues from recruitment to hardware sourcing. Of those who have received advice or help from AVA almost all respondents found this to be very helpful.

25% of respondents would value an increase in technical support cover to 24 hours a day, and for 26% of respondents

English is not their first language. Although the majority of these felt that AVA are able to communicate with them adequately most of the time, there is room for improvement in this area.

What are we going to do about this very important area of our business?

Whilst there is an **extremely high level of general satisfaction**, we can improve this further through continuing our intensive staff training programmes and refresher courses covering:

- AVA Archive
- AVA Materialize
- Industry background knowledge
- Hardware, network and OS issues

We have also **introduced an internal Training Database** which gives quick and easy access to the detailed training records of both AVA staff and individual customer / users, making the process of identifying the need for additional training quicker and easier for AVA and customers alike.

We will also continue to make our customer partners aware of the ability of AVA to offer (free) advice on a range of subjects beyond CAD software.

With our continued global expansion, we are planning for an increase of Technical Support to 24 hours in the near future.

We have set ourselves the objective of making all AVA marketing material, software release notes and manuals available in German, French, Spanish and Italian by the end of this year. Most new recruits to AVA this year will speak at least three languages.

5 Training and recruitment

Most customers have taken advantage of at least one of AVA's additional training products, and there were a number of suggestions for additional training courses, with the most frequent being an

introduction to CAD/CAM technology for senior management and Mac OS training.

A large portion (55%) of respondents had experienced difficulty in finding well trained AVA operators at some time, and would be interested in help from AVA in recruitment of fully or partly trained personnel.

When questioned about three potential new 'high tech' training techniques that we have on trial, 47% of respondents felt that they would be interested in training via computer and voice link, and 51% thought that the CD ROM / e-mail combination could be a viable additional method. In response to this, **we are currently developing the additional courses** suggested above, as well as continuing to promote AVA's **CAD Specialist Training (CST) scheme**. The CST offers customers highly trained young CAD operators (recruited by either AVA or the customer in advance of the course) at 'first job' salary levels.

On top of this, we are further developing our existing (free) networking service which aims to put experienced AVA operators who are out of work in touch with companies who are seeking experienced recruits.

We will soon be running two pilot projects to assess their viability as an additional training medium; one with simultaneous voice and computer link software, alongside the other pilot project – using CD ROM and e-mail.

6 Electronic communication

The awareness of, and willingness to use PDF technology varied significantly from region – with overall experience and enthusiasm higher in North America than in Europe.

AVA are developing PDF versions of manuals which are easier to use (quick cross referencing / search capabilities), to keep up-to-date (release notes can easily be incorporated into the main text) and

translate into foreign languages. These can be accessed either from CD or hard disk on customer work stations or via the internet.

At the same time we will continue to offer printed / hard copy versions for those customers who require them.

7 & 11 Market Conditions and Digital Printing

Only a very small percentage of respondents felt that their companies would be investing less in CAD software, hardware or training over the next few years. **Most were planning on entering new markets with new products and technology** rather than expanding geographically.

76% of respondents felt that their businesses would be affected positively by the continued development of digital printing technology with **59% considering that their companies were 'likely' or 'very likely'** to invest directly in digital printing themselves.

A wide variety of benefits were foreseen as a result of investment in digital printing.

The majority of those who felt that they would be investing, expected that they would initially require a close degree of matching between digital and conventional production, and expected AVA to play a significant role in achieving this. Over half of the respondents requested more information on the details of AVA's **Production Profiling** service.

How can we assist in these areas? We will continue to develop and promote the technology which enables AVA to

match the outputs of most digital printers to monitor, to other digital printers and to conventional (screen, gravure or flexo) printing.

8 AVA in a competitive market

Of the slightly less than half of AVA customers who have also used other CAD software, only 15% purchased the other software after buying AVA. In most cases this minority had a specific requirement not catered for by AVA (eg. interface to a weaving machine) which necessitated use of the other software.

A significant majority felt that AVA is better than other any systems used, in terms of quality of software (67%), support (89%), training (76%) and overall value for money (73%) **It was encouraging to find that only one respondent felt that any other CAD company did any of the above better than AVA.** . . . ▶



Mac OS X (continued)

... Naturally, we'll follow up individually the minority of cases where respondents felt that our competitors performed the same as us in any of the above areas – and find out what we can do better. Equally, we will continue to work to ensure that our customers' **competitive advantage** remains, through our provision of the highest levels of software, support and training – and ultimately ensuring that **value for money** remains.

9 & 10 Quality of software and Product Development

Over 90% of respondents rated **AVA software** as 'Good' or 'Very Good' in each of the areas covered by the survey, such as the User Interface, Colouring, Design and Technology etc. Two thirds of respondents would rather continue to receive three software releases a year (25% preferred two and 8%, one release).

A number of individual feature requests were made or reiterated. The most popular (repeated) ones included:

- Improved vector handling capabilities
- Smoother design tools
- Multiple undo / history
- Multi processor compatibility
- Viewer software
- Embossing software
- Improved printer serving

Having revised our development priorities in line with this feedback we expect to release significant developments covering all of the above mentioned areas this year. AVA will continue to develop its software faster and in ever closer alignment with the identified and specific needs of our customer partners.

We will continue to offer three releases a year in order to cater for the majority of customers who value the speed of development of the software but will be contacting those respondents who (mainly for reasons of time / perceived difficulty of installation) would prefer less releases per year in order to offer assistance with installation and training in the new features provided – focusing on features which will bring particular immediate benefit.

12 New Technology

Over three-quarters of AVA customers have their own web site and **nearly all have e-mail and internet access**. About 60% of respondents had visited the AVA web site (www.avacadcam.com)

Most respondents felt that they could benefit from a central design database with a wide range of potential users / audiences (from customers to other internal departments) identified.

AVA will be developing the partner area of AVA's website as a vehicle for useful updates and technology tips, new product information, links to customer web sites, software downloads and more besides. The AVA Archive is a valuable product which could add value to many customer / partner businesses.

13 Hardware policy

Almost all of the respondents agreed with AVA's hardware policy and the reasons for it. Not all would regard AVA as their 'first port of call' for a hardware related problem since many have support contracts with local hardware providers.



14 Service Plan

There is a **very high level of awareness** amongst our customers of what they actually get for their service plan with all four elements being regarded as 'important' or 'very important' by the majority of respondents.

85% of respondents considered that the service plan represents 'good value for money'

We will work even harder (especially for those respondents who were unsure as to whether they were getting value for money) to ensure that AVA Technical Support, Product Development and Operator Training and Development continues to improve.

15 Partners for all time.

Nine out of ten respondents consider AVA to be a 'true partner' to their company. We obviously need to work harder to convince the remaining 1 in 10, but of those that didn't, in virtually every case, an element of partnership (if even only as one customer said, as a "respected supplier") existed.

In the meantime, the whole of AVA would like to convey their appreciation of the time and effort made by those who responded to the questionnaire – **thank you all very much!** Your feedback means a lot to us all.

Beginners guide to the Internet

Part Two ~ "Making the web work for you"

Getting your company on the web is far easier than you may think and an internet presence is now considered a mandatory part of the marketing mix for most companies. A website brings many benefits – improved ease of contact, the ability to market yourself to a global audience 24/7, an inexpensive communication and support tool, and a "shop window" for potential customers.

If you've not got a website, you first need to think about what you are going to use it for. Then, consider how you're going to use it, keep it up-to-date (a vital area, because an out of date website will rarely get re-visited) and develop it over time. The importance of an easy to find, navigate and understand website can't be denied and a key step to ensuring success is to register a suitable name – or "domain".

The domain name game. The power of your brand should be reflected in your website, and whilst it needn't be your company name (there are many successful companies with catchy phrases as ancillary domain names) it should be an immediate priority to register and therefore, reserve your domain name.

You are now not limited purely to .com or .co.uk or .fr or .de for example, as there are many more suffixes available. The standard address format – *www.companyname.co.country* or the more global: *www.companyname.com* still form the backbone of the domain name structure, but the alternatives include *www.companyname.country.com* (where country is the two letter suffix such as *uk* (for United Kingdom), *au* (for Australia), *de* (for Deutschland) or *jp* (for Japan).

Copyright laws protect the unscrupulous use of your trade marks (although you have to feel sorry for the quick thinking

students who caught on long before the multi nationals did and bought up hundreds of domain names with the idea of then selling them on, only to have countless court cases brought against them!) Once you've decided on a potential name, you need to register it. This can be done on-line at one of any number of registration sites; all of which will charge an ever decreasing (and



Views window from one of AVA Archive layouts

surprisingly small) amount of money for a one or two year lease. Most search engines have direct links to domain name sites, so simply visit, type in your chosen domain name and "bingo!" – if it's available you can buy it straight away.

Getting up and running. Once you've registered your domain, you then need to load up your content. Unless your internal marketing department is fully web wise, it's often best to out-source this process, and again, there are countless numbers of firms offering this service. The recent boom means that there are all sorts on offer, base your decision on recommendations, see their portfolios and talk to their clients. It's not just about good design. You also need to provide your customers and prospective customers with an easy to navigate site that puts function before

form, works with a broad range of browsers (eg. Netscape and Explorer), is simple and inexpensive to maintain (and update) and is hosted on a stable and fast server – to ensure that visitors get a quick-to-access site.

The easiest way to get the site you want is to visit some others on the web. Look at your competitors, customers, as well as some of the big brands. Apple have a

terrific site that's always up to date, loads quickly in spite of the large graphics content and looks great. It is probably far larger (in the realms of thousands of pages) than anyone new to the web may require, but gives a good idea of what can be achieved.

Extra! Extra! Once you have the concept of a simple site (start small and build up, getting the basics right first) you can then think of ways of augmenting the site. **AVA Web Browser Archive** is designed to bolt onto an existing website and provide communication functionality to design studios, printers, separation houses and engravers – really anyone who has the need for instant and secure communication of digital information (be it in AVA or other Mac compatible file formats).

Fully customisable with your own corporate look and logos from selected templates, **AVA Web Browser Archive** enables your customers and prospective customer to view your designs (or a selection of them) through a fast and secure interface, on any computer – anywhere in the world! Because it updates in realtime, any changes you make to the database (such as selling a design or altering its details) are instantly visible, so you can be sure that the information your visitors are seeing is completely accurate and up to date.



AVA Web Browser Archive

This software can be combined with the amazing new version of **AVA Materialize** software, which from the recent release can read and produce JPEG file formats which are perfect for the web. Now, it's a really quick and simple process to demonstrate your latest designs in digital photographic scenes – before committing to any form of production. See our website for more information on both these products at: www.avacadcam.com

What did our partners have to say?

"Your customer service should be used as a model for other companies to emulate"

"Without you, we would be in the dark!"

"AVA was recommended; that's why we decided to buy"

"I am very pleased with our design accomplishments; largely due to our AVA software"

"The essence of AVA Service has been to make every effort – to understand my personal business needs"

"Without AVA, I would not be as efficient, cost effective and creative. AVA is my true partner in business"

Partners for all time

Partners for all time

Successful CST Training Course continues with new intake

Getting into the competitive decorative CAD/CAM industry required a good grounding in the specialist software that the majority of companies use, and the best way of gaining this experience – as well as exposure to some of the worlds top wallcoverings and textile companies, is through AVA's **CAD Specialist Training Course (CST Course)**.

We are running another two month course based at our Macclesfield offices (which will also feature an optional third month), for up to eight participants who will be provided with in-depth training in all the main aspects of AVA's CAD/CAM software. In addition to this, they will complete a placement at one of our partners, and the course will provide a thorough introduction to the current processes involved in a CAD oriented company's workflow.

The course is aimed at design graduates looking for their first job, multi-lingual graduates in any discipline, and also at existing employees or new customers who could benefit from an intensive "hands-on" course as part of a change in role or introduction to CAD. We also encourage our European partners to use the course in order to develop employees' English language experience as well as Computer Aided Design skills.

Having successfully placed all of the CAD Specialists who were seeking jobs from the last course, we anticipate demand to be high for this session. The advantage

to those companies seeking to recruit from the course, is that the calibre and productivity of those graduating from the course will be extremely high, although the cost of employing these young people will be significantly lower than the cost of "poaching" staff from any of your competitors.

We have placed previous CST graduates at a broad range of companies, including design studios and multi-national textile printers. AVA were also able to further add to our own CAD Support Specialist team who are responsible for the provision of Tech Support, training and software testing by recruiting **Aoife Cleary**, one of the outstanding graduates from last year's CST Course.



AVA CAD Support Specialist and CST Scheme graduate, **Aoife Cleary**

Aoife is an honours Textile Design graduate from the National College of Art and Design, Ireland and heard about the CST Scheme at the **New Designers** show in London. "*The CST scheme*

was the ideal next step after graduating, harnessing creativity to fulfil industry needs," said Aoife. "*Now, at AVA, I can put it all into practice and I would like to think that our partners have benefited from the training I've had, as well as my design background."*

The next course is expected to commence on 1st July 2001, with successful graduates looking to start employment with our partners in September / October 2001. If you are interested in either joining this course, recruiting somebody

to send on it, or taking on one of the graduates at the end of the course, please contact **Rebecca Gale**, the **CST Course Co-ordinator**, based at our Macclesfield office.

More details on the scheme are also available at avacadcam.com/cst

New Apples are pick of the crop!

The new range of Pentium IV-busting Apple computers have hit the streets, and include updated **G4** and **iMac** models (the majority of which boast either CD or DVD writers), the stunning all new **G4 PowerBook** and completely revised 500Mhz **iBook**.



Apple G4 Desktop



Apple iMac

With an all titanium casing – and only an inch thick – plus a 15.2" widescreen format display and a built in DVD player, the PowerBook is not only faster than most



Apple G4 PowerBook

desktops, but looks pretty gorgeous too! The G4s are classed as professional graphics machines, and you'll benefit from their incredible performance. You can check out the complete range on-line at www.apple.com



Apple iBook

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Editors: **Duncan Jefferies** & Christiane van Doorn

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Tel: +44 162 550 6807

AVA CAD/CAM

1-3 St. Georges Street
Macclesfield, SK11 6TG
United Kingdom

Tel +44 162 550 6800
Fax +44 162 526 1378

AVA CAD/CAM

Poststrasse 17, Postfach
CH – 9001 St. Gallen
Switzerland

Tel +41 71 222 5023
Fax +41 71 222 6840

AVA CAD/CAM

PO Box 339
Hockessin, DE. 19707
USA

Tel 800 883 4555
Fax 973 237 9787

Website

www.avacadcam.com

Email

data@avacadcam.com

Technical Support

support@avacadcam.com

