

## Sacramento Style

By: David Barbour

### A new Hard Rock Live gives California's capital city a major music venue

All photos: Courtesy of Scéno Plus

The Montréal-based theatre design firm Scéno Plus is well-known for its expertise in showrooms and theatres attached to casino-resorts in Las Vegas and elsewhere. (See "Inside the Resorts World

Theatre," *LSA*, February 2022.) The company's latest project, at Hard Rock Casino Sacramento at Fire Mountain, is part of a trend in which Native American casinos are developing entertainment venues in mid-mar-

ket locales that can accommodate top-level touring acts. (See also "The Big Bet" on page 29.)

The Fire Mountain Hard Rock is the fruit of a partnership between the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which owns



The showroom's interior features a set of acoustical sound panels in contrasting colors; completing its look is a figurative horizontal equalizer at the proscenium, gold walls at the back of house, and blue fascia on the second level.

## CLOSE-UP: NATIVE AMERICAN CASINO SHOWROOM Sacramento Style



Maroon 5 performs at the venue's opening. For concerts, the theatre seats 2,500 guests, a number that increases to nearly 4,000 in the general admission format.

Hard Rock International, and the Estom Yumeka Maidu of The Enterprise Rancheria, a federally recognized Native American tribe. The overall 300,000-sq.-ft. resort, which includes a 14,000-sq.-ft. casino floor, a 169-room hotel, 10,000 sq. ft. of convention space, and an 8,000-sq.-ft. ballroom, sits on a 40-acre site near the Feather River in Northern California. Construction began in 2016, ahead of a 2019 opening.

The 70,000-sq.-ft. Hard Rock Live, which opened in April of this year, is designed for multiple applications, including concerts, sports (including basketball, boxing, and UFC), conventions, banquets, and other special events. For concerts, it seats 2,500 guests, a number that increases to nearly 4,000 in the general admission format. Indeed, says Olivier

Berthiaume-Bergé, president and CEO, Scéno Plus, the theatre was conceived as a true expansion of the facility: "You walk into the casino lobby through the existing convention center. An extension joint leads to the theatre, and you can use the lobby as part of the convention center."

Berthiaume-Bergé says the showroom's uses extend beyond the norm, allowing it to host agricultural fairs or serve as an emergency shelter for the local community. "You can do a poker tournament or set up a basketball court," he adds. Still, music is likely to be the most lucrative attraction. "In terms of the local market, there isn't a venue like this, not even in downtown Sacramento. This theatre can draw big names, like Maroon 5, which was the opening night act." Since the casino does its biggest business on

weekends, he adds, the venue is a way of "activating Monday through Thursday," drawing music fans who will sample the six restaurants on-site and/or indulge in a little gambling.

The auditorium functions on three levels. The orchestra level provides access to the main floor, with a retractable seating system, consisting of 15 rows totaling 915 seats, supplied by UK-based Audience Systems. When set up for the general admission configuration, Berthiaume-Bergé says, the system, "which is motorized, pulls back to be stored under the mezzanine in a 9'-deep alcove. It's a collapsible system; when stored, you see only the vertical facings of the risers, making a big wall at the back of house." Francois Blais, vice-president, technology and specialized equipment, at Scéno

Plus, adds that three crew members can retract the seating in as little as 30 to 45 minutes.

The second level, accessed by staircase or elevator, leads to the VIP balconies, which include a meet-and-greet area, photo booths, glass cases filled with rock memorabilia, and a full-service bar. "The seating in VIP booths is flexible, mixing low chairs with high tables and stools," Berthiaume-Bergé says. "There's also a drop-down section, reaching out to the proscenium; these are the best seats in the house, being so close to the action." He adds that sightlines were a high priority: "There's not a bad seat in the house."

The third level contains the lighting and projection booths. The lighting rig includes 75 automated lighting units, consisting of Ayrton Ghiblis and Boras and Elation Professional Fuze Profiles and Proteus Rayzor 760s; 32 conventional units, including Elation Protron 3K Colors and Cuepix WW4s,

Altman Lighting PHX3s, and Lycian followspots; and Chauvet Amhaze Stadium hazers/hazers, controlled by an MA Lighting grandMA3. The lighting network is composed of Netgear M4250 AV Line network switches and Pathway 6182 and 6321 Ethernet-to-DMX nodes. Blais says it is "a good, basic lighting system," to which touring acts can add their own gear.

The video system consists of 1,675 sq. ft. of Taylorleds VS3 panels, deployed on a 15'-by-26' upstage screen and two IMAG screens, each measuring 13' by 23'. A remotely controlled and automated camera system is designed to deliver sharp close-ups of the artists.

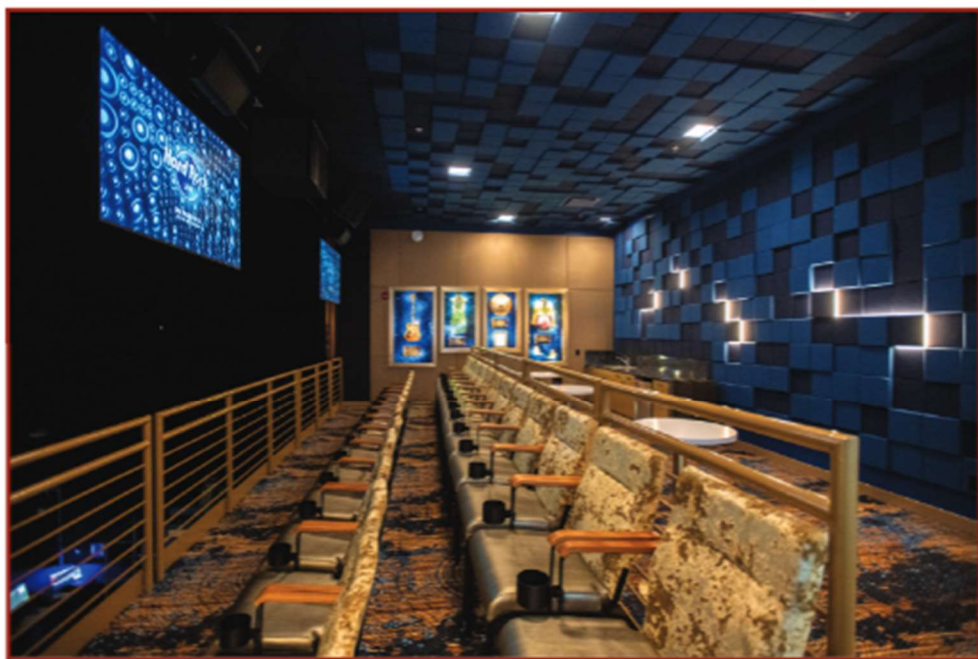
The showroom's interior also features a set of acoustical sound panels in contrasting colors; completing its look is a figurative horizontal equalizer at the proscenium, gold walls at the back of house, and blue fasciae on the second level. Light arches, spanning the walls, are also part of

the visual signature. Horizontal lighting effects are embedded in the ceiling and acoustical panels. "Francois and his team designed the acoustical system based on volumetric calculations," says Berthiaume-Bergé. "Most of the surfaces are fabric-wrapped acoustical panels. The side galleries, projecting toward the volume, are custom-made with variation of thickness to break the long straight surfaces. The Lapendary panels in the ceiling handle the lower frequencies; each has a thick drape, hanging like a banana. These vibrate, imperceptibly, dissipating the lower frequencies. It's a technique used a lot in sports facilities with big volumes, and in pools, where the water reflects the sound." This arrangement, he adds, "works as well as the more traditional acoustical baffles that you are used to seeing. But they participate more in the theatre's architectural language. With Hard Rock as our client, we aim for something efficient yet not overde-



The meet-and-greet area in the mezzanine includes a full-service bar.

## CLOSE-UP: NATIVE AMERICAN CASINO SHOWROOMS, PART II



Above and below: The seating in the VIP booths is flexible, mixing low chairs with high tables and stools.

signed. The listening conditions are great.”

The sound system, Blais says, consists of gear from L-Acoustics: “We have nine K2s per side with five KS28 subs per side, plus KIVA IIs for front fill, K21s and A15s for side fill, and LA12X amps. We treat the space like an arena. Everything is on wheels, like touring gear.” Sound is controlled by DiGiCo Quantum 225 consoles, one at the front of house and one at monitors. But, to meet any eventuality, a set of L-Acoustics X12s are available for use on onstage monitors. Completing the rig is a Shure wireless microphone kit and Clear-Com communication system. Noting that Scéno Plus has designed several theatres for Hard Rock, Blais says he and his team keep their equipment choices similar across venues, to make it easier for touring acts that may be moving from one Hard Rock venue to another.



The stage floor area is 130' by 51', for a total of 6,630 sq. ft. The hanging height is 45' above the stage and 35' over the house. A 64'-by-36' portion of the stage is height-adjustable and removable. The main floor load rating is 350lb/sq. ft. A Columbus-McKinnon chain hoist system can be used on lighting and sound gear as well as the LED screens. The stage is also modular, allowing it to be reconfigured for various event—for example, moving a basketball court or boxing ring into the center of the room.

Amenities include dressing rooms for 28 performers (including stars), a green room; offices for touring and residential personnel; a back-of-house freight elevator with stops at all levels, including the technical catwalk, two loading-dock bays with access to the stage and freight elevator; tour bus drop off and parking, with power and Internet access; direct stage access from dressing rooms, offices, and green room; and plenty of storage space. The paging system is composed of QSC Q-SYS Core 510i processors and CX-Q channel amplifiers.

This is the sixth venue that Scéno Plus has done for Hard Rock International and there are more to come. Indeed, the company seems to have found the knack of standardizing certain technical requirements while giving the venue an identity of its own. Mark Birtha, president of Hard Rock Sacramento, points to this relationship when he says, "Scéno Plus has used their experience and expertise to design an unparalleled facility which will contribute to the property's long-term success. We value the relationship we have with Scéno Plus and their work here in Sacramento and at other Hard Rock venues around the world." <sup>26</sup>



As these renderings show, the space can be reconfigured for banquets (above), boxing (below), and basketball (bottom).

