



INSTALLATION SPOTLIGHT

The Venue at Harrah's Horseshoe Casino, Hammond, Ind.

BY JESSACA GUTIERREZ

Show Boat

When you're gambling, you want all the luck you can get. That's why when Harrah's Horseshoe Casino in Hammond, Ind., opened the doors to its new entertainment theater, The Venue, it chose Aug. 8, 2008, as its opening day. Because of the large Asian population in the area, this floating casino wanted to invite guests to the entertainment center on a meaningful day, and in Chinese culture, the triple-eight date represents wealth or prosperity. However, pulling off the full lineup of events scheduled in the \$500 million theater has nothing to do with luck. That success is due to the slew of inhouse audio- and video-production technologies that were installed in the space.

On opening week, The Venue hosted such names as Bette Midler, the Smashing Pumpkins, and James Blunt back to back. To meet The Venue's demanding opening-

week acts and its ongoing schedule, the 2,500-seat, 90,000-square-foot theater needed to have a setup that could go from basic audio needs for sporting events to full-scale concerts in a matter of hours. The Venue's production systems were designed by Montreal-based Scéno Plus—the brains behind The Colosseum at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas—with installation by PSX of Covington, La. The theater was installed with two Yamaha PM5D-RH digital consoles; one Yamaha DME24N, one DME80-ES, and two DME64N digital mixing engine controllers for EtherSound capabilities; and a Meyer Sound line-array system.

The consoles have helped production show crews that also rely on Yamaha PM5D-RH consoles to reduce the equipment load they bring to the stage for each event. Instead, they can use The Venue's inhouse consoles, saving time and labor. Production Manager Scott Flaws says traveling engineers can easily load mixing setups into the console on CompactFlash cards, and he emphasizes that this capability is especially useful when the show is behind schedule, allowing the Flash card to provide an automatic mix for artists.

The system needed to be streamlined and flexible to host not only concerts on the theater's stage, but also boxing or mixed martial arts matches. To this end, the theater's center floor seats are telescopic—allowing

The Venue at Harrah's Horseshoe Casino in Hammond, Ind., has an inhouse production suite that includes two JVC GY-HD2500U handheld cameras, four Panasonic AW-E860N convertible cameras, and a quad-core Apple Mac Pro running Apple Final Cut Studio 2. The suite helps the production staff produce event DVDs quickly and efficiently.

the production crew to fold the seats out of sight with a touch of a button to create an open space in the middle of the theater to accommodate a boxing ring or a circular ring. More seats can be folded down to clear the entire floor space for 100 tables in a dinner-theater-style configuration.

"The way the whole system is deployed, there's not a bad seat in the house—sonically or visually," Flaws says. "The audio rig doesn't visually impact on any looks of grandeur."

GRAND TOUCHES

To handle video content, The Venue was equipped with three Digital Projection International Lightning 30isx+ projectors, which are combined with lighting to create a wide range of interactive special effects, and three Draper Paragon 18'x24' screens. With a quick lens change, the same projectors can project to a custom Lesna 30'x56' screen for events such as the casino's annual Super Bowl party. A Ross Vision QMD/X series digital switcher provides video control.

Completing the full inhouse production suite are two JVC GY-HD250U handheld cameras and four Panasonic AW-E860N convertible cameras that can be fitted with zoom lenses. Footage of the events hosted at The Venue can be captured with these cameras, and then the facility's production team can efficiently produce DVDs of those events, adding in graphics and effects using Apple Final Cut Studio 2 on a quad-core Apple Mac Pro workstation.

Perhaps the most elaborate touch of the installation is the wireless Toshiba Portégé M700 tablet that provides wireless control of the mixing consoles or the lighting sys-

tem from anywhere. Throughout the house are repeaters to handle the staggering wireless demand.

CHALLENGES

It's not surprising that there were some challenges during the installation, but according to Flaws, there was nothing that couldn't be taken care of in a day or two. The largest of the challenges were on the networking side.

"We found that single-mode fiber was a little bit of a pain to deal with—having to get some specific boxes to convert stuff to work on single-mode versus multimode, and then the way the EtherSound works in the digital realm of things," Flaws says. "We have had to reconfigure the consoles as far as the cards. The [PM5D-RHs] have four [Mini-YGDAI] card slots, and we don't need the AES/EBUs—we needed inserts. We have [the PM5D-RHs] configured for 48-channel digital snake with [MY16-ES64] cards, and then one card slot is an AES/EBU digital card. All we had to do was swap out the AES card for another card to be able to do analog inserts."

By the time the installation was completed and ready to open, Flaws says luck was on its side, although it wasn't really needed—opening day was a big success. Thus far, the only request the casino has received from patrons is more beer.

"[As a visitor], you're going to be killed with kindness from your ushers, [and get] a technologically savvy experience from an inhouse production standpoint to when the people walk out," Flaws says. "They try to give you the full package here. They want to make your experience memorable. They didn't by any means cut corners on the equipment." **SVC**

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◀ The Venue's audio system includes two Yamaha PM5D-RH digital consoles; one Yamaha DME24N, one DME80-ES, and two DME64N digital mixing engine controllers; and a Meyer Sound line array. The video setup features three Digital Projection International Lightning 30isx+ projectors, screens by Draper and Lesna, and a Ross Vision QMD/X series digital switcher for video control.