

The Lighting Game:

Fine Design Associates Designs Booths for Global Gaming Expo



At this year's Global Gaming Expo, held in Las Vegas, Fine Design Associates provided very different lighting designs for clients Konami Gaming, Inc. (photo, top) and Aristocrat Leisure Limited (photo, bottom). Paul Fine, president and principal designer of Fine Design, which has offices in New York City and Doylestown, Pennsylvania, says that his company has worked with Konami and Aristocrat for several years; both booths, which occupied adjacent spaces on the trade show floor, were designed by Sparks, the global brand experience agency.

At a show such as Global Gaming Expo, making the right visual impression is especially important. "Aristocrat's booth has really evolved, in part from being next to Konami, in terms of creating an atmosphere. When we started out with Aristocrat, the booth typically had 50 lighting units and a couple hundred feet of truss. Now we have lots of automated fixtures, LED strips, and motors. It's a little bit like keeping up with the Joneses. Konami has always been tech-heavy, especially at the front of the booth. This time out, the client wanted us to highlight the depth and breadth of the exhibit space."

At 18,400 sq. ft., the Aristocrat space could be described as sprawling. Still, Fine says, "It was designed to be a total environment. This is the first time that they've treated the entire space as a whole." The lighting in this booth was showier, with high-contrast areas and plenty of textures and

saturated colors. The rig included ETC Source Fours and Source Four PARS; Chauvet Professional COLORado Solo 1 Zooms; Chroma-Q Color Force 12s, 48s, and 72s; Philips Vari-Lite VL3500 Spots; Martin by Harman MAC Viper Profile, Mac Auras, Mac Quantum Profiles, and Mac Quantum Wash units; and GLP impression X4 Bar 20s.

The Konami booth was a bit smaller, at 13,800 sq. ft. "We had quite a bit more dimming in the Konami booth," says Fine. "There was also a lot less saturated color, and more black-and-white starkness, with just a hint of color and texture. Our approach was very theatrical. That's our roots. I, Ken Moreland (Fine Design's senior associate designer), and





the rest of our team are all from the theatre. It's a funny thing with technology: Sometimes nothing beats a regular Leko." The rig for this booth featured a mix of Source Fours and Source Four PARs along with COLORado Solo 1 Zooms, VL3500 Spots, and Mac Quantum Washes, Mac Viper Profiles, Mac Auras, and Mac Viper Wash DX units. Both booths featured ETC dimmers and were controlled by MA Lighting grandMA2 consoles. (Aristocrat can be seen at top left and Konami at top right.)

The lighting gear for both booths was supplied by 4Wall Entertainment. "I've always maintained that, because we don't own any gear, all our jobs are free to look different," Fine says. "We pick and choose the tools we need to create specific atmospheres. That's why I work with 4Wall, which always has the latest and greatest in tools and support. You know, what we do is not for the faint of heart; we have a top-notch team on our end and we work with partners who can also handle the unpredictability of the jobs."

The process begins, of course, with intensive client meetings; this year, Fine and Sparks were dealing with a nearly all-new management team. "We evolve with them, and we educate them," Fine says. "Sometimes it's a matter of saying to the client, 'This is where we've been before; where do you want to go now?'" This year, Konami had specific requirements for the lighting." As he notes, being a good listener is a key skill: Each booth "is quite an expenditure for the client, so we work to make sure that the final result is exactly like the renderings."



The time frame for each project can vary, Fine notes. "Every trade show has its own pre-rig availability. The preliminary rigging deadline for the Consumer Electronics Show is 30 days. Typically, our process starts about two to three months out from the load-in—but for the lighting team, it's always compressed by a month. The earlier you start your process, the better the product. At the Global Gaming Show, we had seven days of installation—bare concrete to doors." Of course, he adds, the demands for exciting new additions only grow from year to year. "Last year, two weeks before the show, Aristocrat decided to fly a 6' platform with Tim McGraw next to a giant slot machine, then dropping right in. They definitely like to push the envelope."

He adds, "What exacerbates this process is that, with both companies, it's all about the products. The key for them is getting products on the show floor; the pressure is on the lighting guys to get the gear in the air, hung, flashed, and trimmed so the carpet can go down and the floor work get started. Most clients want us to turn over their booths to them a full day before the show opens. That's a further compression of the time frame, and anything can set us back. We can't finish focusing until every last graphic is in place. We're also accountable on the show services and system sides; we design the rigs so that they can stay on for days, as sometimes they have to." Next year's expo will be held in October; it seems likely that Fine Design's clients will want even splashier and more expansive exhibits, giving Fine and company new challenges to conquer. 📶