

Copyright Lighting&Sound America October 2018 <http://www.lightingandsoundamerica.com/LSA.html>

The Complete Showroom

By: David Barbour



The room's automated lighting package draws heavily on Chauvet Professional's Maverick line.

Parx Casino expands its purview with a highly equipped new live entertainment venue

Since it opened in 2009, Parx Casino, in Bensalem Township, Pennsylvania, has relied almost entirely on gambling for its success. This strategy changed in January of this year with the opening of the Xcite Center, an addition that brings live entertainment to Parx. The plan is to attract non-gamblers with entertainment offerings. Nathan Powell, director of entertainment technology for Greenwood Gaming, Parx's parent company, told the website Pennlive.com, "We're not just about

gaming; we're also about the arts and fine dining."

The venue opened on January 18 with a concert by the jazz-rock group Chicago. Since then, headliners have included Bill Engvall, Allison Krause, Trevor Noah, Sarah McLachlan, Chris Botti, and Reba McEntire. At press time, upcoming bookings include Snow Patrol, Dennis DeYoung, The Australian Pink Floyd Show, Tracy Morgan, Brian Wilson, and Grand Funk Railroad.

The venue seats 1,532, with room

for 2,000 standing. According to Pennlive, "The stage was designed with one criterion in mind: Parx Casino owner Watche 'Bob' Manoukian wanted to ensure that it could fit the Philadelphia Orchestra, which has more than 90 musicians. At 65' wide and 35' deep, the stage can decidedly fit them all, with some room to spare."

The acoustics in the venue were deemed to be of the utmost importance from the beginning. The architectural and acoustical consultant team went to great lengths in designing a room that gives the highest quality acoustic experience. The venue has 3'-thick walls covered with absorptive materials, custom acoustic ceiling lid, and an isolated concreted slab. These

Photos: Courtesy of Starlite

all contribute to contain the sound to the room and prohibit transmission into the adjacent spaces which include a new poker room, Liberty Bell gastropub, Oliveto Italian eatery, and, of course, the casino floor.

The extensive lighting and sound packages have been supplied by Starlite, based in Moorestown, New Jersey. The company has a long history with Parx Casino. "We have been providing services to them for audio, video, lighting, and rigging for years," says Brandon Creel, director of engineering for Starlite. This project, however, is on another scale altogether. The lighting package includes, from Chauvet Professional, 40 Maverick MK2 Wash RGBW units, 50 Maverick MK2 Spots, 16 Maverick MK1 Hybrids, and 12 STRIKE4 LED audience blinders. "When we looked to supply the new performance lighting, we did a shootout between several brands, weighing in on all the pros and cons. Chauvet Professional has come a long way as a manufacturer, and was selected because they make great quality and full-featured products at a reasonable price."

Filling out the rig are six Chroma-Q



The sound system employs a Meyer Sound PA.

Color Force II units, eight ETC Source Four LED Series 2 Tungsten HDs, four Robert Juliat Victor followspots, and

an Altman Lighting Ghostlight. The choice of the Robert Juliat gear was based on experience. "Every tour that comes in says that they are the best followspots," Creel says. "The casino's team, and their ownership, want nothing but the best, and we worked hard to deliver that."

Effects gear includes three XLaser Skywriter HPX lasers, and a pair of MDG theONE digital atmospheric generators. Control is provided by a MA Lighting grandMA2 system, which is fitted out with a full-size console, replay unit, network processor unit, and an onPC command wing. The network includes, from Pathway Connectivity, 14 Pathport Octo eight-port nodes and, from Interactive Technologies, a CS-900 CueServer2, Ultra RGB button stations, and CuePad control app. The venue's media server is a Green Hippo V4 Karst.

Speaking about the networking, Creel says, "Parx's theatre consultant, Nathan Powell, actually went to work at the casino full-time during this project. He did the vast infrastructure



The room is designed to handle a wide variety of acts.



The room's chandeliers can be raised and lowered as needed, using an ETC QuickTouch controller.

design and Starlite worked with him in bringing it home. It was a big challenge getting all the networking requirements for in-house and touring acts' use as well as Internet access; ultimately, having a dedicated building-wide network was the most reliable and safest way to go. We couldn't even consider our systems having any access to the casino, because you definitely can't crash the slot machines."

The rigging system includes a variety of ETC Prodigy Hoists, Thern RD8 roll drops, Stagemaker chain motors, and custom-fabricated steel beams for the room's video walls. The rigging systems head end is an ETC Foundation with handheld touch screen remote and ETC QuickTouch 8 for the chandelier hoists. Also featured is Tomcat custom box truss; ADC tLift vertical curtain system and curtain tracks; and Rose Brand traveler, Venetian, and Austrian curtains plus the company's Chameleon LED star drop and various valences, legs, cyclorama, scrim, and architectural curtains. Staging includes, from

Staging Concepts, a stage platform package plus custom front-of-house and ADA platforms, and custom 60"-high stage steps. A customized, adjustable catwalk railing system was designed and provided by Starlite.

Speaking about the rigging system, Creel says, "All of the chandeliers are on custom-fabricated frames supported by motorized hoists. Since it's a multipurpose event space, the chandeliers can be raised out of view during a performance event and lowered when serving a banquet. The other big thing is the stage rigging, which is from multiple manufacturers and features several types of motorized hoists, integrated into a single ETC control system. I think it may be the first in the country like this."

The power system, also provided by Starlite, includes seven Lex Products PowerGATE company switches, nine LynTec remote power control panels, and Whirlwind Power Link Stringers and Power Packs.

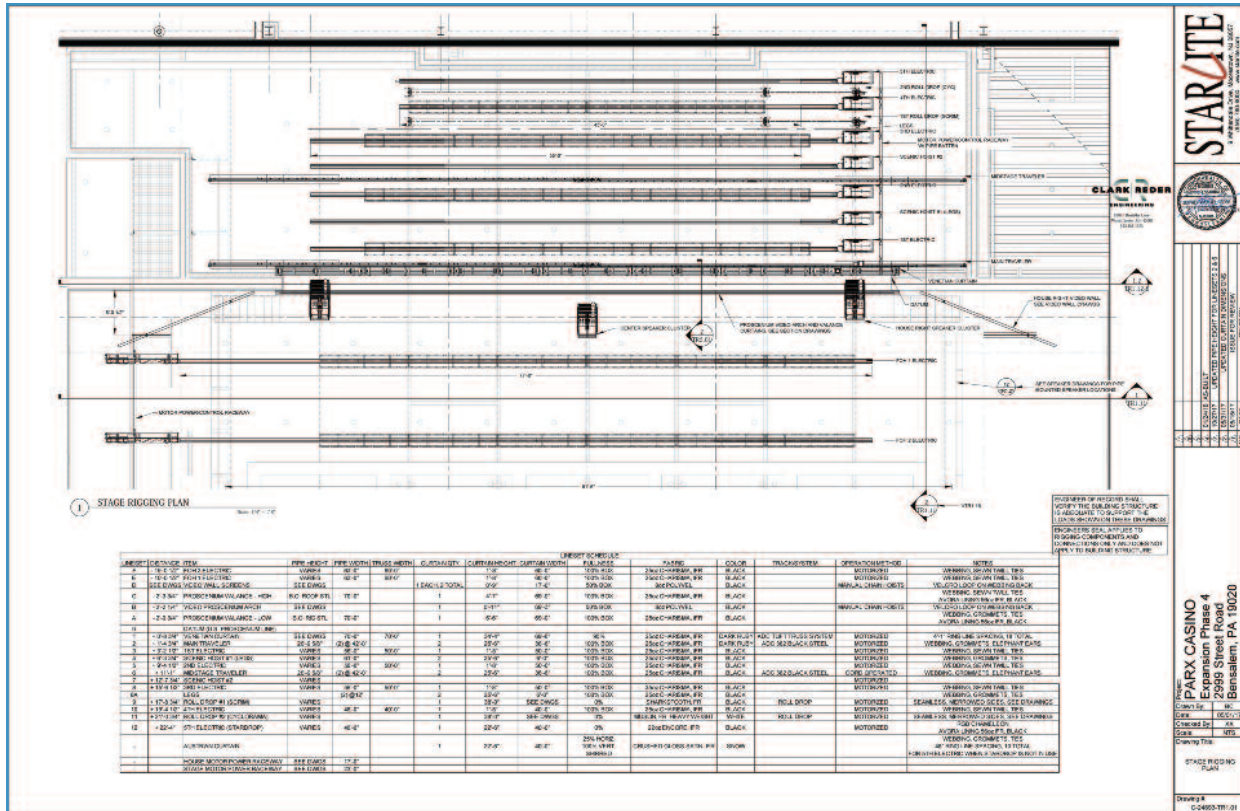
Starlite also supplied the architectural lighting fixtures, selected items of

which include Acclaim Lighting DynaGraze HO, Philips Color kinetics custom eW Cove and Fuse units, and The Light Source RGBW pendants and recessed units for the project.

Audio

The loudspeaker package supplied by Starlite consists of gear from Meyer Sound, including 26 LEOPARD line arrays, eight 900-LFC and six 1100-LFC subwoofers, fourteen UPJ-1XP and four UPQ-1P point source units, two Galaxy 816 digital processors, and a RMServer remote monitoring system. Onstage are Meyer six UM-100P, six MJF-210, and five MJF-212A monitors. Mixing is provided by a pair of DiGiCo SD10 and a SD11 control surfaces, with SD-Racks, D-Racks, and Waves servers all connected together via fiber optic cabling to a Broaman AutoRouter for ease of setup and redundancy.

David King, design engineer at Starlite says, "This system was chosen for the sonic clarity. The Parx Casino team demoed several mockups of potential options and together we ulti-



A view of the room's rigging system.

mately settled on the Leopard line. Since audio is a top consideration for them; they wanted to have a best-in-class sound system, which is also tour-friendly." The audio package includes BSS London Architect processors, Crown Audio DCI amplifiers and Attero Tech Dante interfaces. The microphone inventory consists of many models from Sennheiser, including 9000 series wireless with countryman headsets, and numerous wired microphones from Shure, Earthworks, Audix, AKG, plus Radial Engineering DI boxes. King says, "With the broad variety of acts playing the Xcite Center, it only makes sense to have a package that can handle it all, without having to constantly subrent additional equipment."

Completing the audio lineup is a Green-Go digital intercom system, including 32-channel wired belt packs, wireless belt packs, and wireless active antennae located throughout the showroom, backstage areas, and even loading dock.

The video package includes four

HD Broadcast JVC cameras, a Barco S3 processor, and digiLED video walls supplied by Video WallTronics based in New Castle, Delaware. The center wall, located at the back of the stage, is a massive 32' wide by 12' tall, while in the house flanking the proscenium opening, there are two screens each being 16' wide by 9' tall. Finishing off the fully immersive experience, there are an additional 68 LED panels acting as a "proscenium arch," framing the stage opening. Connecting all of the sources and destinations together, Starlite provided switching and distribution by Blackmagic Design including an ATEM 4 M/E 4K Switcher, Smart Videohub 40X40, recorders, and numerous converters and interfaces. King says, "The video production room is outfitted with six Middle Atlantic equipment racks, furniture by Winstead, and LCD monitors by Samsung, which gives the production team the most ideal vantage for ultimate control of all the video for IMAG and effects during performances."

Creel notes that the project has

been in the works for several years, and Starlite has been involved pretty much from the beginning. "When we got the green light from ownership," he says, "we had to figure out, what the contractor needed from us and how much lead time we had. The contractor needed the rigging gear first, along with the company switches and panels. So, we started with the rigging, power, and electrical systems, filling in the blanks of the infrastructure, because contractors were pulling wires before we even knew what was going into the panels. We took it one manageable piece at a time, making sure we were comfortable before moving on to the next piece."

The big challenge, he adds, was "keeping everything moving on time." Starlite also supplied gear to the Liberty Bell Gastropub, Oliveto restaurant, and poker room.

Given the variety of acts playing the Xcite Center, it seems certain that the Starlite team has managed to cover all bases, positioning Parx Casino for a period of extended growth. 📶