



- [LDI](#)
- [Master Classes](#)
- [Gear](#)
 - [Lighting](#)
 - [Projection](#)
 - [Staging](#)
 - [Sound](#)
 - [Live Gear Gallery](#)
- [Concerts](#)
 - [U2 360°tour](#)
- [Theatre](#)
- [Staging Rental](#)
- [Venues](#)
- [Architainment](#)

- [Bookmark \(http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php\)](http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php)
- [Save \(#\)](#)
- [Reprint \(http://www.icopyright.com/3.7287?icx_id=livedesignonline.com/mag/highend_budget/index.html\)](http://www.icopyright.com/3.7287?icx_id=livedesignonline.com/mag/highend_budget/index.html)
- [Email \(#\)](#)
- [Print \(#\)](#)

High-End on a Budget

Jan 1, 2004 12:00 PM, By Matt Hurwitz

Designers spice up Latin music award show with light, video help from venue



Designer René Lagler created a rectangle stage that heavily relies on overhead truss elements for the Latin Music Fan Awards.

The Latin American equivalent of the People's Choice Awards faced an interesting creative challenge back in October — to achieve a high-end look similar to other major awards shows like

the People's Choice event, but on a much tighter budget. This challenge in presenting the El Premio de la Gente Latin Music Fan Awards fell squarely on the plates of art director René Lagler and lighting designer Jeff Ravitz of Visual Terrain, Los Angeles.

The event took place in October at the Mandalay Bay Events Center at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas, and aired on television three weeks later on the Telemundo Network. The show featured 11 production numbers and a wide variety of acts, from solo performers to mariachi bands, as well as the show's presenters and hosts.

“We wanted it to look as high quality as other awards shows the producers most admired,” Ravitz explains. Lagler adds that “you approach the job the same way, whether you have all the money in the world or limited resources. The bottom line is you want a good-looking show within your parameters that pleases the producers and solves all the functional needs.”

The problem was the budget. Though the designers were limited in the area of financial resources, they were given some assets, particularly Mandalay Bay's large inventory of existing set materials and lighting equipment. “They've got enough truss pieces there to truss the whole city of Las Vegas,” Ravitz jokes.

The Design

Lagler already had a basic design plan in mind for the show, based on a truss design he had created for the same show two years earlier at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, but his initial visit to Mandalay Bay quickly inspired other ideas.

“When we walked the hallways of the Mandalay Bay, I saw all these trusses laying around, and decided to use them,” he says. “The staff at Mandalay Bay, headed by Paul Opromolo, did a great job helping out, making available 90 percent of their stock — everything from 900ft. of 20in. box trusses, to platforms and lighting fixtures to tech equipment. This really made it possible for us to come up with a big look that had visual flexibilities.”



The trusses were supplemented by additional existing set pieces from two Las Vegas scenery shops, A&D Scenery, Inc. and Scenic Technologies.

The basic design was modeled after the star-shaped logo of the El Premio event. The stage was rectangular in shape, with several 16ft. and 12ft. semicircle platforms from A&D, along with other raised panel shapes made up of curved panels of stretched fabric and diamond shapes. Scenic Technologies also provided an 18'×20' Plexiglas dance floor — marked off with metallic tape to produce a grid appearance, and lit from below.

The trusses gave the stage its unique look. In the stage's center, the crew suspended a large 15'×20' projection screen, bordered by truss on all sides. The main screen was supplemented by two smaller 10 1/2'×14' projection screens for IMAG, far stage right and far stage left, all raised about 15ft. above the stage deck.

“René's philosophy is that you need good backgrounds behind all the performers, in every angle,” says Ravitz. “His theory is to break up large expanses of surface with vertical and angled lines, in order to create interest, and keep the viewer's eye locked in on what it's supposed to be.”

Lagler began his design by creating a model of the set. But after studying his model, he decided to place the screens on a 30 degree slant, to make the look more unique. “The minute you did that, the whole thing came alive,” he says.

Video and Light

The canted screens, however, created a challenge for Las Vegas-based InSync Show Production Services, which provided video projection services for the show.

“When they first presented it, I didn't think the angles were going to be so steep,” says InSync's co-founder John Kalata. “But they were quite severe angles.”

Kalata had to hang his projectors — pairs of Eiki LCXT3 10 K's (center) and Christie RoadRunner L8's (side screens) — “doubled-over” to assure secure projection in case one failed, at identical angles to the screens. The side screens were front projection, suspended over the audience, while the center was rear projection, with the projectors hung on set trussing. Several Sampo PME42V3 plasma monitors were used to supplement the projection screens. These monitors were placed onstage and used to display award winners' names and show logos.

For Ravitz, the trusses were more than a place to hang hundreds of lighting fixtures.

“For me, it's a complete pleasure to have any scenery to light,” he says. “I do a lot of shows where there is virtually no scenery, and I'm asked to create the scenery with beams of light.”

Ravitz made use of the full selection of house-owned lighting fixtures, which consisted of hundreds of Martin MAC 500, MAC 600s, MAC 300s, and MAC 250s, as well as conventional ETC Source 4 PARs.

Additional fixtures rented from Morpheus Lights, Las Vegas, supplemented the house lights. Morpheus provided 40 Martin MAC 2000 Profiles, as well as six of its custom-built BriteBurst instruments.

“The BriteBursts are kind of a search light,” explains Ravitz. “They're an HMI source that's lensless, with a 2000W lamp. They pan-and-tilt and have got a color changer attached, as sort of an outboard accessory. It makes big, solid, bright beams of light that can throw over long distances.”

Besides automatically controlled lighting, Ravitz also used four front-of-house Lycian 1207 Midget 2K follow spots, as well as two more located onstage behind the action.

Morpheus' Vice President of Operations Danny English and assistant gaffer Kile McClure supervised lighting construction.

“Danny is very talented and knew what it was that we were trying to do, interfacing his lights with the Mandalay Bay's,” says Ravitz. The lighting, trusses and other stage set pieces were all assembled on the floor before the stage was constructed, and then flown into place.

The lighting was controlled using a house-owned Flying Pig Wholehog II lighting controller, programmed by Steve Lieberman of SJ Lighting. He was assisted by Ravitz's assistant, Erin Powell. The lighting team found itself challenged by the limited amount of rehearsal time available to program each of the 11 live performances.

“We literally had a quickie run-through, where we just didn't have the time to get everything set,” says Ravitz. “The next time we saw it was for the show. If it wasn't for Steve being a really quick programmer, we would have been caught.”

Ravitz and Lieberman made the best of a difficult situation. “We knew that there were live performances, we knew that there were presentations, and we knew there were audience moments,” says Ravitz. “There are also wide shots which need to be lit which show the whole stage as the camera goes in-and-out of commercials.”

Various types of performances mean different lighting plans and styles for different parts of the show.

“Some of them were simpler than others,” says Ravitz. “Some were just a performer standing on stage. Others, though, like the mariachi act and other groups, had 20 or more people on stage, all in different configurations. They were all offset by 10 or 20ft., and at different angles and in different quantities for every act.”

Celebrities on a live show don't always face the same way they did during rehearsals, he points out.

“We're dealing with angles and with last-minute changes for a live show,” Ravitz says. “It's not unusual for somebody to suddenly turn 40 degrees from the way they were facing the rest of the night, and suddenly, the lighting angles are not as ideal as they were a few moments before. In the middle of a live show, it's hard to recover from those kinds of things.”

Matt Hurwitz is a freelance writer who covers music, film, television, and the live-event industry for a wide range of publications. Email him at MattHurwitz@aol.com (<mailto:MattHurwitz@aol.com>)

Popular Articles

- [50 Powerful People: The Top Ten \(http://livedesignonline.com/concerts/0302-fifty-powerful-people/?imw=Y\)](http://livedesignonline.com/concerts/0302-fifty-powerful-people/?imw=Y)
- [LIV Nightclub In Miami | Breathes New Life Into The Billion-Dollar-Renovated Fontainebleau Hotel | Feb 2009 \(http://livedesignonline.com/venues/liv_nightclub_miami_0209/?imw=Y\)](http://livedesignonline.com/venues/liv_nightclub_miami_0209/?imw=Y)
- [Scharff Weisberg Lights Up Times Square On New Year's Eve \(http://livedesignonline.com/stagingrental/scharff_weisberg_times_square_new_years/?imw=Y\)](http://livedesignonline.com/stagingrental/scharff_weisberg_times_square_new_years/?imw=Y)
- [Barco Acquires Element Labs \(http://livedesignonline.com/news/barco-acquires-element-labs-0317/?imw=Y\)](http://livedesignonline.com/news/barco-acquires-element-labs-0317/?imw=Y)

[Back to Top \(#container\)](#)