

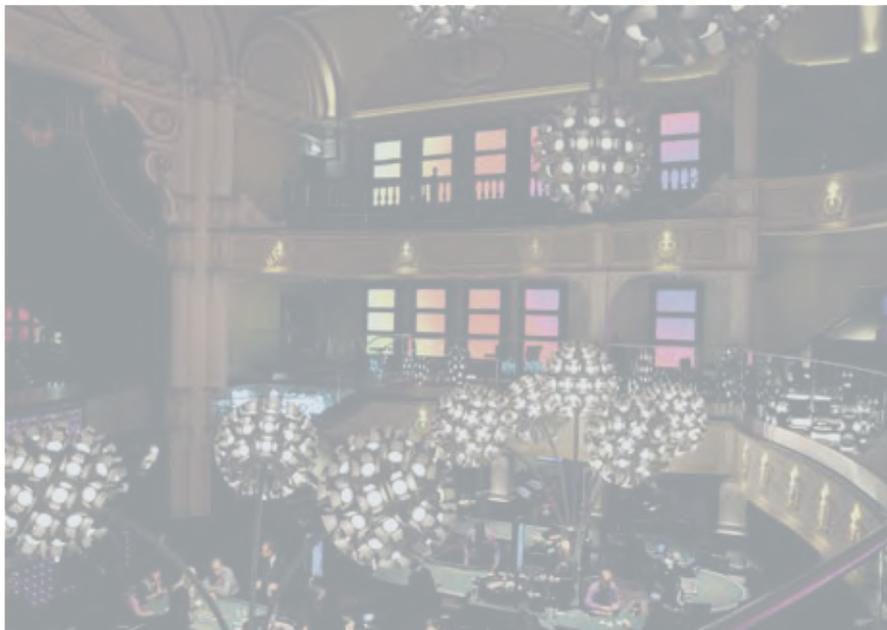
AV IN ENTERTAINMENT

CINEMAS | VENUES | GAMBLING | SPORTS CENTRES | VISITOR CENTRES | STADIA | THEME PARKS

VOLUME 1



» WWW.AVINTERACTIVE.COM



Over 200 Community loudspeakers feature at The Hippodrome Casino, London

throughout. The organisation even has its own full-time digital content creator producing the graphics and visual content for the screens.

Throughout the world, live entertainment ‘spectacles’ in casinos are common. Performances are changed frequently and often theatres host different shows throughout the day in contrast to the long fixed runs of traditional theatres. They still need full show production equipment: lights and controllers, audio mixers and projection equipment and everything needs to facilitate set up and changeover and be available and familiar to visiting production crews. Features such as sequence and show storage and Show Import on Avolites lighting control consoles, which allow designers to copy effects developed for a previous show, are highly beneficial. Consistency of control language and style across the product range also contributes to product familiarity and simplifies use. This point is endorsed by Jamie Cobb, production manager at Milwaukee’s Northern Lights Theater at Potawatomi Bingo Casino, who recently installed a DiGiCo SD10 sound console. “A musical equalizer is a must, but ease-of-use is really the big one,” says Cobb. “If a visiting engineer is frustrated by the work surface, then all the features serve no good purpose. The

SD10’s control surface has the flexibility to be laid out exactly the way a visiting engineer would want, and we’ve been able to show these engineers how to use the features of the soundboard so they’ll be able to get up and running quickly for their show.”

Within the casino, delivery of high quality HD video streams is essential to attract and retain customers and increase dwell time, while promoting the available services and amenities at the same time. This is an area that BrightSign has addressed successfully. “A typical US casino running live sports gaming will show several hundred simultaneous video streams on screens of every size, drawn from local and satellite TV, casino games, internet streams, gambling odds and signage displays, with local selection by staff using interactive touch controllers,” explains Jeff Hastings, ceo. “Using a network structured around XD1230 players, QAM modulation on IP encoders, with BrightSign Network management software and Crestron controllers we have delivered this scale of network video delivery matched to the existing cabling infrastructure that is often irreplaceable in the venue.”

On-street advertising to attract visitors offers another use of AV. At the Casino Reeperbahn in Hamburg, Holosonics’ Audio Spotlight

directional speakers are used outside a main entrance foyer as a sonic beacon. According to Christian Hartwig of BrainGain Projects, the integrator responsible for the installation: “The speaker beams the exciting sounds of slot machine jackpots and spoken word promotions to entice passers-by. The installation has been a great success, and the casino is already looking to expand its Audio Spotlight fleet for use in other areas inside and around the property. Narrow beams of sound surround the listener’s head; a single step outside the beam and the level drops by over 90 per cent.”

The use of interactive technology is also beginning to appear on the gaming floor. “Interactive touch screens are appealing to casinos to overcome some of the security issues associated with chips, such as identification and pilfering, despite integral RFID,” comments Kevin Williams of interactive out-of-home entertainment consultancy KWP. “People are familiar with touch screens. Using them for roulette and other games simplifies the transaction while providing a new level of experience.”

High street betting shops are also becoming more noticeable as they extend their range of facilities and gambling opportunities using digital signage for advertising and upgrading the gambling experience for customers. “We are investing heavily in internal AV to move away from the old high street betting shop reputation of ‘chalk and betting slips behind nondescript blacked-out windows’, to a more interactive, Apple-type experience, with self-service touch screens and multichannel HD sports broadcasting. Some of our shops have large multi-screen video walls and we are trialling smart glass,” says Mandy Kerr, William Hill’s operations controller for London and the south east. With nearly 2,500 shops William Hill represents around 25 per cent of the UK market of over 9,000 shops and this approach is having a knock-on effect as others upgrade in response.

The company extended this idea to on-course betting, installing a 55-inch Giant iPhone at the Epsom Derby. Mark Jones, managing director of Touch2View, designed the device: “A Giant iPhone allowed visitors to view details of each race, examine form, check the latest odds, register and place a free bet on a race. Winnings were paid into the users’ accounts and confirmation sent to their mobile devices, as well as being displayed on the screen.”

On-track facilities also present a massive opportunity to audiovisual integration professionals. Racetracks around the world are enhancing their facilities to attract racegoers. UK Racecourse Association chief executive, Stephen Atkin, praised the performance of racecourses in 2013: “Racecourses are making continued efforts to improve the racegoer experience in what is an extremely competitive leisure market where growth in the current climate is hard fought. With annual attendance of over 5.6 million people, racing has maintained its position as the second most watched sport after football.”

Racetracks are, however, often old and widely spread facilities which present unique problems to integrators. “Prairie Meadows Raceway is a treat for spectators but the audio

system was outdated,” explains Mike Pedersen, senior staff engineer at Mechdyne Corporation, the integrator behind a major AV upgrade project. “The racetrack venue was built in phases over more than 20 years with stadium seating on one level, grandstand seating on another and a multi-tiered dining area. The original sound system had been expanded incrementally and become untenable.” Mechdyne designed a networked system that includes DSP control, monitoring and expandability. “When the announcers get excited, we want the spectators to turn their heads toward the racing action,” he says. “Even though the speakers are mounted where the glass and ceiling meet, they create the sonic impression that the sound is coming from down on the track.”

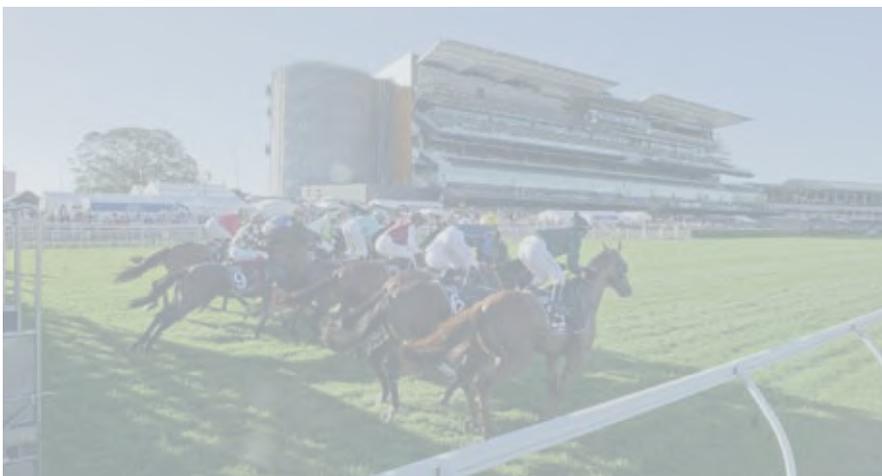
“Even though the speakers are mounted where the glass and ceiling meet, they create the sonic impression that the sound is coming from down on the track.”

Mike Pedersen, Mechdyne

Multichannel networked audio distribution was merged with IPTV video at the 200-acre Royal Randwick Racecourse in Sydney. “We needed a system that could deliver hundreds of audio channels throughout 60 zones, distributed over a common Gigabit network,” says Josh Jones, project manager at integrator The P.A. People. “This was resolved using Harman’s BSS BLU integrated with Audinate’s Dante. Other audio networking technologies that use 100Mb/s could not give us the channel count that we required with the low latency we needed and the quality we expected.”

Digital signage is an important aspect within venues of all sizes. Many organisations report improved sales after installing a system to promote services and entertain customers. Group SPI configured and installed 16 SpinetiX HMP130 digital media players at Dakota Sioux Casino & Hotel. The media players power landscape and portrait displays throughout the property as well as several ViewSonic ePosters. “This system has been extremely successful in improving our marketing to entice customers to use our resort products further and to promote future promotions and entertainment,” says Weston Quinn, ceo of Dakota Nation Gaming Enterprise. A similar effect was achieved at the Italian casino resort of Casino Lugano which chose ONELAN’s digital signage solution for its ease of use. The system delivers internal publicity, jackpot wins and live video sources to 20 screens throughout the property.

The gaming industry is evolving and growing rapidly, which in turn has created demand for AV systems across the board. As Midwich divisional director, Stuart Mizon observes: “There is massive potential for audio visual technology and services in bingo, high street bookies, casinos, racetracks and other gaming locations. We are currently experiencing a particularly strong demand from high street bookmakers for display and interactive technology.”



Above: A punter views a video wall at William Hill; MGM Resorts International’s New York-New York Casino chose Audio Spotlight speakers. Below: Royal Randwick Racecourse uses Dante