

Front-row experience

Visualisation solutions

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Advanced display systems bring the thrill of sitting in the very best seats to all sports fans, no matter where they are in Reliant Stadium

Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas covers a total of around four acres and is like nothing you've ever seen before. With its unique retractable, Teflon-coated roof almost 76m above ground level, its removable natural-grass field and larger-than-life screens, Reliant Stadium, home of the NFL Texans, truly is the sports fan's paradise. This is the place where sporting legends are made. Where fans, with cheering enthusiasm, carry their heroes to final victory.

This unique project was created with one goal in mind: to make sure every single time a fan visits the arena for an event it will be magic. The perfect seat, the perfect view. Great service and awesome sound. For the first time ever, each and every single fan is being offered a choice, front-row seat from which to watch their favourite team charge to victory.

But giving a front-row seat to each and every spectator at the 69,250-seat venue isn't that easy, which is why Barco was called in to help.

"The client wanted a state-of-the-art visualisation solution that would ensure every spectator on location gets to see all of the close-up and replay action – which was until now reserved for the viewers at home. Add that to the noise of the hordes of cheering fans, the smell of popcorn and the adrenaline-charged action on the field and you have the ultimate sports experience," states Marco Bruines, division manager at Barco Media.

The displays supplied by Barco, including two giant ones measuring 250m² and placed at each end of the field, together with the four indoor LED walls located at the highly finished stadium club level areas of the stadium and the display located in the Bud Plaza, all form part of the most advanced audio-visual solution seen in a sport stadium to date. The displays, measuring over 550m² in total and ideally suited for live transmission of the new USA digital TV format, will be used for stunning live image magnification, replays and graphics during football games, rodeos and other events held at the stadium. The displays, configured in a very wide 32:9 ratio, feature two full-resolution, high-definition 16:9 ratio images side by side, as well as an ultra-wide 32:9 ratio image. The high-resolution, multi-images are made possible by using the proprietary Barco D320 image-processing system.

Barco also supplied various other systems to the venue, including four BR 6500s with networking modules for the wow walls (rear projection on a 9 x 16ft) inside the stadium for advertising. The stadium also features four iQ G300s in a few of the conference rooms for presentations. The venue also has Barco Control Room equipment installed – displays and three Hydra processors (iStudio units) configured in one wall allow up to 90 SDI video sources to be shown simultaneously.

As the only supplier that could provide the customer with all the requested visualisation technology – including the daylight displays and large-screen projection equipment it delivered to the stadium – Barco firmly claimed its stake in the US sports market by winning this project.

"During our initial consultations with the client, the architects and the other contractors on this project, we soon realised that what these guys aimed to build was no ordinary sports venue," states Bruines. "They had a clear vision of what the sports arena of the future should look like, and they looked to Barco to provide a visualisation solution to match."

Leroy Shafer, assistant general manager of Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, which also calls the stadium its home, says: "The entire

Reliant Stadium is designed and built to accommodate the latest in audio-visual technology. From the smallest to the most visible components, we were looking for quality, efficiency and reliability in every piece of equipment and we are proud to have Barco join us in this quest for excellence."

International performances

Until recently, Barco's displays were used mainly for large-scale events and media applications. Media giants like Clear Channel International and Viacom, as well as rental companies catering to a multitude of international performances including those of Madonna, U2, Bon Jovi, Aerosmith and Kylie Minogue, have long endorsed the image quality and reliability of Barco's products. Being chosen to complete a fixed installation for a major US sports venue such as Reliant Stadium, however, was an important breakthrough for Barco in the US sports market.

As Stephan Paridaen, VP of BarcoProjection, says: "Winning the contract for a key reference like Reliant Stadium has proven that the quality of Barco's solutions for large-screen visualisation is recognised, not only in the media and events industries, but is also fast becoming known in other industries that can benefit from this cutting-edge technology."

The key to Barco winning the contract lies not only in its reputation as a leader in visualisation solutions, but also in the fact that it continues to invest so much in driving the future of the professional image-processing industry. As part of the solution it brought to the unique Reliant Stadium project, it offered the client the best display and projection solutions and also its latest image-processing software – software that makes it possible to show several images, both data and video, on the screen at the same time.

With its six levels, five public concourses, hidden field lights, larger-than-life screens, 174 luxury suites, 10 party suites and a stadium roof that stretches almost twice as high as any other NFL venue, Reliant Stadium is already taking sports fans' breath away. ■



The visualisation solution ensures that every spectator gets to see all of the close-up and replay action