



LOS ANGELES Aug 21, 2008 – The winner of ACM’s Vocal Group of the Year 2007, Rascal Flatts has always enjoyed an extremely close relationship with its fans. Nowhere is this more apparent than at the country trio’s concerts, during which Joe Don, Gary and Jay frequently walk into the audience, and even bring fans up on stage to participate in the show.

Rascal Flatts wanted to get even closer to its fans – literally and figuratively – during its current 2008 “The Bob That Head” Tour. So the group called on All Access Staging & Productions (Torrance, CA) to create a set that would make it easy to interact with the audience. “They basically had a T thrust on their last set, and this year they wanted one that would extend even further out into the audience,” said project manager Mike Bell of All Access Staging, which had constructed sets for Rascal Flatts in the past.

Working with set designer Bruce Rodgers of Tribe Inc. and lighting designer Andy Knighton of Bandit Lites, All Access created “one of the most complicated sets I’ve worked on,” said Bell. Featuring an intricate 32’ high spiral staircase as a backdrop and a 48’ x 68’ main stage with a multi-level layout, the set incorporates a runway-style rectangular thrust that wraps around four spectator egresses to provide audience access. Five elevated risers serve as platforms for the instrumental players, while numerous stairways, ramps, bridges connect the various sections and levels of the set, giving the band the freedom to move deep into the audience and back to the main stage.

To tie together all of these divergent horizontal and vertical elements, All Access relied on nearly 1,000 color-changing LED fixtures from Elation Professional and Acclaim Lighting. The massive number of lights are used to outline and highlight the thrust, risers, stairways and other elements, giving the set a cohesive look, while creating a breathtakingly stunning visual experience.

Some 730 Acclaim X-Cubes alone are installed on the set. A compact, rectangular cube-shaped RGB LED fixture, the X-Cube is used along the perimeters of the thrust and those of the risers where the instrumental players are positioned. Spaced 1’ apart on the elevated risers, the X-Cubes serve to “draw attention to the risers and the backline guys,” said Bell. X-Cubes are also used to highlight three diamond-shaped decks that sit on top of two elevated audience egress bridges and on the front of the main stage, and a fourth square-shaped deck at the front of the thrust.

The top surface of the entire thrust is outlined with Acclaim X-Tubes on each side. A linear RGB LED strip, the X-Tubes – more than 125 in total -- are placed end-to-end so that they appear as an uninterrupted “running light” along the sides of the thrust “to really give it a runway look,” said Bell.

Octostrip LEDs from Acclaim’s sister company Elation Professional dramatically illuminate the treads of the many stairways on the set. These include: two large staircases that lead down from the 32’ silo to the main stage; four additional “screamer” staircases that surround the main stage; and eight sets of

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stairs that lead up and down from the elevated decks on the thrust. A 39” RGB LED strip, more than 100 Octostrip units are used on the stairways.

“The Octostrips really give a lot of focus to the steps, making them more than just a functional part of the set,” said Bell. “The stairs look so cool all lit up, they become an integrated part of the design.”

Across the entire Rascal Flatts set, added Bell, the Elation and Acclaim LEDs serve to tie together the various complex elements into one cohesive whole. “The lights connect the walkways to the stage, and the stage to the risers. The lights are programmed so that they all flow together. They’re so impressive that you don’t necessarily see them as a light on its own, but as part of the entire visual product. I think they even exceeded our expectations as to what they were going to look like.”

In addition to their spectacular appearance, the Elation/Acclaim LEDs have stood up to the rigors of Rascal Flatts’ virtually non-stop touring schedule, reported Bell. “It’s the nature of touring that things get thrown in the back of a truck. You just can’t think of a more destructive way of handling product – and the lights have held up very well.” What’s more, Bell said, with so many lights on the set, the long lifespan of the LEDs has proven to be a lifesaver. Rated at 50,000 hours, they rarely need replacing.

Another benefit of the Elation/Acclaim products is their economical price tag. They have contributed to the overall cost-effectiveness of the Rascal Flatts set, according to Bell and All Access’s president and creative sales director Erik Eastland. “We really think that we have provided a durable, functional, world-class set at a reasonable price, and this is proof that you don’t have to pay the big bucks to get a product that is both beautiful and custom,” said Eastland.

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