



PHOTO: Gerry Hariton

## **Acclaim LEDs Make A Splash Onboard Royal Caribbean's *Independence Of The Seas***

LOS ANGELES – When one of the nation's largest cruise ships commissioned Gerry Hariton and Vicki Baral (Hariton/Baral Design) to design the set for their largest-ever onboard musical concert show, the Los Angeles production designers were determined to create a truly spectacular environment. The ship was Royal Caribbean's *Independence of the Seas*, and the production was to be held in its 1,350-seat Broadway-style theater. "They were going to have 21 musicians on stage at one time, which is extraordinary for a cruise ship," said Hariton, who has been working with Royal Caribbean for a decade.

How to design a set for such an elaborate concert production? Model it after one of the nation's most famed cultural landmarks -- the Hollywood Bowl. Working with lighting designers Peter Moore and Mark Pranzini (Lightspeed Productions, Miami, FL), Hariton and Baral emulated the legendary Los Angeles amphitheater's dome-like structure and tunnel of color lighted arches in the ship's theater, using X-Chip LED chips from Acclaim Lighting.

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“Once we decided on the concept of the Hollywood Bowl, we started looking for a lighting product that could do indirect LED lighting, that we could actually build into the set,” said Hariton. “We had been doing LED lighting with other products in the past, and we needed something that was an upgrade from what we had been using.”

Another consideration was the fact that projects on cruise ships typically have to be completed within a shorter amount of time than those in other types of venues. So, the lighting products used on the *Independence of the Seas* had to be very quick and easy to install.

The design team found what they were looking for in Acclaim Lighting’s X-Chip, a low voltage modular LED PCB using tri-color RGB SMD LEDs, controlled via the X-Chip driver, which accepts DMX-512 protocol control, allowing the color-mixing LED chip to be utilized to easily build custom displays. They chose the model X-Chip-100 SMD, a small surface mount LED that measures 4” long and contains five tri-color SMD red, green and blue LEDs.

“We actually went to (Acclaim director of sales) Eric Loader’s office and set up a demo at the distance from the background that the product would be placed, which was 3 inches from the wall. We found that the X-Chip had the brightness and evenness of illumination that we were looking for,” said Hariton. “Another thing that really attracted us to the X-Chip was that it was modular and very easy to install. We also liked the color temperature of the X-Chip -- it mixed to a really nice white, which was important.”

About 600’ of X-Chips (approximately 1,800 units) were used in 9 overhead arches, as well as in linear and circular strips that frame the orchestra members’ seating areas. All of the pieces were pre-fabricated at River City Scenic (Cincinnati, OH) before being installed on the *Independence of the Seas*. “Once we got on the ship we had a very short timetable to install everything,” said Hariton. “We were able to accomplish this because the X-Chips can be plugged one into another and we didn’t have to solder anything.”

What appears to be 9 individual concentric arches are actually 3 flown wall units, each containing several arcs of bent aluminum channel lined with X-Chips. When installed in the theater, they give the illusion of a 3D-like tunnel of arches. The rear piece, which is a solid wall, is comprised of 5 arches which get progressively smaller from top to bottom. The middle section, positioned over the bandstand, contains an additional 3 arches. The final section, outside the bandstand, holds the remaining 3 arches.

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“The whole thing is just three different layers, but each layer has multiple arches,” said Hariton. “Because each of the arches is individually controlled, we could really create depth by having the foreground arches a different color or brightness than the background arches. This gives it a real tunnel-like appearance.”

Strips of X-Chips framing the orchestra members can be color-coordinated with the arches, pulling together the look of the whole set. “The range of colors that these LED chips provide is really spectacular,” said Hariton. “The client really loves the magnitude of the effect and the fact that we can get so many different looks on one set just by changing the colors.” Of course, another thing that’s greatly appreciated -- by the performers themselves -- is the cool operating temperature of LED lights, especially when you have 21 musicians together on one stage!

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