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Dollywood “Great Pumpkin LumiNights” Aglow in Elation Lighting

StudioVibrant, Elation and Acclaim Team Up to Make Annual Fall Event a Success

Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, is a theme park success story for several reasons. Besides having one of country music’s most iconic personalities as co-owner, the park is a well-chosen mix of traditional thrill rides spiced with crafts and culture, a successful recipe of entertainment that attracts nearly 3 million guests a year.

Each fall, Dollywood holds a popular Harvest Festival and this year sought a family friendly, fall-centric addition to the autumn event. Park leadership decided on a pumpkin-themed evening concept to support the park’s “Year of the Family” theme. The new experience, “Great Pumpkin LumiNights,” is an outdoor installation of thousands of illuminated jack-o-lanterns, artistic sculptures, playful scenes, pumpkin-themed food and entertainment.



Theatrical approach to lighting

Since lighting would play a vital role in the evening event, Elation Professional dealer StudioVibrant of Lexington, Kentucky, was asked to join the “Great Pumpkin LumiNights” design team from the initial conceptual discussions. “Early in the process, I determined that a theatrical approach to illuminating the show sets was important,” stated Matt Cooper, principle lighting designer at StudioVibrant, who was key in specifying both Elation and Acclaim lighting on the project. “Most pumpkin events we researched tended toward interior illumination and negative space but focusing on only interior illumination misses the opportunity to highlight the form of a pumpkin. It became clear that sidelight, upright and washing the exterior of the show sets would be critical not only in setting LumiNights apart from other events, but in conveying Dollywood’s unique identity and history.”

SixPar and SixBar

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As conversations evolved it became apparent to Cooper that the area of the park designated for the event contained several permanent structures that were rich with opportunity for illumination. The project focused on both supporting temporary show-specific sets (a giant pumpkin spider, among others), as well as illuminating several permanent elements, specifically two roller coasters, the park's 250' tall Drop Line tower ride and several themed structures.

"Because of Dollywood's tradition of live shows and a polished theatrical presentation, I was very sensitive to the need for a strong color mixing system to reproduce the amber and pastel tones that are central to the park's palette," Cooper said, explaining that for building wash duties he selected the Elation SixPar 300™, an LED Par light with six-color LED chip, including UV. "The color mixing system was advantageous for washing the Mystery Mine building and the dedicated UV element was critical in rendering the eerie tone of the structure and related show sets."



Each jack-o-lantern within the "Great Pumpkin LumiNights" show sets contains individual pixel-mapped RGB diodes and each decorative set vignette receives a wash treatment to highlight the scale of the set and communicate the unique form of a pumpkin to guests. "We used a combination of SixPar 100™, SixPar 200™ and SixBar 1000 IP™ fixtures for exterior wash," Cooper says, "often times leaning heavily on the color mixing capacity of the SixPar series for contrasty sidelight to accentuate the forms and translate the playful, fun, upbeat tone of the event." Additionally, SixPar 200s with custom top hats were used to help wash the tree canopy and uplight specific themed characters.

Acclaim Lighting

Lighting from Elation's sister company, Acclaim Lighting, also played a key role as Acclaim DynaDrum HO fixtures took a prominent role in illuminating permanent structures. An array of 16 DynaDrums illuminated the Thunderhead wooden roller coaster while six DynaDrums illuminated the Drop Line structure. "The integrated Aria wireless DMX transceiver was a huge asset in facilitating placement of the fixtures within ride enclosures and landscaping where hardwired solutions would have been impractical," the lighting designer explains. "I also appreciated the capability to swap filters to vary beam angle which helped our team dial in focus and coverage in the field. The sheer output of the DynaDrum is also very impressive and the illuminated Drop Line tower is now visible from Dollywood's main parking lot. The output capacity for the dollar is nothing short of impressive."



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To facilitate control of both the fixtures on the temporary show sets and fixtures associated with permanent structures, the StudioVibrant team developed and deployed an extensive control network. Over 40 universes of sACN form the backbone of the control solution including three discrete universes via Aria wireless transmitters. Transmitters were fed from sACN nodes with antennas placed in inconspicuous locations on existing structures. Cooper calls the Aria solution an asset, specifically when coupled with receivers integrated in fixtures.

Product support on the project was provided by Elation manufacturer rep firm Five Lakes Marketing, who Cooper was more than happy to work with. "Ed Cheeseman at Five Lakes was instrumental in the process, aiding us in securing demo fixtures for on-site evaluation with the design team and in coordinating arrival times of a great deal of equipment with a non-negotiable opening date," he said, adding that Dollywood was a tremendous partner to work with. "Their team is world class, dedicated and tenacious," he concludes.

The largest addition ever made to Dollywood's fall festival, "Great Pumpkin LumiNights" ran from September 29th until October 28th and was a great success, helping set park records for fall attendance on several occasions.

About Elation Professional

Elation Professional is one of the world's leading lighting and visual solutions providers and is the global brand of Elation Lighting. Founded in 1992 and headquartered in Los Angeles, with European sales, distribution and support based in The Netherlands, Elation designs and manufactures a comprehensive range of innovative yet affordable lighting and video products that are distributed through a global network of dealers and distributors. Made up of a spirited team of dedicated personnel, Elation is setting new efficiency and performance standards in Platinum lamp and LED technology and is acknowledged for a comprehensive commitment to Total Support. As a company in expansion with a presence in a growing variety of market segments, chances are you've experienced Elation lighting at a concert, special event, TV, theater, late night venue, House of Worship, theme park, cruise ship, exhibition, architectural space or elsewhere. For more information, please visit www.elationlighting.com

For more information, contact:

Elation Professional US

6122 S. Eastern Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90040
USA

Tel: (866) 245-6726 (toll free)

Tel: (323) 582-3322

sales@elationlighting.com

www.elationlighting.com

Elation Professional EU

Junostraat 2.
6468 EW Kerkrade
The Netherlands



www.ElationLighting.com

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Tel: +31 (0)45 546 85 66
info@elationlighting.eu
www.elationlighting.eu