

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

A NEW PARADIGM FOR CORPORATE EVENTS AT CISCO LIVE

/// BY ELLEN LAMPERT-GREAU



Cisco raised the benchmark for corporate events with a visually exciting, 360° experience with Cisco Live, held June 25 to 29 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas. The in-the-round, arena-style venue, hosted an educational and training event for IT, networking, and communications professionals produced by Go! Experience Design, with lighting and visual design by John Featherstone of Lightswitch and scenic design by Johniene Papandreas of Valdreas Design.

"Valdreas Design was brought in by GO! Experience Design at the very initial stages to scenically conceptualize, design, and develop a 360° arena experience engaging an audience of thousands seated in-the-round in an immersive and interactive experience, while equally incorporating all the required presentation needs of a major corporate event," explains Papandreas. "We had the added good fortune of collaborating again with John Featherstone of Lightswitch. Working with him always ups any game."

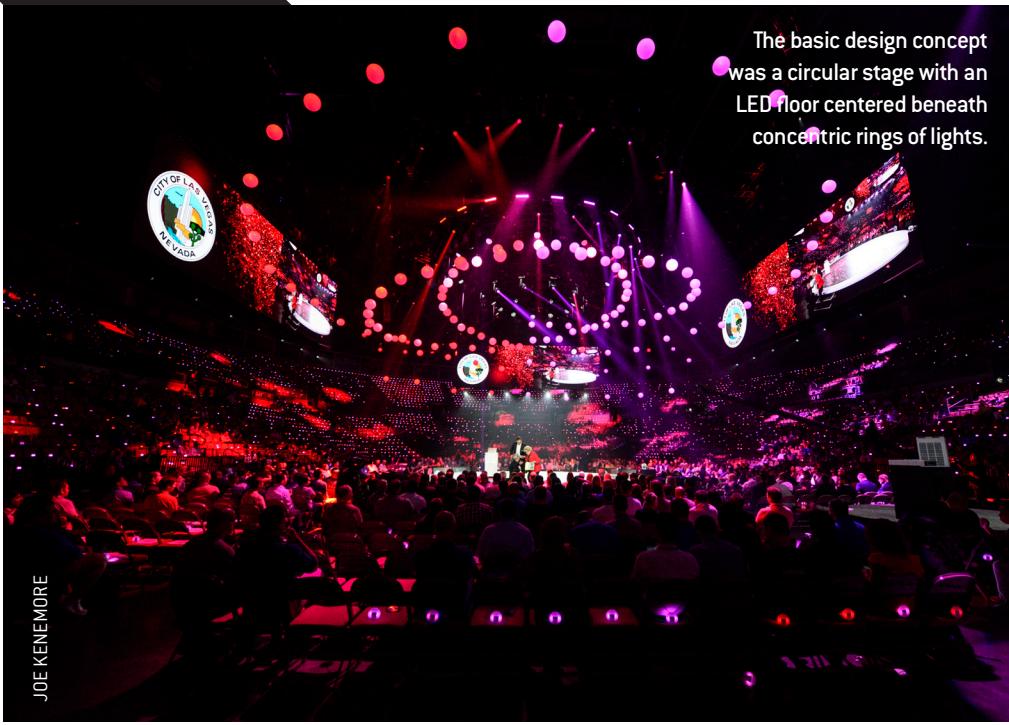
One of the scenic challenges was, as Papandreas points out, the 360° setting. "Finding a way for a presenter working in the round to connect with an audience of thousands is a balance of focus and scale," she says. "Being alone in the center of such a large venue, a human-scaled presenter has to be given the focus and then scale employed to embrace and include the attendees." The basic design concept was a circular stage with an LED floor centered beneath concentric rings of lights, created by a total 176 Glow Motion LED orbs raising and lowering on high-speed Stage Kinetik Winches.

JOE KENMORE



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Johniene Papandreas



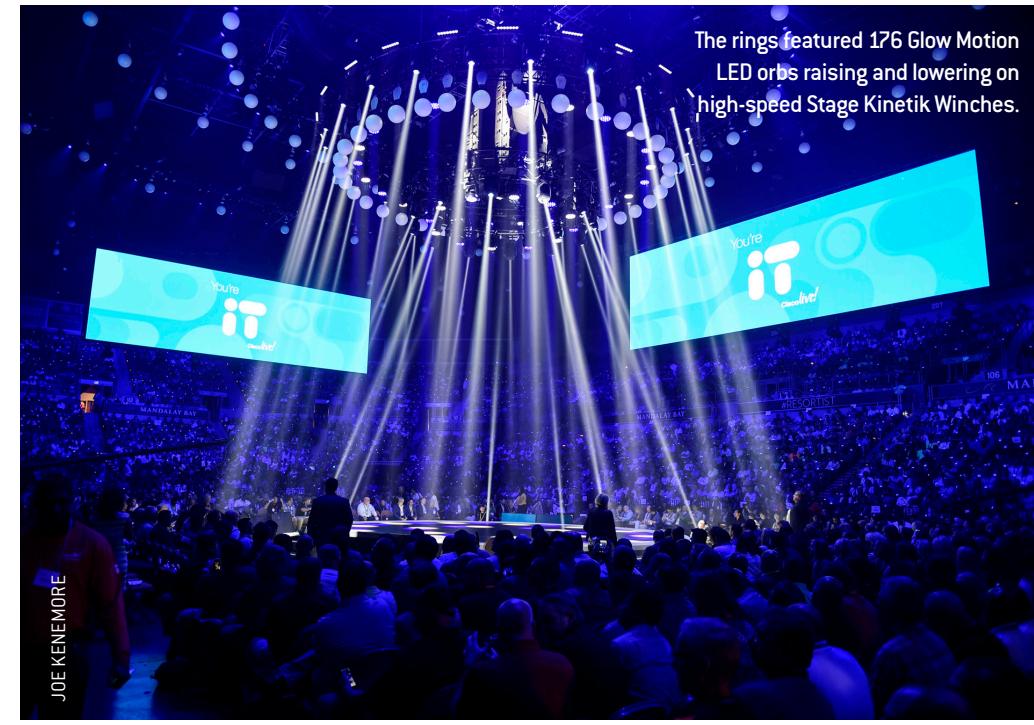
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As Cisco is a technology company, Papandreas and her team hit on the idea of visualizing “the ripple effect” of technology, kind of like a stone tossed into the water. “Our presenter on the circular stage became the entry point, and a ‘splash’ of concentric lighting effects supported by a series of circular truss over the stage was used to transition attention upward,” she notes. “Lateral, concentric ‘ripple rings’ of the glowing orbs continued the visual progression out over the audience, and four wide-format LED screens were incorporated into the array.”

The four LED screens hung from truss measuring approximately 50'x18' and comprised eight sections, or four units, back-to-

back of Unilumin UPAD III 2.6 LED panels with 5,760x1,728 pixel resolution, provided by Chris Kimball at Trend Group directly to Full Motion Technical Group. Joe Russo at Full Motion Technical Group worked with John Westermann at VER, who, in turn, supplied the video package, broadcast truck, and round LED stage floor for this event.

“Joe wanted to have a broadcast truck for the Cisco team to keep it separate from the in-house video team. VER used the latest Riedel Media Networks’ video systems to make this work,” says Westermann, who adds, “Featherstone did an amazing job with creative and lighting to make this a very immersive show.” The 28'-diameter LED floor provided by VER comprised 256



JOE KENEMORE

Uniview BO-6 LED panels for a resolution of 1,440x1,440 pixels.

To help create the immersive experience, “each of the concentric ‘ripple rings’ was rigged with internally lit orbs, each on its own winch, capable of independent animation,” says Papandreas. “They could rise up and down in various sequences and were brilliantly choreographed by John at Lightswitch to realize the fully immersive experience desired.”

What made this project so successful? “When you have an adventurous and skilled creative and production team, and a client interested in pushing the bounds, the result can be a concept fully and memorably realized beyond even the original

expectations. We certainly had that,” Papandreas adds, crediting the cutting-edge nature of the Glow Motion rings of light with Stage Kinetik winches that, as she says, “really brought the concept home and transformed the arena into an immersive gyroscopic experience that no one who attended will soon forget.”

RIPPLES OF LIGHT

“Cisco wanted to do two things: Shake their audience up and get away from the expected opening for their meeting,” according to Featherstone. “They wanted to recapture the edginess that was their original DNA, and opening with the spheres was to say it’s not business as usual.”



The lighting rig was designed to echo the circular shape of the stage and fill the visual space of the large arena.

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The show started as expected with an intro video. “There was an interruption, a break like we lost power for a long few seconds, and then it was like we rebooted, and something very different happened,” Featherstone explains. “After the reboot, we got into the immersive entertainment technology. The guests were wearing Glow Motion pendants

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for a true multimedia experience, along with the spheres over the audience, triggered sound effects, and the presenters’ graphics, which contained elements of the pendants and spheres during the four-day meeting.” The pendants were controlled from the same console as the winches and orbs, but all of the lighting control was one network.

This was not, in any sense, a traditional sales meeting. Cisco Live is a pay-to-play event for professionals from around the

world, with a lot of training, plus a show floor with Cisco and third-party technology. “The idea is to engage the audience from the get-go,” says Featherstone. “The show was truly integrated and focused on telling a real story that Cisco wanted to tell—true business theatre—and everything became an analogy for the fluid, ever-changing network and Cisco’s new paradigm. We wanted to make sure it wasn’t as if people were just watching TV on a screen someplace in the room.”

As a result, “the lighting rig was designed to echo the circular shape of the stage, fill the visual space of the large arena, and also speak to the global networked nature of Cisco’s clients and offerings,” explains Featherstone. “Working with fabulous scenic designer Johniene Papandreas, we conceived the array of circular trusses and arcs that moved into house like ripples from a stone thrown in a pond. These provided not only lighting positions, but also hanging for the winches and orbs.”

Featherstone adds that the rig was divided into three main categories of fixtures. His real workhorse fixtures for stage and audience light were what he calls his “usual go-to” of Martin by Harman MAC Viper AirFX fixtures for audience light and Robe BMFL Blades and Robe Spiiders for stage key and fill light. “The AirFX give me the ability to achieve both punchy beam effects and wide, even washes of color and texture from the same light,” the LD says. “The BMFL Blades give me the ability to really control the light distribution, high color-rendering index and impressive output. The Robe Spiiders are a new LED fixture to me that combine both impressive stage wash capabilities with novel and innovative effects—pretty

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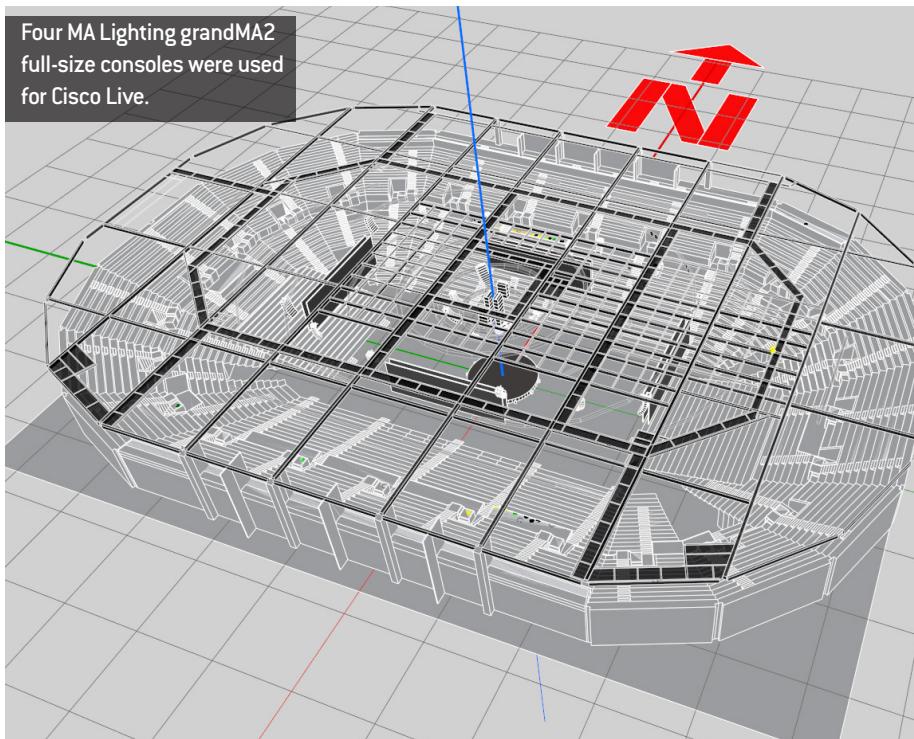
rare in this day and age, when I thought I'd seen everything an LED fixture could do."

Next in the rig were air beam effects. "There is only really one game in town for me in that regard," says Featherstone, referring to Claypaky Mythos fixtures, which were placed on the floor as well as mounted on two of the rig's concentric circles, where they formed a parallel cage of beams enclosing the stage. "Brightness, control, and accuracy: it's the sharp edge in my designs." The third section of the rig is what Featherstone refers to as icing or eye candy. "For this, I turned to the always delightful Ayrton MagicBlade-R, which provided accents as visual interest and are astonishingly bright for such a

compact fixture."

But what made the system really special for Featherstone was the combination of the Glow Motion orbs on their individual winches, as well as the Wi-Fi-controlled audience-worn medallions, and the lasers, provided by StrictlyFX.

"I was ably assisted in my endeavors by my right-hand man and collaborator, lighting director Dennis Connors, as well as winch programmer, Prelite pre-visualization guru, and all around tech genius, Mike Robertson," says Featherstone. Technical support came from production electrician Ryan Babroff, assisted by networking gurus Lacey Taylor, David Strouse, and Steve Thacker.



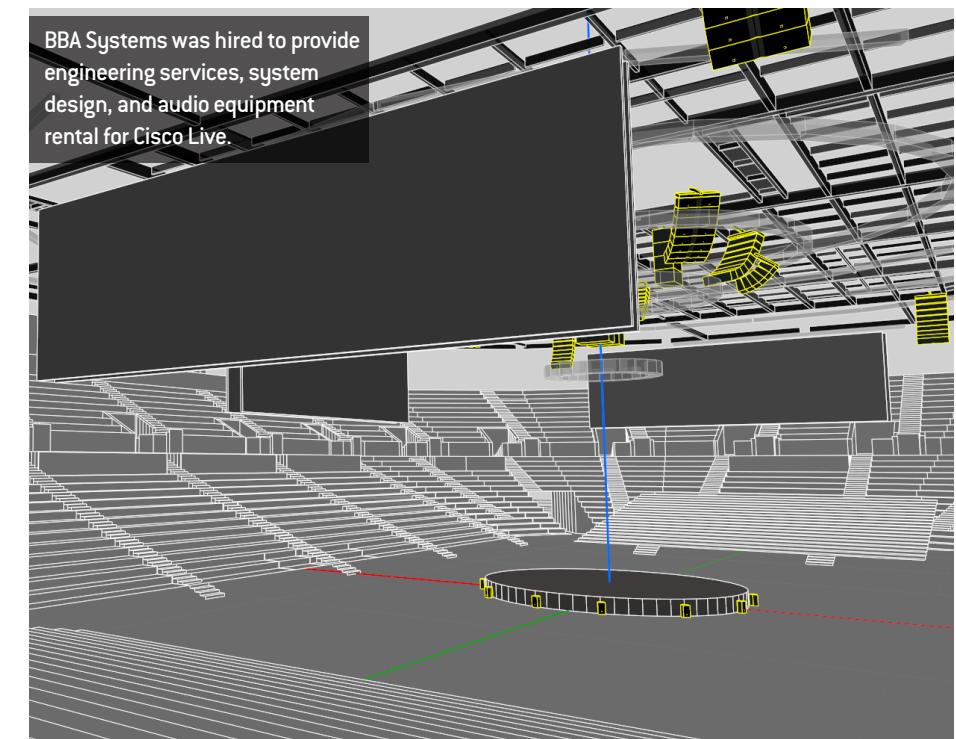
"Robertson built a very detailed MA3D model, including the winches, and we were very happy with the accuracy of the winch movements from offline to online," says Featherstone. "They were correct down to the inch. The d3 Technologies video playback was ably managed by the always delightful Troy Fujimura and the patient Austin Shapley."

Four MA Lighting grandMA2 full-size consoles were used for Cisco Live. One of these consoles, programmed by Connors, ran the main portion of the lighting system. The second system, programmed by Robertson, handled the winches, Glow Motion orbs, and wristbands. The third system was for the tech team, while the fourth con-

sole was on hand for backup.

SOUNDS OF SUCCESS

BBA Systems was hired to provide engineering services, system design, and audio equipment rental for Cisco Live. "Initial design for the project began about four months prior to load-in," says BBA audio project manager Dino Ruggiero. "This project had multiple challenges: designing a visually inconspicuous system that achieved seamless coverage, high speech intelligibility, and consistent SPL over the audience, all while simultaneously not impinging on the sightlines of the visual elements or the four massive, double-sided LED walls."



System designer James Book points out that as BBA is an exclusive user of L-Acoustics products, so all modeling and design for the show was done in Soundvision, which allowed the sound team to produce a highly detailed 3D model of the arena to create the design for the room. "By using Soundvision, we were able to achieve very accurate results quickly, and it allowed us to do basic system tuning and alignment offsite. Soundvision was also used to check for sightline and scenic element clearance. For a show of this size with twenty-four hangs of PA, this was a life saver," he admits.

An extensive Dante network was also part of the set-up. "For Cisco Live, there were many different areas with a variety of routing requirements," says Dante network engineer Philip Reynolds. "The BBA team is a big user of the Audinate Dante protocol. With this network, we can quickly deploy solutions to match any requirements of the show. The whole network is comprised of seven locations, all interconnected with Cisco network switches, with over a mile of opticalCON Quad fiber. We had a total of eighteen Cisco switches running between primary and secondary networks."

Over the network, there were five virtual local area networks [VLANs] running Dante audio, L-Acoustics Network Manager control, RF control, intercom control/audio, network infrastructure management, and a utility VLAN. "For IP management and firewall, we use the Cisco Meraki MX64 security appliance. Multiple access points allowed the systems engineer to adjust the PA system and the A2 ability to cue input channels and manage intercom throughout

the venue," Reynolds explains.

The consoles for Cisco Live consisted of two Yamaha CL5s, one located at FOH and one in the broadcast truck. A Yamaha QL5 was also used backstage for redundancy and monitoring channels on the Dante network. In addition to the Yamaha consoles, a number of Yamaha

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Rio and Focusrite RedNet devices completed the Dante network.

"To interface with the broadcast truck, we used a Focusrite D64R Madi interface with single mode fiber. With this, we could transport all audio channels and four-wire intercom to and from the truck via a fiber link," notes Ruggiero.

Cisco Live

SELECTED LIGHTING GEAR LIST

- Provided by VER
- 180 Martin by Harman MAC Viper AirFX
- 42 Claypaky Mythos 2
- 36 Robe Robin Spiider
- 28 Robe BMFL Blade
- 24 Martin by Harman Rush PAR 2 Zoom
- 6 Martin by Harman MAC Viper Performance
- 176 GlowMotion Orb with Stage Kinetik Winch
- 14 Ayrton MagicBlade-R
- 4 MA Lighting grandMA2 Console
- 176 Stage Kinetik Winch

SELECTED VIDEO GEAR

- Provided by VER
- Flex Solutions Broadcast Truck
- 1 d3 Technologies Media Server
- 256 Uniview BO-6 LED Panel
- 2160 Unilumin UPAD III 2.6 LED panel [Provided by Chris Kimball at Trend Group]
- 3 Barco Encore E2
- 1 Barco EC-200
- 1 Extron XTP II 6400 64x64 Router
- 1 Extron XTP II 6400 16x16 Router
- 1 Riedel MediorNet Metron N 64 Port Routing System
- 4 Riedel MediorNet Compact Pro
- 4 Riedel MediorNet MicroN

SELECTED AUDIO GEAR

- Provided by BBA
- 102 L-Acoustics KARA
- 64 L-Acoustics K2
- 28 L-Acoustics SB28

- 16 L-Acoustics X8
- 24 L-Acoustics LA-RAK
- 20-Shure UHF-R Wireless Microphone
- 1 L-Acoustics Soundvision
- 2 Yamaha CL5 Console
- 1 Focusrite D64R Madi Interface
- Clear-Com HelixNet and Freespeak II Intercom Systems

SELECTED CREDITS

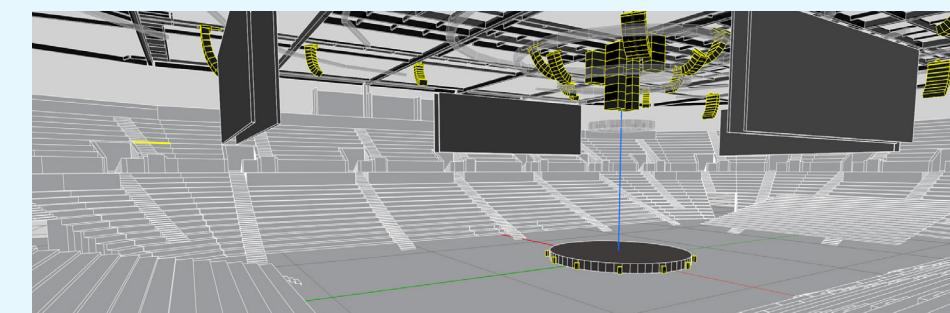
- Julia Mitchell, Executive Producer
- Julie Schnieder, Creative Director
- Joe Russo, Technical Director
- Johniene Papandreas, Set Designer
- John Westermann, VER Video Project Manager
- Donny Lodico, VER Lighting Project Manager

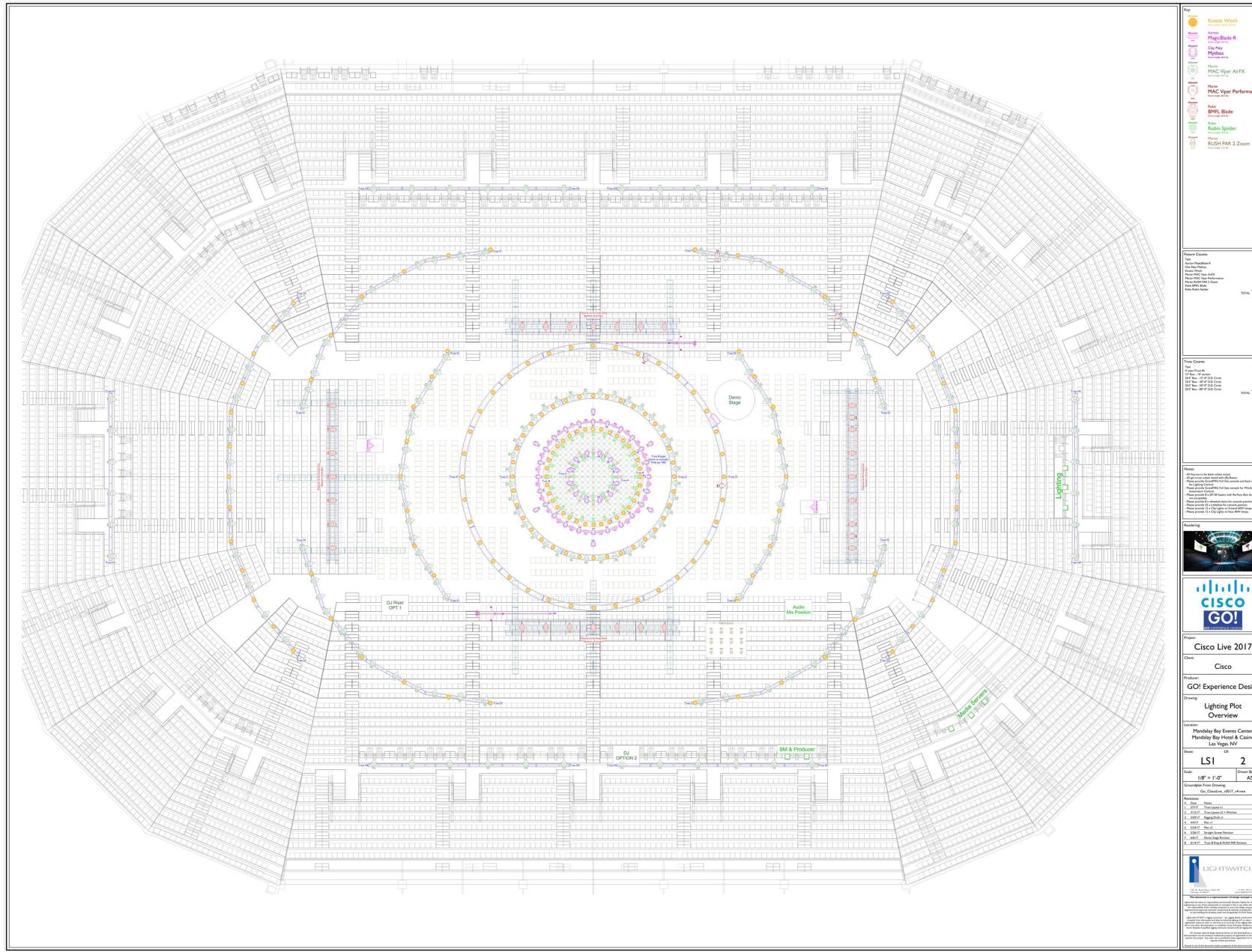
LIGHTSWITCH CREW

- John Featherstone, Principal Lighting and Visual Designer
- Ryan Babroff, Production Electrician
- Dave Strouse, Assistant Electrician
- Lacey Taylor, Networking and Technology Supervisor
- Dennis Connors, Mike Robertson: grandMA2 programmer
- Troy Fujimura, d3 Supervisor
- Austin Shapley, Content Curator and Archivist

BBA CREW

- Dino Ruggiero, A1/Project Manager
- James Book, System Designer and Engineer
- Philip Reynolds, Dante and Network Engineer
- Almir Lejic, A2/Intercom Tech



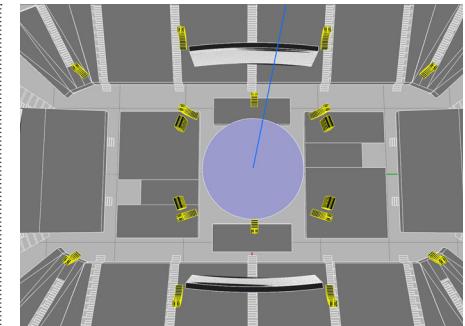
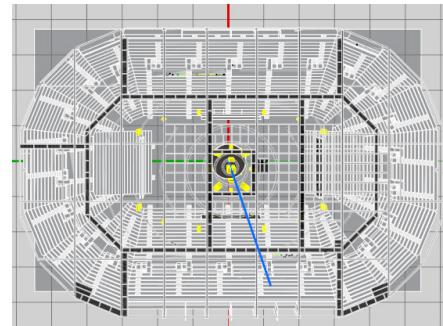
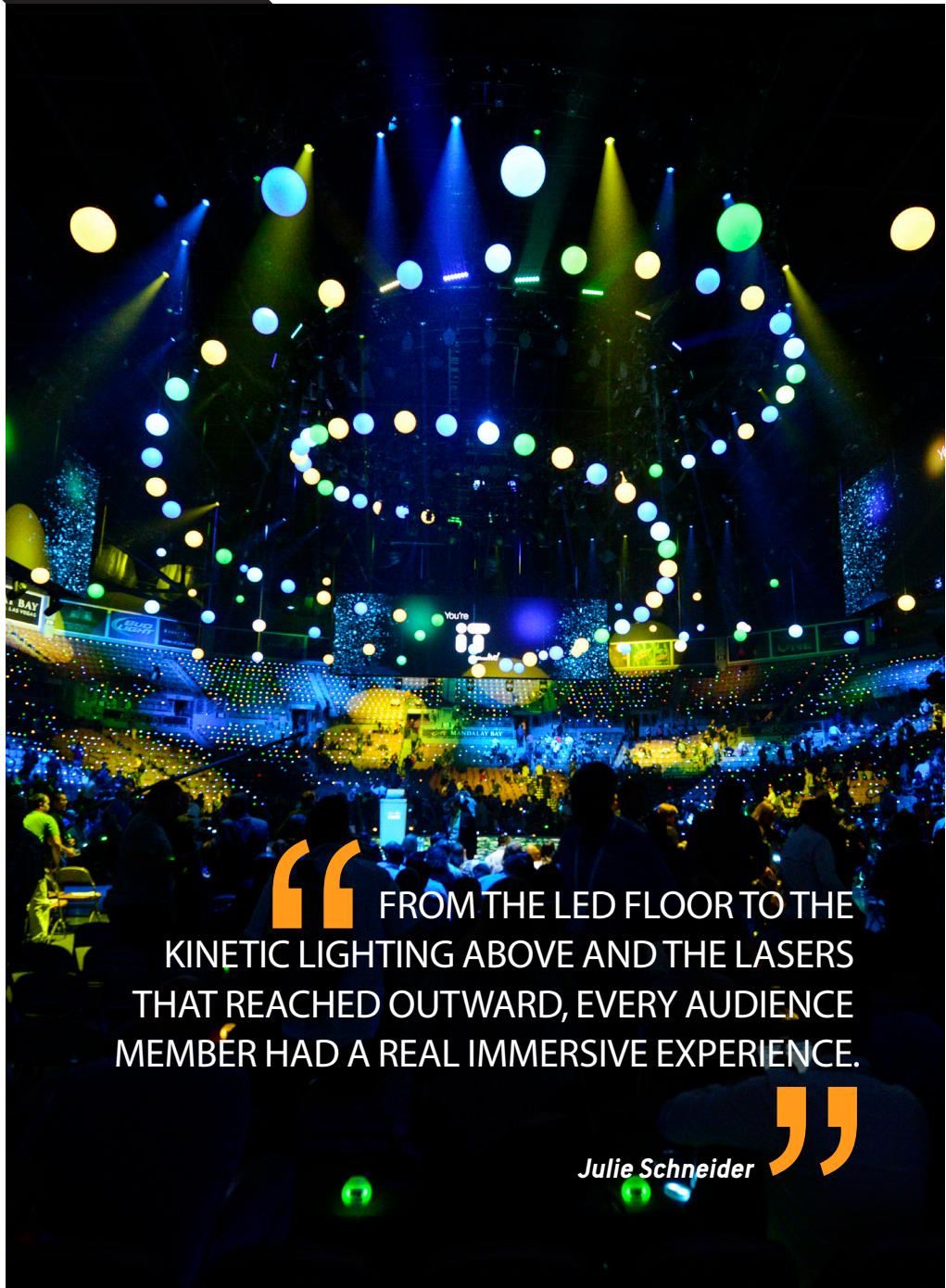


Videos

Time-lapse

Cisco Live 2017 Opening Keynote

Cisco Live Day 1 Opening Sequence



For intercom, BBA deployed extensive Clear-Com HelixNet and Free-speak II systems. “A total of four HelixNet main stations filled with five four-wire cards and three two-wire cards were spread throughout the venue linked via fiber,” says intercom tech Almir Lejlic. “More than 40 HelixNet hard-wired, and 25 Freespeak II stations, were ultimately utilized.”

CREATIVE INSPIRATION

The scope of work for creative director Julie Schneider, she says, “was to own the main stage keynotes throughout the four-day event, from scenic design, lighting, entertainment, walk-in experience, video, and opening. The only things it didn’t include were scripting and graphics for the main presentations.”

Knowing they were going to approach this as an in-the-round production gave the creative team inspiration for bringing the audience into the show, expanding scenic and creative storytelling devices, not just in front of them, but surrounding them. “From

the LED floor to the kinetic lighting above and the lasers that reached outward, every audience member had a real immersive experience,” Schneider says. “Soon after winning the project, we learned of a new technology that Cisco was gearing up to reveal, a new offering that was going to change the network as we all knew it. What better inspiration to design an opening experience around using all the great technology we had at our disposal, creating a reset for the industry starting at Cisco Live?”

Cutting-edge it was, for sure, using a gaggle of entertainment technology for a corporate event. “While the individual items, on their own, might not be the newest tech, how we used them in combination with each other magnified their effect,” confirms Schneider. “The kinetic lighting was such a fun tool to use. It has the ability to completely change the set/mood on a dime, and the seemingly limitless ways the orbs can be choreographed and lit made them a favorite of mine for sure.”

