

Hard Rock Casino Vancouver

VANCOUVER, BC

CASE STUDY | HOSPITALITY

➔ Challenge

Provide amazing audio and video for Vancouver's newest, largest and hottest casino.

➔ Solution

Take advantage of the simplicity, reliability and superb quality of Crestron DigitalMedia™ and Crestron control technology.



Party Like a Rock Star

Vancouver's newest casino and night club really rocks thanks to Crestron technology

“

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— Johnny DeFazio

Hard Rock Casino Vancouver

There's no place like the Hard Rock Casino Vancouver to feel the young, electric spirit of rock 'n' roll.

When the owners of the Boulevard Casino decided that a major upgrade of their property was in order, they rebranded as a more hip and casual Hard Rock Casino, with all of its appeal to a younger generation and those who like to feel young.

To do so required making major changes, including the addition of two new club venues, a new 80,000 square foot gaming floor, and all new sound and video systems.

The technology team, lead by consultant Nathan Haynes of Vancouver-based Current Supply Inc., relied heavily on Crestron DigitalMedia and Crestron control. They knew younger guests would demand the high-impact sound and video that only the very best digital systems can provide.

A much cooler venue

The new Hard Rock Casino Vancouver is owned and managed by Great Canadian Gaming Corporation of Richmond, BC.

“We want people to feel welcome here and to know that this is a place that has everything you go out for: great entertainment, sound, food, brighter lights, as well as a great casino. It's really everything you would go to Las Vegas for, but right here in British Columbia, Canada,” says Vibe Manager Johnny DeFazio.



The change to a rock ‘n’ roll-based venue was made easier by the fact that the Boulevard had already opened a state-of-the-art, 1,000-seat theater in 2006, which regularly hosts rock acts like Little Richard, Buddy Guy, Eric Burdon and The Searchers. Rebranding as a Hard Rock Casino was highly attractive to concertgoers, most of whom stay on property after a show rather than going somewhere else.

Another major draw today is the Asylum Lounge, a new nightclub with a stage and video system appropriate for live local and nationally-known bands, as well as DJs, private dance parties and, especially on hockey nights, live TV sports viewing.

“It’s a modern, edgy kind of place with color-changing LED lighting, a big stage, and a long bar feel to it,” Haynes says.

There’s an open floor in the middle of the club where staff can remove the tables and chairs for dancing at a private function, as well as two VIP rooms in the back, each with independent sound and video systems. Above the stage is a 180” projection screen ideal for a live camera feed, video that a band or DJ may bring, or TV sports. Behind the bar are five TVs from 55” to 80,” two TVs to the right of the stage, one in the back and three more in the VIP rooms.

Every display and audio zone is a separate channel on a huge 96 input, 96 output Crestron DigitalMedia switching matrix, allowing managers and VIP patrons to customize which video and audio sources go where. They can even stream music and video from the Asylum throughout the property, allowing the club to set the evening’s mood.

Another important new venue, the Unlisted Lounge, overlooks the casino and features smaller bands and vocalists, as well as sports viewings. Whereas Asylum can be a separate space closed off with a privacy curtain, Unlisted is open to the gaming floor, four steps up from the casino level.

“

Used together with Crestron’s 3-Series control platform, DM makes for the cleanest, most professional design possible, yet one that’s easy to use. It’s a win-win!”

— Nathan Haynes

Current Supply, Inc.

Patrons can watch the gaming action from Unlisted and guests in the casino can see the acts performing in on its stage. “The venue is very colorful and theatrical,” Haynes adds. “There’s a lot of eye candy, including a ceiling with huge LED backlit discs, gold wall paper and a number of TVs geometrically placed. There’s a lot of sound reinforcement as well.”

The casino itself has been completely rebuilt and features 1,000 of the latest electronic games, 70 new table games, poker and baccarat rooms, a fantastic collection of rock memorabilia, and superb sound and video. Angus McLeod, Manager Technology Implementations and Commissioning for Great Canadian Gaming, headed the effort to upgrade the gaming, security and IT systems.

Nearly 60 TVs and projection systems bring any combination of sources to the gaming floor, including live events from Asylum or Unlisted, hockey, football or



baseball via cable TV, messages and promotions through a SpinetiX digital signage system, or any other audio and video that managers think is appropriate or that guests request.

Hard Rock Casino style

As in any live music venue, Hard Rock Casino management assume that most live acts will bring their own sound and video systems, including amps, loudspeakers, and mixing consoles. The real story at the Hard Rock Casino is its uniquely powerful house audio and video system— and how the performers' sound and video gear can interact with it.

“With the Hard Rock Casino remodel, the owners wanted loud and they wanted ‘wow,’” says Haynes. “They needed live acts to be able to plug into the house system and carry their music throughout the facility.” There are Crestron input plates at seven locations across the property, including the casino and retail store, as well as the night clubs. “A big feature of the system is its ability to support pop-up events anywhere, inputting any kind of audio or video signal,” he adds.

Management streams recorded music into the house system as well, downloading playlists onto local Mac mini devices from the same music provider as the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. “They play it at a good volume and make sure it thumps,” Haynes explains.

The team from Current Supply created a number of unique audio effects within the new sound system, including one Haynes calls gradient audio. “When you first walk into an area, the sound is relatively low but gradually gets louder as you get closer to the middle. You don’t get blasted right away but gradually warm up to the vibe in that room,” says Haynes. The effect gives even recorded sound a live music feel. To make it happen, Haynes created four audio zones for every area. “Even though it’s one zone and one level control on the Crestron touch panel, the speakers are at

different levels within the room.” Haynes says the scheme has worked so well that Canadian Gaming is installing it into several of its other properties.

Sightlines were also a major concern within the venues and throughout the gaming floor. “We had to make sure everyone could see what’s going on, whether a big game is on TV or a band playing, with the visual impact as high as the audio.”

With video being so important at the Hard Rock Casino, it’s probably no surprise that Haynes and his team used Crestron DigitalMedia to carry and switch all the video signals throughout the new facility. It may surprise some, however, that the team used DM[®] to carry and switch all audio signals as well. “We use a Rane DSP and Crown amplification, but it’s all controlled and managed through DigitalMedia,” Haynes explains. “We used DM for audio because we wanted to keep the system as simple and reliable as we could. Crestron switching and transport keeps the need for maintenance down, while DM keeps us invested with just one company that always provides superb support.”

“What I like most about using Crestron,” he adds, “is that I can do anything I can imagine. There’s never a problem with the Crestron systems not handling what I want—No, the problem is deciding where to stop. As long as I can figure out what the customer really needs and wants, not letting myself get carried away is always a win.”

All welcome

Haynes says one of his team’s most important goals was to keep control of all this technology simple, allowing the staff to focus on their guests.

It’s important to understand that, while the move to the Hard Rock Casino was made with a younger demographic in mind, management was determined to hold on to their core customers, many of whom are long past retirement



age. “Obviously that was a concern because we needed to be able to set up the system differently to please different demographics,” DeFazio says. To some degree, people tend to sort themselves out by the time of day they come into the property, with guests expecting more activity and higher volume levels later in the evening and night. Beyond that, DeFazio says the property runs different programming aimed at different guests on various days of the week and times of day.

Staff can make necessary changes quite easily via a series of sound and lighting presets. They access them from five password-protected 10” Crestron touch screens located throughout the facility, plus an additional 7” screen in the retail store. Certain adjustments take place automatically. For example, volume levels gradually increase as the evening progresses and crowds grow.

“When they need to make changes in the audio or video sources or routing, they can do so with just three button presses,” Haynes adds. “First they select the discipline [audio, video or power], then a destination, and finally a source. You can preselect any number of destinations, or select all, and then select the source. That makes it possible to switch every display to the hockey game with just three clicks.” A ‘return to default’ button makes it very easy for a morning shift manager to undo all the custom routings created for an event the night before.

A facility manager or engineer can use a second login to overview system status, fine-adjust audio zone levels, and set up new audio, video and lighting presets. They can also check on projector status and maintenance needs.

Haynes says installation of the new systems went well, but it was a challenging process because it was done over

the course of 10 months, with the Boulevard never closing as it gradually transformed into the Hard Rock Casino. “Basically, they cordoned off one 20,000 square foot section, demolished and rebuilt it, then started on the next.” Collaborating closely with Current Supply, integrator Action Data Communications built a new audio and video head end on the second floor, roughly above the center of the casino, and linked it with an electronic umbilical to the old. “Analyzing what was there and how to keep it alive as we phased in the new systems was a pretty complex task,” he adds.

DeFazio says that the transition to the Hard Rock Casino brand has gone very well, with long-term clients continuing to feel welcome as the property introduces a newer, younger demographic. “We’ve given a great deal of attention to our sound, media, TV programming, lighting, and even temperature control, all of which makes a huge difference to our guests.”

That attention was a big reason why Haynes specified Crestron components throughout this project. “DM is the leader in HD and 4K audio visual distribution,” he explains. “Used together with Crestron’s 3-Series™ control platform, it makes for the cleanest, most professional design possible, yet one that’s easy to use. It’s a win-win!”

Design Consultant
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Programmer
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Photos: Sombilon Photography, Vancouver