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SHARK TALE SWIMS ITS WAY TO VENICE FESTIVAL

Sep 20, 2004 12:00 PM

For the premier of *Shark Tale*, Dreamworks latest animated creation, at the 2004 Venice Film Festival was

staged in style in the historic Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square). Show producers Bob Collins and Sean Glen of California's Me3 Productions worked with UK-based technical production specialists Andy Peat Associates (AKA) and Venetian production company TESE to pull off the major feat in technical production.

It was the first time ever a show of this nature was granted permission to take place in the Piazza San Marco, a world heritage site, Venice's central tourist attraction, and home to thousands of pigeons.

The audience was joined by the film's star "voice over talent," including Will Smith, Robert De Niro, and Angelina Jolie plus the film's producers and directors. In addition to 500 VIPs, approximately 5,500 local guests also enjoyed the evening—free—courtesy of tickets distributed via a local newspaper lottery.

Production manager Andy Peat and production assistant Bryony Wells coordinated the rigging, lighting, audio, staging, scaffolding, power, and trucking logistics. This including 52 technical and 40 local crew members, and fourteen 45' trucks worth of equipment. It took 8 long days and nights of constant work by all departments to transform the Piazza San Marco for the premier. Site Managers for APA were Barry Thornhill (days) and Garry Wilson (nights). Technical contractors included Summit Steel (rigging), Essential Lighting (lighting), Britannia Row (audio), Aggreko (power), Blitz Video (cameras/PPU), EST (trucking) and LimeLite SRL from Rome, who supplied all scaffolding and scenery.

"This event was a massive technical challenge for all departments," says t Peat. "Working in St. Mark's Square isn't easy so teamwork and communication were crucial to the project's success, and it's a great testament to all concerned that we worked together to produce such a spectacular result."

Jumping the Shark: Logistics of Set Up

Venice's historic canals and the historic square made logistics even more involved than usual. Since Venice has no roads, only water canals, the trucks were loaded onto barges at the docks and towed to a specially built jetty outside the Plazzo Ducale; since no fork-lifts were allowed in the Square, the contents were then pushed 400 meters into the Piazza. EST also sent 6 trucks containing lighting, sound, and rigging from the UK on staggered journeys to circumvent the assorted European local holiday driving restrictions.

There were four flatbed load-fulls of mains cables and generators, three truck loads of Layher scaffolding and scenery and one of projection and screen equipment. These loads came to a second dock on a barge with on-board crane.

Projecting the Shark

Shark Tale was projected onto a massive custom-built 26mx14m matt-white Harkness Hall Screen. It was supported by the world's largest inflatable outdoor screen structure, which was designed and engineered by German-based AIRSCREEN. The entire structure measures 30mx20m. It was made from a customized fabric-reinforced PVC and can be inflated in 15 minutes using two small air pumps. Weighing just 1,500kg and ballasted by 48 tonnes of water, the screen frame structure can withstand wind speeds of up to 35 km/h.

The *Shark Tale* movie was stored on an Avika hard drive supplied by digital cinema software specialists Avika Technology from Santa Monica, CA. It was projected via a doubled-up pair of Barco DP100 projectors using DLP CinemaTM technology, supplied directly from Barco's headquarters and tech'd by Dirk de Weerd.

A three camera PPU, supplied by Blitz Video, was used for pre-show IMAG to capture the talent, presenters, audience, etc. This was beamed onto the screen, along with *Shark Tale* trailer footage and video visuals from the M-Box digital media server run from the lighting desk, directed by Rob Fender and engineered by Mick Jones.

Sound in the Square

The *Shark Tale* soundtrack was broadcast to the audience via FM radios, complete with headsets which were given to the audience as they arrived in the Square. The process of setting up an official Italian broadcast station for the event was coordinated by radio and sound expert Bob Whyley. Guests could select between an Italian and English soundtrack. The only audio element emanating from the large Turbosound PA during the film was sub bass.

Designed by Derrick Zieba and supplied by Britannia Row, the sound system was also used for pre- and post-show presentations and speeches. Zieba used a Yamaha DM2000 to mix sound. The PA, consisting of left and right front stacks with three delays each side of the square, was also engineered to act as a full audio back-up system in case of blips with the radio broadcast, but wasn't needed since the broadcast ran smoothly.

Lighting

LD Manny Treeson worked closely with programmer/operator Christian Hibbard. Using 80 Martin MAC 2000 washes, 8 MAC 2000 profiles, and 8 Irious Pro Space Cannon searchlights, the lighting scheme included the tasteful illumination of the Piazza San Marco's famous architectural features including the Campanile tower. Hibbard operated the show using a Virtuoso VX console. All lighting equipment was supplied by London-based Essential Lighting, who's crew Chief was Simon Dunnell.

Rigging

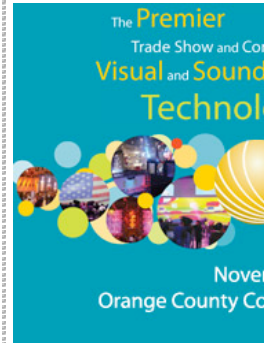
Summit Steel supplied the vast quantities of rigging required to transform the Piazza into an auditorium capable of receiving a state-of-the-art production. This included building the main left and right PA wings: four legged ground support structures that also accommodated several lighting fixtures and six 12m Summit Smartmasts for sound and lighting rigging points along the Piazza.

At the entrance, Summit constructed an intricate 12-legged ground support system, draped with signage and banners. The 5-strong rigging team also built a 15m goal-post gantry above the FOH mixing and projection position to give additional lighting positions.

The production required 1.2 megawatts of generated power, which was supplied by Aggreko and managed by Stewart Parker. The four generator sets were craned off of their trucks onto a floating pontoon which was moored 200m away from the Square. The electricity was run in using approximately 6km of 120mm Powerlok mains cable that needed three specially constructed trussing bridges to traverse waterways and roads. Once in the square, the Aggreko team also supplied all the distribution to various locations and departments, a feat that alone involved another 2km of cable and massive amounts of distro.

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