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Manning's Restaurant in Harrah's® New Orleans combines football history with live television broadcasts

Background

The Manning family and New Orleans have a magical connection. During his ten years with the Saints, Archie Manning was the marquee player. Since his retirement, he has served as a sports commentator for local and national media. New Orleans has also taken his sons into its heart, and although they don't quarterback for the Saints, in many ways Peyton Manning's Peyton Manning's Super Bowl® ring is New Orleans's ring, and Eli Manning's second Super Bowl MVP has made him a New Orleans MVP as well.

Given that history, when Rob Pourciau of JBA Consulting Engineers got the chance to design the audio/video systems for the new Manning's Restaurant on Fulton Street, he knew it would be a very special assignment. "It's not just another video project," he explains. "For me it's the connection to New Orleans and to Archie and his family."

Special too was the owners' request to include a sports anchor desk and four screen by four screen video wall in the restaurant, which serves as a set for local and national TV and radio broadcasts. To ensure that the audio/video systems would serve the needs of broadcasters, as well as patrons, Pourciau designed them using Crestron DigitalMedia™.

The End Zone

According to Kennedy Smith, Marketing Director for Harrah's Casino of New Orleans, which owns Manning's Restaurant, the anchor desk is just one of several touches that give patrons an extraordinary experience when they visit.

First, there's the location, across from Harrah's® on Fulton Street, near the Mississippi River and a short walk from the French Quarter, the business district and the Convention Center. The restaurant is filled with Manning sports and family memorabilia, and it boasts a famous New Orleans chef, Anthony Spizale, who has created a "Southern cuisine with tailgating twists," according to Smith.



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The “End Zone,” an area with 19 leather recliners facing the broadcast anchor desk, is very much the focus of the first floor of the restaurant. The video wall, 13 ½ feet wide and 7 ½ feet tall with 16 displays, serves as a background for the on-air personality during TV broadcasts and as a supersized TV the rest of the time.

In creating the AV systems for the venue, Pourciau says he didn't want to “decorate with TVs” as sports bars typically do. “Although there are plenty of flat-panel displays, I wanted to accentuate the French Quarter architecture, as well as the sports viewing experience.”

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Although Fred Martinez of Harrah's designed a broadcast LED lighting system for the End Zone, he didn't include cameras or other broadcast gear. Instead, the design team tried to make it as easy as possible for production crews to bring their own. “We needed a modular and expandable setup,” says Pourciau, “wired to handle broadcast-quality digital signals with an input for a production system, plus an outside connection for a mobile remote truck and satellite uplink.”

Pourciau says he was able to accommodate all of these requirements plus the AV for the restaurant, including its HD cable and satellite feeds, with a single Crestron DigitalMedia network. “DigitalMedia gave us one-wire transport for high-definition video, audio and Ethernet to the displays, plus the HD-SDI input and output we needed for the broadcast systems,” he explains. “It also handles EDID very nicely and removes any concerns about HDCP copy protection.”

“Harrah’s also wanted the ability to add additional inputs in the future, as they expect the facility to grow. DigitalMedia is very expandable and a logical choice for that reason,” adds Pourciau.

Pourciau used a Crestron processor, together with two six-inch and two wireless eight-inch touch screens, to control all of the routing, all of the lighting (including LED broadcast lighting installed in the End Zone), the source and channel selection for each TV, and the source and volume levels for each zone of the sound system. John McGovern of Covington, LA-based PSX, Inc. handled programming and built the equipment racks.

Best Seat for the Big Game

The main floor includes a private dining room called Archie’s Room, with a 50” flat panel TV and surround sound, plus an exterior courtyard dining area with four 46” Samsung TVs in weatherproof housings.

Upstairs is the Stadium Club, a three-way divisible banquet room able to host up to 300 people, opening to a beautiful wrap-around balcony. It has its own kitchen, its own 42” Samsung TVs, its own zones in the sound system, plus computer inputs and wireless microphones.

Manning’s opened two weeks before the Super Bowl® XLVI. “It was a fantastic way to introduce ourselves to the public,” notes Smith.

The owners are very pleased with the restaurant’s AV capabilities, especially the Crestron control and signal management systems. Jim Boa Olander, whose in-house staff did most of the installation,

explains that, “Certainly when you have the number of TVs and the number of sources that we have in our facility, the need to route music, game audio and the broadcast signals, and the need to be able to control the audio and lighting in the sports desk area can be a challenge.”

“There was a lot of discussion on how to make this work properly, and we all felt that Crestron would be the best choice,” adds Olander. “The install went very well, with all systems functioning properly for the opening, even though the construction and décor was not 100% complete.”

Next year New Orleans will host the Super Bowl, and Manning’s, less than a mile from the Mercedes-Benz Super Dome®, will no doubt be in the thick of the action.

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