

Sight and Sound

Audio, video and digital media add drama, impact at Scheels

By Marianne Wilson

From the sheer size of the space to the variety of its attractions, Scheels' newest outpost, in Legends at Sparks Marina, Sparks, Nev., is in a class by itself. The 295,000-sq.-ft. emporium, billed by the Fargo, N.D.-based retailer as the world's largest all-sports store, combines an extensive selection of sportswear, footwear and sporting goods with a big dose of entertainment (see related story). Among its most notable features: an integrated media experience that uses high-impact audio, video and digital signage to evoke the Scheels brand and engage customers.

"Everything in the store, including the music and video, is designed to make Scheels a true destination location," said Darrell Champagne, senior VP of operations/audio and video systems services, PlayNetwork, Redmond, Wash., which supplied all the store's media assets, visual and audio, along with all hardware design and system design, integration and installation.

The integrated audio and video programming is designed to envelop customers and enhance the overall shopping experience. The audio component includes eight customized music programs that can be routed to different zones of the enormous space.

"Scheels carved out 15 different zones unique in regard to the music programming, with the programming tailored to whatever vibe they are trying to create in the zone," Champagne explained. "The music programs are easily routed to the zones via touchscreen technology in the main AV room."

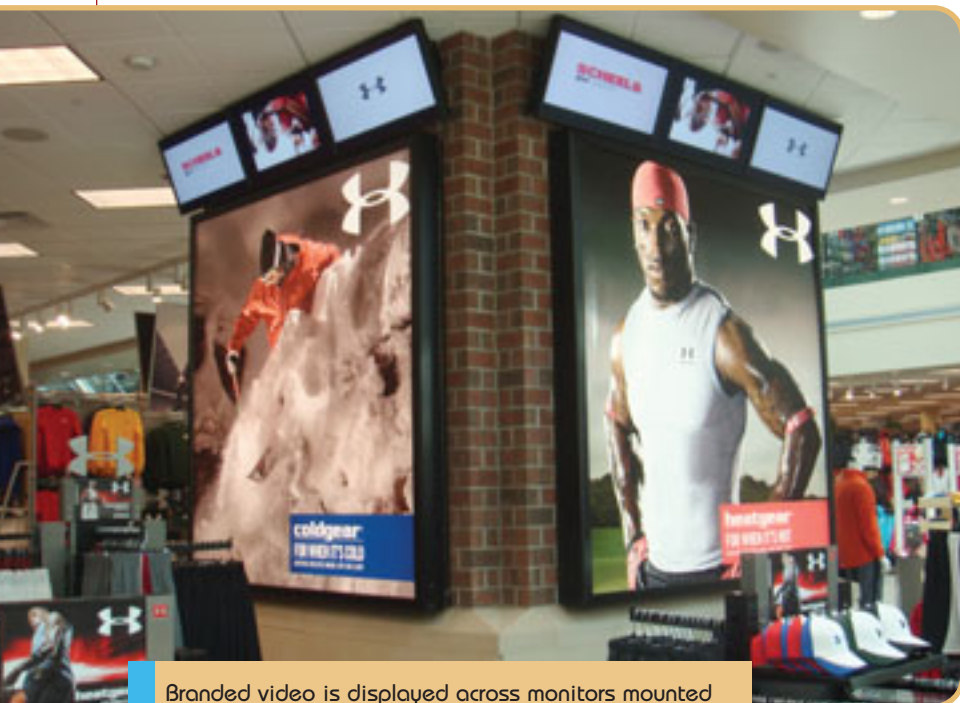


Scheels in Legends at Sparks Marina, Sparks, Nev., combines extensive selection with lots of entertainment.



The store's restaurant, for example, features a background of casual alternative adult music. Elsewhere in the store, younger shoppers are listening to more teen-oriented rock. Depending on the zone, some shoppers hear classical music.

The store uses 800 speakers (11 different types) to ensure good sound quality that doesn't leak from one audio zone to another. Music is preprogrammed in terms of loudness by zone.



Branded video is displayed across monitors mounted on four large columns.

“For example, the music plays a bit louder in the young women’s apparel area than it might in some other areas,” Champagne said.

The store boasts two huge aquariums, which come complete with sound effects.

“Along with supplying the sound effects around the aquariums, we also supplied the audio for the digital-signage elements,” Champagne noted.

Video: There are more than 100 42-in. plasma TVs located throughout the store. The monitors are dedicated to Scheels programming (Scheels TV), which includes a mix of brand messages and promotional messages from major suppliers.

“There are 39 programs that can be distributed to any of the TVs,” Champagne said.

In addition, branded lifestyle video footage (specific to various vendors) is displayed across 36 40-in. high-definition LCD monitors mounted on four large columns. The columns are located on the first floor.

“Three sides of each column are covered with three monitors,” Champagne added. “The displays are very impactful and one of the first things customers see when they enter the

store.”

The video content on the column can be synchronized to run across the three displays on any one side.

The in-house restaurant, Grandma Ginna’s, displays its fare via four 40-in. and four 50-in. digital menu boards. “The breakfast, lunch and dinner menus are preprogrammed into the system by dayparts so that the board flips automatically. The system also gives users the ability to easily change content on the fly to accommodate daily specials and the like.

“The sheer magnitude of the site, the number of entertainment areas and the integration of media within and throughout the store environment is amazing,” Champagne added.

Jason Loney, VP of store development for the 23-store Scheels, praised the

PlayNetwork staff for understanding the company’s needs.

“Throughout the entire process, from early concepts to install, they have made it their business to understand our brand culture,” Loney said. Their ability to translate that brand into music and visual elements that enhance the overall experience has been instrumental to our creating a one-of-a-kind shopping destination. ■

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Destination Retail

The new Scheels store, in Sparks, Nev., has something for everyone, including the largest selection of sportswear and sporting goods ever offered under one roof.

“Scheels has always stood for sports and the active lifestyle, but our newest location is truly a shopping adventure unlike anything customers in the Reno-Sparks area have ever experienced,” said Jason Loney, VP of store development, Scheels, Fargo, N.D., which operates 23 stores in eight states.

The 295,000-sq.-ft. store serves as the anchor tenant for the Legends of Sparks Marina Center, a new, 1 million-sq.-ft. retail and entertainment center. The sports superstore includes a customer tram; two 16,000-gal. salt-water and freshwater aquariums; an interactive wildlife experience; a 35-ft.-tall, 800-sq.-ft. “Wildlife Mountain” taxidermy display; and a brightly lit 65-ft., 16-car Ferris wheel (a restored 1930s model) that fills the main atrium. The “Walk of Presidents” features 14 life-size models of American presidents.

There are shooting galleries; an indoor archery lane; and golf, hockey, soccer and other sport simulators where customers can test their skills. And if patrons get hungry, there is an on-site restaurant and a fudge shop.

Additionally, Scheels has an extensive service area, offering everything from bike repairs and skate sharpening to ski/board waxing and racquet stringing.