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Voodoo Lounge:

Adding a New Vantage Point to a Popular Music Festival

The Voodoo Music Experience, the three-day mashup of rock, jazz, indie, and other musical genres, returned to New Orleans in October. The architect and designer Stefan Beese is in charge of the festival's look; this year, he came up with the LOA Structure, a viewing stand/concession area, which also served as a logo for the entire event.

The structure, Beese notes, was constructed out of six shipping containers—each of them 40' long—which, on one side, provided ample seating for festivalgoers, with room below for a VIP lounge. The word “voodoo” was carved out of the walls—both backwards and forwards.

Stephen Rehage, the event's producer and Beese's business partner, says, “The question was, how do you take what you'd normally do at a musical festival and make it more interesting. Stefan said, ‘Why not use containers?’” Beese adds, “It was a kind of recycling aspect; I was interested in building an infrastructure that could be used again.



“A main goal was to provide a grandstand where you don't have to leave to get a drink,” Beese continues. “And, being cantilevered out 10', you also have a great view.” He notes that, facing out, the bottom containers served as a concession stand for the public while, inside the LOA Lounge, VIPs reclined on ottomans, creating a club-like atmosphere. “Usually at festivals, these sorts of structures are eyesores,” he notes.

In addition, Beese worked with the Life is Art Foundation to set up a large-scale exhibit on the premises, with installations that included a fluorescent sign spelling out “OK,” and a rotating cone made up of light rods. “There were 25 international artists taking part in a curated festival,” notes Rehage. Also, Beese designed a sign of 12'

Photo credit: Melissa Shelton

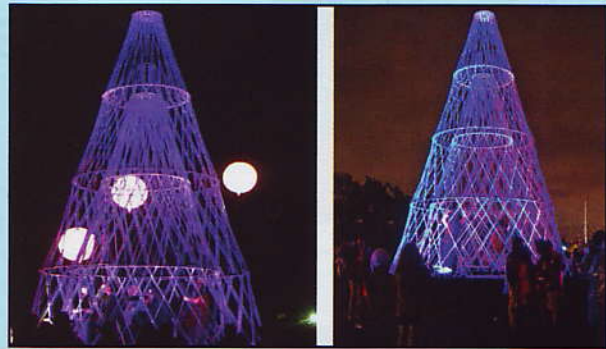
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box-welded sheet metal cut-out letters spelling "voodoo," which provided an entry to the festival. Illuminated weather balloons provided more visual stimulus.

The LOA Lounge was lit with ten Martin MAC 250s, 30 Philips Color Kinetics ColorBlasts, and ten Chauvet COLORados. (The lighting, Beese notes, remained in the purple-pink range, the palette of the festival's marketing materials.) The container deck also featured ten pieces of Tomcat box truss, housing five MAC 250s to illuminate the sunsails at night. The nearby trees were lit with 60 James Thomas PAR 64s. The LOA entrance sign, which featured 100' of Global Truss, was lit with 24 COLORados, as were the nearby cabanas. Lighting was controlled by an Avolites Pearl Expert console.

With 32 hours to load in, the event posed many challenges. "The weather didn't help," says Beese. "It rained before and during the festival. Each art installation required at least two crew members for set-up, and we had more crew around, for additional help."

Lighting gear was supplied by See-Hear Productions. Patrick Theriot was the programmer. Andy Ragan, Jackie Johnson, and Andrew Castile were technicians. Container construction was provided by Bev Inc., with scaffold components supplied by Center Staging, Inc.

"The majority of the party happened in front of the stage," says Beese, "then you looked back and there were people dancing on the container structure around the balloons." Look for more visual invention next year. ☺

Photo credit: Andrew Goetz (left) and Melissa Shelton (right)



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