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## Essence Music Festival 2009

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### 2010 Excellence Awards Concerts Nominee

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Essence Music Festival is a three-day concert and cultural seminar series held in the Louisiana Superdome and Louis Armstrong Convention Center, respectively. It is the largest African-American music and empowerment event in the country, and 2009 had the highest attendance in Essence history, with top performers including *Beyoncé*, Lionel Richie, Anita Baker, Ne-Yo, John Legend, and Maxwell.



Photos by Andrew Goetz

The concept was to have the stage be more readable as one sculpture. Most important was achieving one fluent look that read horizontally from left to right, and vertically from the top of the stage down through the floor. This required avoidance of free-floating screens by framing and connecting the screens, creating a winged effect. In addition, the stage design needed to be flexible enough to accommodate four to five acts per night. It's necessary to swap in and out the individual needs of each performer and crew, while maintaining the integrity of the overall festival design. In addition, the stage needed to function as a large curtain hiding two separate areas from the audience; stage-left served as a work deck to stage all equipment for each act, and stage-right a VIP bleacher with an additional backstage area.

The 2009 event was the festival's 15th anniversary; the design was an abstract reflection of a celebration and timeline, to show the significance of this recurrent festival with celebratory imagery, like fireworks, in a digital time tracing format. Element Labs Versa Tubes were chosen as vessels for this light traveling appearance, light strokes fading in and out, creating a circuit-board-like effect. The Versa Tubes became part of the video controlled elements, instead of lighting elements, as these docked in visually into the Barco MPix curved LED panels; the curved MPix lines docked onto a Barco MTrix LED curtain left and right of stage, integrating the I-Mag Barco SLite screens.



2010 Excellence Awards nominee, Corporate Event: Essence Music Festival 2009

The challenge was programming the light to travel through the Versa Tubes continuously, with the additional element of creating a digital texture of "fillings" in between these lines on the MTrix screens. Like the pulsating comets of light racing through the circuit board, these effects could shrink, grow, and disappear.

We created vignettes for artists by finding specific elements to emphasize the individual style of that particular musician (such as digital rain backdrop for Ne-Yo and candlelight atmosphere for John Legend). The aim was to achieve your own festival identity and overall look without taking away from the individual character of the artists.

The circuit-board design was also transferred over into the VIP lounge, giving the feeling of not only being part of the performances but on the actual stage. Light tape was installed onto the makeshift floor, creating multiple lit paths. These complimented the lines on the main stage.

### Design Team

Production designer: Stefan Beese (RE:BE Design)

3D design: Seyavash Zohoori

Video lighting design: Ray Zeigler

Set lighting design: John Clarke

### Video Crew

Media server programmer: Dan Valcich

Graphic artist: Dustin McCollum

### XL Video Crew

LED engineer: Gary Madura

LED Technicians: Steve Otten, Prince Tilahun, Luke Pilato, David Chapman

### Lighting Crew

Ron Fietmaster, Rob Chase, Lance Dennis, John Bailey, Matt Gassey

### Rigging

Steve Brown, Rhino Staging

### Vendors

Video: Event Producers, XL Video, Visibility Media

Lighting: Premier Global Production Company (Steven Creech Anderson)

Rigging: Rhino Staging, Inc.

Soft Goods/MP Lounge: Mardi Gras Productions Inc.

### Equipment

1,975 Barco MTrix Panel

36 Barco TopMx Panel (MPix Modules)

2 Barco SLite 10 XP Screen

312 Element Labs Versa Tube

1 Pixled F-30 Screen

1 Hibino Chromatek 6mm Screen

1 Barco High End Systems Wholehog 3

1 Barco High End Systems Hog3PC

7 SAMSC Catalyst PMv4 Media Server

2 MALighting grandMA2 Console

30 Martin Professional MAC 2000 Profile

30 Martin Professional MAC 2000 Wash

32 Barco/High End Systems x.Spot Extreme

4 Novalight High Ground

6 Coemar Panorama Cyc

7 Mble Richardson Molefay 8-Light

6 ETC Source Four Ellipsoidal 19°

2 ETC Sensor+ 48-Way Dimmer Rack

2 Motion Labs 60-Way 208V Distro

1 ProPower 48-Way 208V Distro

30 1-Ton Hoist

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