



Advancing The Art Of Lighting

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 25, 2008

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WYBRON FEEDBACK SYSTEM EASES MAINTENANCE FOR ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISE SHIP

Cruise ships offer a taste of the good life – sipping margaritas by the pool, exploring exotic ports of call, dining on tasty cuisine.

But on Independence of the Seas, the newest and biggest ship in the Royal Caribbean fleet, the voyages aren't so relaxing for the ship's lighting techs, who work seven days a week to dazzle guests with exciting live shows.

Enter Wybron's Infogate – the feedback software that lightens the workload by monitoring and troubleshooting an entire rig.

As part of Wybron's Infotrace feedback system, Infogate enables lighting equipment on board Independence of the Seas to talk back to its operators using the industry-standard two-way communication protocol Remote Device Management, or RDM. It constantly monitors the equipment, keeping an eye on any problems or maintenance issues.

That's especially helpful on a cruise ship like Independence of the Seas, where the lighting crew swaps out twice a year because each staffer signs a six-month contract. The techs spend half a year getting to know the equipment, monitoring it and maintaining it, then leave – taking their knowledge with them.

With Infogate, that knowledge stays on the ship, benefitting future crew members.

“We can track scroller wear and tear, what strings are in which scrollers, identify each fixture individually and basically track how the rig is holding up,” says lighting technician Michael Calder, who's now headed to Royal Caribbean's Liberty of the Seas – another Infogate ship.

Independence of the Seas launched in April 2008 as the world's biggest cruise ship. Weighing a staggering 160,000 tons and extending the length of three American football fields, Independence can carry nearly 4,000 passengers and 1,400 crew within its 15 decks. It spends the summer months cruising the waters around the UK and Europe, then heads to the Caribbean for the winter.

Guests on board find no shortage of activities, with a water park, surf pool, rock climbing wall, full-size boxing ring, miniature golf course, and more. And, of course, there are the live productions, which enchant audiences in the ship's main theatre and ice skating rink. (Yes, you can ice skate on a moving ship.)

Independence of the Seas has two Infogate systems – one in the main theatre and the other in the ship's ice skating rink.

Infogate comes in especially handy with this slippery situation. It's difficult to access the lighting equipment hanging above the rink, with guests skating there periodically in addition to multiple ice shows and rehearsals.

And because it's ice, techs can only access the gear above the rink with one small Genie lift – and only when the ship's in port.

But Infogate lets the techs troubleshoot problems from the ground, without stepping onto the ice and soaring into the air on the lift, Calder says.

“The less time spent in the air, the better,” he says.

Infogate – and the entire Infotrace feedback system – puts a wealth of valuable information into the hands of its lighting techs. Gathering data from each device on a rig, Infogate can warn users of impending disaster and help them pinpoint problems fast.

Infogate also lets users assign DMX addresses to every piece of lighting equipment on a rig, simplifying a task that typically requires a visit to the fixture itself by climbing up to a truss or pipe.

The Infotrace system leapt onto the lighting scene in 2006 by immediately earning “best product” awards at LDI, PLASA, and the Worship Facilities Conference and Expo. Wybron continues to improve the feedback system by streamlining its operations in response to the wishes of customers – and adding new features.

Wybron recently introduced Infogate for the iPhone, which lets users troubleshoot and manipulate their rigs from a tiny handheld device that can roam onstage, backstage, and beyond. And the latest version of the Infogate software also works with another two-way communications protocol: ACN, or Architecture for Control Networks, which is being used by Electronic Theatre Controls.

ETC is just one of the many manufacturers embracing feedback alongside other big names such as Martin, Robe, and High End Systems.

“As end users see how valuable feedback really is, they're demanding it from manufacturers,” said Wybron President Keny Whitright.

For more information visit www.wybron.com.

ABOUT WYBRON

Wybron designs and manufactures innovative, practical, and high-quality lighting equipment for some of the biggest entertainment productions in the world. Wybron remains committed to standardized two-way communication protocols that help users more easily manage their lighting rigs – sending valuable feedback from your lighting equipment to your laptop.

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PHOTOS: (cruise1.jpg and cruise1.jpg) Ice shows on board Royal Caribbean's Independence of the Seas. Photos courtesy of Michael Calder.