



ROCK SOLID

SIGNAGE SYSTEM MUST FUNCTION 100% OF TIME AT MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MUSEUM IN PHOENIX.

by Don Kreski

“Everyone has had the experience of entering a museum, trying to interact with a piece of technology and it just doesn’t work... We wanted our museum to function at a higher level, to make sure that, at any point in time, 100% of our systems are running.”

The Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Arizona

That’s how Mark McCauley, Director of Technology at the new Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) in Phoenix, describes his priorities in buying AV systems. His concern is well founded: he describes sound and video as roughly half of the experience at MIM.

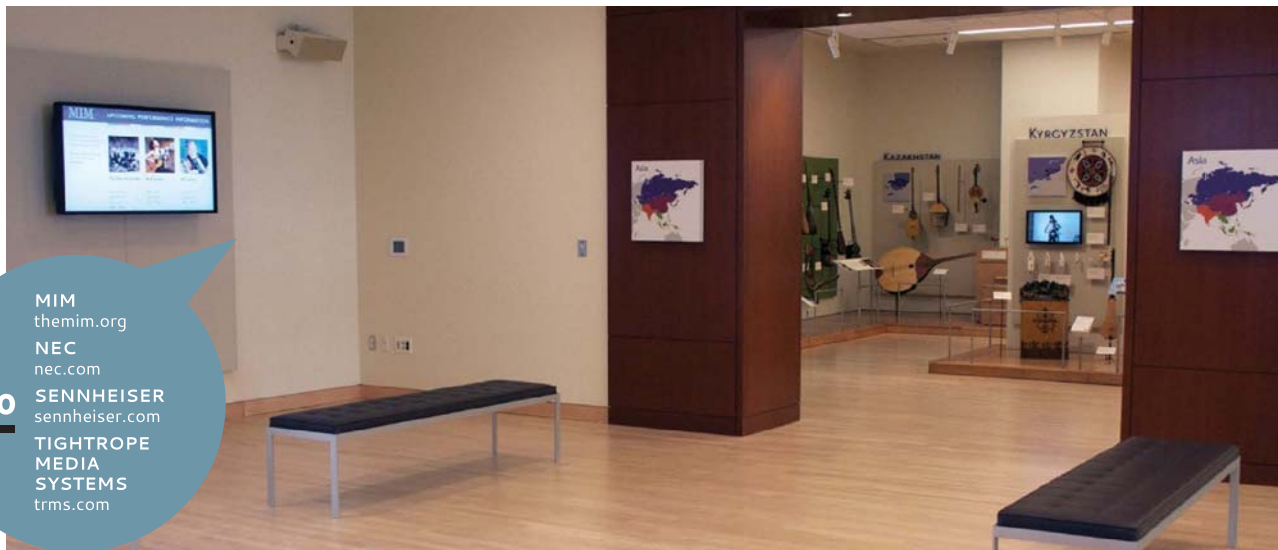
Opened last April, the facility is the world’s first museum of musical instruments, with over 14,000 instruments and related artifacts from every part of the world (3,000 on display). A musical instrument is not just something to look at. The museum includes a performing arts center and a digital audio/video system which together allow visitors to see and hear the instruments in use, both in live and prerecorded performances. An

extensive digital signage system informs visitors about various MIM events, teaches them about the work of instrument conservators, and provides a medium for performers and rental groups to communicate with their audiences during special events. Mark McCauley says that, of 300 exhibits in the museum, 248 now include prerecorded performances.

CULTURAL TREASURES

Visit the African Gallery and you’ll see a collection of traditional instruments commissioned for MIM by curator Amanda Villepastour. She not only traveled to Nairobi to purchase a set of drums, for example, but she brought a film crew to record the local people playing them. In another part of the museum, you can see the Steinway John Lennon used to compose “Imagine” and the guitar Eric Clapton used to write “Layla” — and watch a video of each of them performing these works.

Navigating these videos is very simple for the visitor. Every guest picks up a Sennheiser GuidePORT headset at the entrance, which keeps track of its own location and switches radio frequencies automatically. Walk into an exhibit and the headset tunes itself to the video playing on an NEC high definition display. “We used relatively simple, solid-state video players from CE Labs,” says Ryan Baumann, project manager for AV integrator Sound Image of Phoenix. “We also have all of the videos available on a network server, so if there should be a problem, they can download the clip to a



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MIM
themim.org
NEC
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