

InfoChannel Runs an 85 Foot LED Billboard 24/7

Scala Software Drives Custom-Built Billboard at the New Home of the Academy Awards

LOS ANGELES, CA – Head west on Hollywood Boulevard from its storied intersection with Vine and you are soon to find the next great intersection in this entertainment mecca.

Hollywood & Highland is not just the name of a street corner, however. It is the name of a magnificent new entertainment and retail complex that opened in November 2001, the centerpiece of the revitalization of this storied town. Emblematic of this rejuvenation is the fact that the Academy Awards ceremony now actually takes place in Hollywood – for the first time in 42 years. The new home for the ceremonies is the 3,500 seat Kodak Theater, a main feature of the development and a grand, modern complement to the famous Grauman's Chinese Theater nearby.

What you first see as you approach this two-block square, \$615 million complex is one of the world's largest high-resolution displays - an explosion of motion and color that befits not just the grandeur of the structure, but the grandeur of Hollywood itself. The screen, measuring six feet high by 85 feet long, literally wraps around the corner of the building.

The sign was originally envisioned by developer TrizecHahn as a smaller, monochromatic information "reader board." But the development team recognized an opportunity to give the sign a new dimension, literally and figuratively. They settled on an approach that greatly enhances the overall project and is already delivering tangible business benefits to the developer.

According to Adam Bleibtreu, founder of marketing services firm Creative Chaos and an adviser on the project, "Our objective was to explore incremental revenue opportunities from media-based assets," said Bleibtreu. "We wanted to entertain and educate consumers, but also to drive substantial advertising revenue through the medium," he added.

While the cost of this high-resolution display is in the neighborhood of \$2 million, the revenue it generates is expected to recover that in just over two years of operation. In a given hour, some 35 to 40 minutes is devoted to commercial advertising. Ten minutes consists of uniquely created content from the Hollywood Reporter, the bible of the industry. The balance highlights the more than 70 retailers and restaurants within the complex.

The "Zipper", as it is affectionately known, is only one of two massive color displays. The other sits further west on Hollywood just to the right of the grand entrance to the Kodak Theater. The content on this 9-foot by 16-foot screen, known as the "Marquee", is devoted primarily to the shows and events inside. Some 20 percent, however, is available to advertisers.

The sheer complexity of displaying, managing and scheduling the constantly shifting content on the screens is the job of Scala software and Rey Howard, Hollywood & Highland's director of content.



Howard, who joined the project just days before the grand opening, values Scala most for its stability and for its flexibility in scheduling.

Hollywood is the epicenter of moving images and video is what gets displayed most of the time. Since most of that content is composed of "spots" – short ads sold to run at a specific frequency – the ability to hit precise timings without fail is crucial. Howard particularly likes Scala's ability to run "nested" scripts within a master script. The master script governs the entire day and is made up of multiple time slots of varying lengths. The nested scripts are scripts within the master script that determine which spot runs in a given time slot. In Howard's case these can go four or five levels deep, constantly rotating content in and out.

"Basically, we can build a master play list with Scala software, and never have to touch it again," Howard said. In spite of nesting scripts within scripts, something that can be dicey in other applications, Howard has never had a crash. As a result, he feels confident that no matter how complex his play list, the Scala software will remain stable and the spots will run on time so that all advertisers get exactly what they signed up for.

Scala's scheduling prowess helped meet another challenge. According to Stuart Lyne of Octavian Creative Inc., who with Rob Fleming of Invariance LLC was responsible for integrating the display system, the job of merely putting images on the screen was made particularly complex by its anything-but-standard aspect ratio. "The screen is actually four different screens each requiring its own DVI (Digital Visual Interface) channel," Lyne said. In order to display custom produced, ultra-wide content – mostly video – the software has to move this material in perfect synchronization. Lyne adds that the job is further complicated by the fact that there are really three unique vantage points for viewers depending on where they are standing.

According to the team, Scala not only satisfied their tough requirements, they did it in record time. Looking for more effective scheduling software, the team selected Scala to replace their initial software solution just three weeks prior to the November 9 opening. Scala mobilized members of its new Broadcast Media Services team to support the installation. The software was up and running with time to spare. And it has been running flawlessly ever since.

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About Scala, Inc.

Founded in 1987, Scala pioneered the cable TV industry with software and services to allow users to create localized channels inexpensively. Today, Scala has grown to lead the corporate communications, retail dynamic signage, and interactive kiosk industries as well. With an unrivaled software suite to handle authoring, networking, monitoring, and logged playback, Scala has been the choice of tens of thousands of customers worldwide. Built on reliable and flexible network architecture, Scala software can support nearly any existing infrastructure from dial-up to LAN to Wi-Fi to satellite and terrestrial-based multicast networks. Scala's powerful and efficient store-and-forward design allows the control of unique content on a single cable headend or thousands of remote displays or kiosks from a single desktop PC without the constraints of streaming video.