



INTELLIGENT-M: 10mm pixel pitch (2' 7 1/2" x 11' 9 3/4")



LED DISPLAY TECHNOLOGY

Historic Ritz Theatre

The Ritz Theatre, in historic downtown Toccoa, GA., opened in 1939 as a 400-seat, single-screen film theater and entertained thousands of moviegoers of all ages until it went dark in 1985. It has been used by several local groups since that time as a community and performing arts center.

Beginning in 2012, with the assistance of grants and funding through the City of Toccoa, the theater began restoration to its original glory. In January 2016, the Fox Theatre Institute gave the city a generous grant to restore the historic marquee on the front.

Challenge

Historic theaters like the Ritz Theatre with architectural distinction often make them a challenge to combine a modern, electronic sign system with a pre-existing historic look while maintaining the signs' original integrity. With only faded black and white photos as reference, Smyrna, GA-based Commercial Signs' designers and master craftsmen had to replicate the

sign's original v-shaped appearance. Additionally, the electronic sign system needed to provide visual clarity because the marquee is viewed by people driving a few blocks away as well as pedestrians walking in close proximity.

Solution

Commercial Signs worked with California-based Optec Displays, Inc., and installed two of the company's 10 mm Intelligent-M LED Electronic Message Centers (EMC). The Intelligent-M is an ultra-high bright, lightweight, smart LED module with all-weather performance. Its innovative design provides a flexible solution for advertising and promoting events. The full-color display measures 2' 7 1/2" x 11' 9 3/4" and has the capability to show video, animations and graphics as part of the overall visual promotion of upcoming theater events.

"Working with Optec provided a seamless installation experience for us and the Ritz Theatre," said Jeff Kendrick, owner Commercial Signs. "Optec's customer service is second-to-none," Kendrick added.



The Ritz Theatre - 1939



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Originally, Main Street Toccoa was considering either a 16mm or 20mm EMC, however, after seeing a demonstration of the 10mm they realized this was a better solution because they needed to have very clear resolution for displaying movie trailers, which this offers. Additionally, due to height restrictions, the 10mm fit perfectly while still providing enough pixel count to show quality images.

It was also decided that in replacing the original marquee, not only did the theatre need a new marquee, but one that could constantly present new messages informing the community about current and upcoming shows and special events.

Result

"The marquee is an important project for the final restoration of this landmark theater," said Connie Tabor, Toccoa Main Street Director. "The installation of this historically-inspired marquee will help serve to make the Ritz Theatre a focal point in Downtown Toccoa for the foreseeable future," continued Tabor.

To maximize the marquee's effectiveness Optec Displays worked with the city to select appropriate graphics for the events and shows they want to promote, import

those files and transfer the content to their marquee, making it more visually interesting and bringing more business to the theater.

"You have to learn about the proper use of color, use of animation and what the available viewing time (dwell time) is for vehicles passing by," added Christian Hamilton community development specialist City of Toccoa. "This allowed Optec's design team to create readable and memorable messages for drivers as they pass the theater's marquee."

The restoration of the façade and marquee were done to painstakingly resemble the unique 1939 Art Deco-era appearance. Now owned by the City of Toccoa, the Historic Ritz Theatre at the Schaefer Center was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in October 2015.

“OPTEC DISPLAYS CRAFTED STATE-OF-THE-ART ELECTRONIC MESSAGE BOARDS FOR THE THEATER THAT REALLY BRINGS VIBRANCY TO DOWNTOWN TOCCOA.”

— Christian Hamilton *community development specialist, City of Toccoa*



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