



Photo by SHOW + TELL (NY, NY)

# DIGITAL OUTDOOR EXPANDS IN PUBLIC SPACE

by Louis M. Brill

As much as outdoor digital signage has become a significant billboard advertising medium, so has digital signage migrated into the urban cityscape and is just now finding a home with street furniture incorporating itself into bus shelters, newsstands and other furniture structures as it makes sense.

In an effort to understand this developing market, OAM has noted several prominent outdoor digital players involved with street furniture from both a manufacturing level and an advertising level, and to discuss with them the emergence of their digital street furniture programs into urban cityscapes.

## YESCO ELECTRONICS

YESCO Electronics (Las Vegas NV) is a full service sign company that manages its signage creation process through design, fabrication, installation, service and maintenance. The company deals with both the static and

the digital realms of indoor/outdoor displays. When outdoor signage went high-tech with the introduction of LEDs as a display resource, YESCO became a prime manufacturer of LED signs. In another effort to lead new sign developments, the company now has a similar path emerging for introducing LCD digital signage as a major component for outdoor advertising.

In doing so, YESCO has recently acquired access to a pre-existing LCD screen and is re-engineering it to be known as the YESCO Suncutter LCD, a rugged, outdoor, daylight visible display for bus shelter and other street furniture products in that market. Bob Klausmeier, Director of New Business Development from YESCO Electronics LLC (Logan, UT), noted that YESCO has had a tremendous success with digital billboards where enough demand for that product required them to build a separate factory for fabricating and providing digital billboards to the outdoor advertising community.

“Clearly there is a strong business model as well for

outdoor LCD signage," said Klausmeier, "and the LCD component is something that our larger customers have requested. Our YESCO Electronics solution is to offer a very robust outdoor LCD display that is daylight readable, and can be integrated into any existing bus shelter or other appropriate street furniture application, such as train and bus platforms, newsstands, etc."

"Our LCD screen is HD ready at 1080 and scalable, depending on its outdoor application. The Suncutter comes in several sizes including a 40-inch diagonal screen, a 46-inch diagonal screen, a 55-inch diagonal screen and a 70-inch diagonal screen. An important feature of the Suncutter is that its outdoor LCD Display comes with easily replaceable backlighting lamps so that you can maintain a sunlight viewable brightness of 2000 nits

throughout the life of your LCD Display."

"As for ambient environmental concerns, our LCD screens are placed inside of a waterproof cabinet. To deal with extreme heat," noted Klausmeier, "the YESCO cabinet employs a forced air solution that allows the LCD to stay well within the manufacturer's operational temperature ranges even while the LCD is in direct sunlight. To further protect the Suncutter screens, along with the ruggedized cabinets the LCD is shielded by vandal proof and graffiti resistant protective glass."

"Integrating digital displays into street furniture is a new market," says Klausmeier, who summed up the YESCO LCD program by noting that "outdoor advertising companies who have existing street furniture programs see digital signage as a practical transition into select street furniture products within the next

year or so."

## OUTDOOR PROMOTIONS

Outdoor Promotions (Fort Collins, CO) is an outdoor media company that began by dealing with billboards, but since then has sold off that portion of the company. The company now specializes in only managing bus shelters with street furniture deployments in the Denver Metro area, the Salt Lake City Metro area, and the Las Vegas metro area.

Outdoor Promotions' evolving bus shelter program was discussed by Ginny Deitchler, vice president, Sales & Marketing, who said, "By 2006, Outdoor Promotions was already successfully involved with our bus shelter program when we won the bid to manage the Las Vegas Strip bus shelters. We were already aware of digital displays for bus shelters and saw that as a wave of the future."

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bus shelter program, we planned for a digital display component that would be a high definition, full color, full motion, with full sound digital screen to be an advertising feature of the bus shelter. We believe at that time we were one of the first companies in the United States or for a matter of fact, the world to implement this kind of a program."

"We began by specifically designing the digital display units," noted Deitchler, "to function in an outdoor environment that could deal with everything from potential vandalism to the extreme weather conditions of Las Vegas that it would be subjected to. In developing this system, we refer to it as the Digital Advertising Network (DAN), which went live in Las Vegas in the summer of 2010."

Las Vegas was a prime market to introduce our digital display bus shelters because of its high volume  
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Outdoor Promotions Las Vegas digital advertising program now includes up to 15 high profile digital displays, all located on bus shelters along the Las Vegas Boulevard (The Strip) traffic corridor. The company began this program by installing 15 high profile digital displays, all located on bus shelters along the Las Vegas Boulevard (The Strip) traffic corridor. Currently each Outdoor Promotions digital bus shelter has three static and one digital display advertisement. Soon they plan to add additional LCD displays to their existing digital bus shelters. As for the network's content Deitchler stated, "We are pure advertising...no weather, news, etc. We opted for 100 percent advertising because of the mindset of a visitor and the average bus riders dwell time being nine minutes as they wait for the Deuce bus which travels along The Strip. Thus, our advertising is focused on The Strip and its opportunities on where to shop, where to get tickets for shows; and where to have a nice dinner or be entertained with a branding product ad."

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ELECTRONIC MESSAGE DISPLAYS

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pedestrian and vehicular traffic. A recent 2009 market study by Applied Analysis (Las Vegas, NV) determined that on a daily basis pedestrian visitations to Las Vegas averaged an hourly count of at least 17,000 tourists on The Strip. The study also estimated a peak nightly Strip attendance of at least 40,000 tourists an hour. With this attendance volume of tourists, it made Las Vegas a natural advertising environment to establish a digital bus shelter deployment and attractive to national and local advertisers."

Outdoor Promotions overall Las Vegas bus shelter program consists of approximately 2,800 advertising panels. Because of Las Vegas's world-class attraction as a destination with its tremendous daily pedestrian and vehicular traffic, it became the perfect location for Outdoor Promotions to initialize a digital street furniture program. "Our inventory on The Strip is a combination of digital and static panels. We added the digital because of the cutting edge technology of full motion with audio," noted Deitchler, "it would appeal to certain brands as well as the flexibility for short term convention targeted campaigns."

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For the initial outlay of the Outdoor Promotion digital display inventory, eight of them are LCD displays, and the remaining seven, LED displays. The LED screens were placed on the locations that have more exposure to vehicular traffic as the visibility is better since they are much brighter. We went with the LCD for the screens that are oriented for a majority of pedestrian traffic as they are "higher definition" for close-up viewing.

"The LCD display component is composed of a 70-inch screen in a portrait format, integrated into ten appropriate bus shelters near specific hotel bus stops. The displays are daylight readable, each with a nit rating of 2000, stated Randy Baker, Operations Manager of Outdoor

Promotions, though in the summer, this setting automatically drops down to as low as 1200 nits to reduce the amount of heat generation. The display screen is a sub-component encased in a steel box that is bolted to the shelter. To protect the display component from the Las Vegas summer (where temps are known to average out at around 110 degrees on a daily basis) each screen is cooled with as many as 17 fans drawing air thru the unit to displace the heat build-up."

Outdoor Promotions remaining five LED displays are fitted out as a full panel (70-inch diagonal) on the side of the bus shelter facing street traffic. Each screen has a 6 mm pitch, with a brightness level in a range from 1500 to 2000 nits - not to exceed 2000 nits. These screens are also encased in a steel box that is bolted to the shelter. A thick piece of plastic on the front of the unit protects it from vandalism. For temperature control, there are 10 fans that draw air through the unit to displace the heat

build-up.

"In a full system integration, Outdoor Promotions handles all aspects of the Las Vegas bus shelter program," stated Baker, "as we fabricate the digital display as a sub system and install both the bus shelters and the digital displays into them. We also maintain and service the bus shelters on a daily basis and as expected, book all the advertising and operate our digital network on an ongoing basis."

### TIME SQUARE'S STREET SIDE DIGITAL DISPLAYS

In an interesting turn of street furniture applications, an innovative program was launched by CEMUSA (Madrid, Spain) a company specializing in operating and monetizing street furniture in large metropolitan markets around the world. The company in fall of 2010 introduced the first digital display

system embedded in a newsstand structure in the U.S., with its first deployment in Times Square. Its creation and operation was described by Warren Levy, Executive Vice President of Business Development, SHOW + TELL (NY, NY) whose company launched and operates the CEMUSA network of digital newsstand displays.

"The newsstands are modern, stainless steel and glass structures whose front end is open to allow its operator to interface with the public. On the backside of the newsstand four LCD displays (HD 1080p screens from Display Devices Inc.), each with a 65-inch diagonal, have been installed in a two x two landscape configuration, creating a six by ten-foot panoramic back panel. Additionally one 70-inch LCD display has also been installed on one side of the newsstand in a portrait orientation."

"A total of eight CEMUSA newsstands are part of the digital display network. The scope of SHOW + TELL's work included architecting the system that distributes the content to the eight newsstands, overseeing the retrofit of the digital components into the existing structures, designing and producing all non-advertising content, as well as providing ongoing technical operations, support and content management for the CEMUSA newsstand digital display network."

"The LCD screens we used were specified for outdoor use (e.g., daylight readable), each with an overall brightness level between 1500 - 2000 nits. For protection against graffiti, each LCD screen was installed behind vandal-proof glass."

"The newsstand's digital content runs in an eight-minute loop with a play list that is targeted to Times Square's changing crowds. The



network is a 50/50 mix of third-party advertising (including hyper-local advertising for events in the Times Square area), and dynamically driven informational spots—real-time transit info, news, sports, weather, and entertainment art moments, highlights/promos for art institutions. And in the foreseeable future, the CEMUSA newsstands will present opportunities to engage Times Square audiences through interactive content. With its day-parting ability, we can adjust the schedule to target office workers during the day and more tourist-oriented mix in the evenings and weekends.”

CEMUSA’s digital display network is changing the landscape of Times Square. Now newsstands are not only selling magazines, sodas and concessions, but also acting as a hub for real-time news, information and video advertising. The people in Times Square no longer have to look up to be dazzled.

### FROM BABY STEPS

While digital street furniture works on a technological level, cost-wise, they are still very expensive to build (though that will change with lower display costs and economies of scale in volume purchasing). Currently, the setup of a digital street furniture program is defined mostly by demographics and destination as noted by Deitchler. “It’s still very expensive to build a digital bus shelter network. To justify its operation, you need to have a huge pedestrian traffic of tourists and convention attendees with extended dwell time opportunities.”

However, Deitchler also noted there are very few United States cities that have these kinds of heavy audience volumes other than Las Vegas and Times Square. These other American cities with their unique destinations can attract large audiences that create audience

surges and have the potential to warrant some degree of digital street furniture within that particular cityscape. For outdoor advertisers, this is all good news, and for other soon-to-be digital street furniture programs, ‘the day is young...’

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