Fridley Theatres introduces state-of-the-art movie-going experience across the Midwest

Facility:
• R.L. Fridley Theatres, Inc.

Vertical:
• Theatre

Location:
• 22 locations across Iowa and Nebraska

Challenges:
• Update the theaters with digital cinema technology and install digital signage menu boards for concessions and ticket sales

Solution:
• NEC NC3240S, NC1200C and NC2000C digital cinema projectors; 32” NEC V322, 40” P402, and 46” V462 displays; 40” NEC P402-TMX4P 2x2 TileMatrix™ bundle; Allure Global Enterprise Digital Signage Software, featuring Digital Menu Boards, Digital Box Office, Digital Auditorium signage products

Result:
• Ability to provide customers with the highest quality experience from signage to cinema

Date:
• April 2013

For movie-lovers across Iowa and Nebraska, Fridley Theatres has been the place to turn for the latest in cinema entertainment. The Des Moines-based R.L. Fridley Theatres, Inc., opened almost 40 years ago, and the founder of the company, Robert L. Fridley, has been a well-known leader in the motion picture theater industry for more than 60 years. Fridley Theatres aims to provide exceptional service, presentations, and entertainment choices.

The Challenge

Fridley Theatres prides itself on bringing its customers the very best movie-going experience, from the concessions to the movie-viewing itself. Like much of the industry, Fridley Theatres showed 35 millimeter films, the norm for decades. However, the film industry was making monumental changes. Operations managers with Fridley Theatres knew the transition to digital films was coming, so they started planning ahead to determine which digital cinema projectors would be the best candidates for upgrades in their 22 locations.

The managers began work with one manufacturer and purchased several models of digital cinema projectors, starting with a few theaters for the transition. Not long after these digital cinema projectors were retrofitted into the theaters, Fridley’s management noticed problems.

“Almost immediately, we were having technical problems with the projectors,” said Russell Vannorsdel, Director of Operations at Fridley Theatres. “One unit, in particular, was having some issues that we couldn’t fix, and the time required for the manufacturer to repair it meant we had to shut down that screen in the theater. We didn’t want to do that to our customers, who had come to expect a high quality experience at Fridley. We determined that we would need to purchase new projectors from another manufacturer.”
After further research into digital projection, display manufacturers and products, Fridley Theatres reached out to NEC Display Solutions to determine if the digital cinema projectors it manufactured would be a good fit. After research and testing, the management team at Fridley Theatres determined that NEC products offered them the best quality, options and support, and began deployment.

Fridley Theatres’ venues range in size from single-screen theaters to 10 screens in the largest locations. For each of these, different products would need to be installed. NEC consulted with Fridley officials to determine the best course of action.

“They really wanted to ‘wow’ their audiences,” explained Jim Reisteter, General Manager of NEC Display Solutions, Digital Cinema Division. “Many of their theaters had been open for decades, so we knew we needed something that would retrofit into the existing facilities, while offering the brightness, clarity and cutting-edge images that customers have come to love.”

As a result, it was determined that the NC3240S digital cinema projector would be the best option. Created specifically for large screens up to 105 feet wide, the NC3240S is the world’s brightest DLP cinema projector with 3D capabilities and high contrast images. Its ease of operation was another critical advantage since multiple locations would be using the model.

For the smaller screens, Vannorsdel and management determined the NC2000C would be the best fit as it provides the same digital cinema quality with 3D capabilities as the NC3240S, but is constructed for screens up to 64 feet wide. For its theaters with screen widths up to 42 feet, Fridley Theatres decided the NC1200C model would be the best option.

“As we reviewed their other needs, I told them that NEC’s digital signage displays would be a great way to enhance the Fridley experience even further, creating a whole new movie-going experience outside the auditoriums,” said Reisteter.

In each of the Fridley Theatres, there had been static signage, showing ticket sales and concession stand offerings. “We loved the idea of showing our customers our offerings in a digital, state-of-the-art way,” said Vannorsdel. “It aligned perfectly with the digital upgrade we were already investing in.”

Fridley Theatres then reached out to Allure Global Solutions, a leading provider of Digital Media solutions and Point-Of-Sale software for entertainment and retail dining venues. Based on its extensive experience and full range of strategic products, services and solutions, Fridley Theatres was assured Allure Global could provide the content development and related services it needed to enhance and positively impact the customer experience; as a result, a comprehensive digital signage solutions package was implemented.

Realizing the many ways Allure Global could impact operations and the guest experience, Fridley Theatres invested in several options, including strategic digital displays intended to add to the guest experience at several different touch-points within the theaters.

For the box office, the 46” NEC V462 display powered by the Allure Global DigiBox™ solution was selected. Engaging animated digital content greets patrons as they walk in, providing bright, crisp images of the movies...
playing that night, with available show times, admission fees, and type of viewing experience – from 2D to 3D and more.

After purchasing tickets from the Digital Box Office (DBO), many patrons head straight for food and beverage concessions. For most of the Fridley Theatres, the offerings consist of classic movie-going fare, but several now offer high-end offerings, creating a dinner theater atmosphere. To support these enhanced menus, Fridley Theatres’ management knew that enhanced digital menu presentations would be important, and as a result, additional V462 displays were installed to feature the Allure Global optimized Digital Menu Board (DMB) solution. This DMB solution was also installed in the traditional theater venues, creating a consistent messaging strategy and execution throughout the chain.

To further elevate and transform the guest experience and operational capabilities, the team extended the in-theater digital technology renovations to include exciting new video walls. Featuring upcoming specials, promotions and releases, several 2x2 video walls were installed, with each consisting of four 40” NEC P402 digital screens. Digital Auditorium Signage was also installed with 32” NEC V322 displays placed at each auditorium entrance.

The grand opening across all the Fridley Theatres continues throughout 2013, but a few customers in several locations have already experienced the new look.

“The customers have been wowed, which is exactly what we were hoping for,” said Vannorsdel. “We wanted to provide them with the highest quality experience, from the signage to the cinema, and NEC and Allure Global have helped us do that. It’s been great working with our partners, and I can’t wait to see what the rest of our customers think once they experience what we’ve created.”