

Audio-Visual Industry Case Study: Channel D

Ken Tumblison, President of Buckeye Shapeform



Behind every successful theatrical production, rock concert, or television broadcast is a tightly-coordinated production crew making sure all goes smoothly. From lighting and sound to wardrobe changes and directors, the behind-the-scenes hustle and bustle of the production crew is just as much a work of art as the on-stage performance. And behind elite production crews is an innovative wireless communication system that makes it possible to pull off a precisely-synchronized performance.

Channel D Solution's DBSR antenna distribution system is the workhorse that makes wireless communication among production crew members possible. Amidst the cheering of thousands of concert-goers or the ovations of those attending a play, the DBSR and the intercom system it supports allow crew members to hear instructions, call out cues, and resolve production problems on-the-fly. And when Channel D needed a company to build a custom enclosure for all the components of the DBSR, they called on Buckeye Shapeform.

Because the DBSR would soon be used by the production crews of multi-million dollar shows such as Cirque du Soleil, American Idol, and Lady Gaga, Channel D needed a custom enclosure that not only housed the DBSR components, but looked good doing it.

"Buckeye Shapeform has created a name for itself in the industry because of their ability to create a functional, great-looking product from start to finish, all under one roof," said Channel D owner Mike Porter. "When we needed an enclosure for the DBSR, Buckeye Shapeform was the only logical choice."

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The DBSR allows multiple Clear-Com Tempest wireless intercom base stations to work together so dozens of crew members can talk hands-free to each other, on one or multiple channels, whether they are backstage, in the control room, or behind a camera. Without the ability to talk to each other free of interference from other wireless systems in the area, the show simply could not go on. For large-scale productions in arenas that seat thousands of paying, screaming fans, the ability for crew members to communicate with each other becomes even more vital. Channel D called upon Buckeye Shapeform to build a custom enclosure to house an antenna distribution system that allows the input of up to eight Tempest base stations—big enough for any size crew in any size arena.

“The case was unlike anything we have ever needed before,” Porter said. “We not only needed access for multiple connection ports and lights, but we needed a professional-looking product. They provided both.”

Buckeye Shapeform was involved in all aspects of the creation of the DBSR enclosure from the ground up. They customized the case from an existing enclosure line by punching precisely placed holes and adding custom screen printing—both value-added customizations often requiring more than one shop to complete.

“Because our team communicated directly and openly with the client, together we were able to provide designs, prototypes and finished cases quickly, accurately, and attractively,” said Buckeye Shapeform design engineer Wilbur Meyer.

Several versions of the DBSR are currently on the market to be used by production crews of any size and with any wireless communication need. Cirque du Soleil, in fact, was so pleased with the performance of the DBSR that they recently added their third system for their “Zarkana” production at Radio City Music Hall in New York City, and their fourth systems for “Iris” at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, California. In addition, the Laura Pels Theatre in New York City recently received a DBSR to increase their performance hall wireless intercom coverage. Other DBSR customers include Eighth Day Sound for their Lady Gaga Monster Ball Tour, WWE, Blue Man Group in Orlando, Florida, CoachComm for the Fiesta Bowl and BCS National Championship games, and Another Perfect Event for use at the Academy Awards.

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Buckeye Shapeform continues to work with Channel D on modifications for future antenna distribution products.

“The level of service Buckeye gave us, both face-to-face and in the shop, is unmatched in the industry,” Porter said. “Even though we were a start-up company, the people at Buckeye made us feel like we’d been doing this successfully for years. And because of our work together, the DBSR is in use at world-class venues facilitating the production of some of today’s greatest artistic performances.”

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