



RENKUS-HEINZ

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STEAM POWERED SOUND: SGX41s RIDE THE RAILS WITH SANTA

March 2008, USA – A Renkus-Heinz loudspeaker system is helping deliver a unique visitor experience on the Valley Railroad Company’s Essex Steam Train, an historic railroad which takes passengers back to the days of coal-fired locomotives.

At 20 miles an hour, passengers have time to sightsee and photograph historic towns, pristine natural scenery and bird life – even the occasional bald eagle – while riding 12 miles of resurrected 19th century track in the Connecticut River Valley.

After leaf-peeping season (mid to late October, the North Pole Express takes “a magical nighttime journey to the North Pole” evenings between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The passenger cars become stages for live performances of ‘Twas The Night Before Christmas.

If you think it’s easy turning a vintage railroad car into a music hall, ask Andrew Deneen of Xplore Productions, an exhibit design firm based in Old Lyme, Connecticut. “The cars are about 60 feet long and just 9 feet wide,” Deneen explains. “So it’s difficult to get even coverage.”

Deneen discovered that the only viable space to install loudspeakers was almost directly above the heads of some passengers. “We needed wide coverage in both the horizontal and vertical planes,” he points out. “Of course, the speakers had to sound natural with both music and speech – they are used by the conductor for PA announcements as well as by the performers. To preserve the authentic appearance of the cars, we also needed to minimize the number of loudspeakers.”

Deneen found the right tool for this job in the Renkus-Heinz SGX41 – just 6 inches high, 6 inches deep and 7 inches wide. Its 4 inch coaxial transducer puts out 109 dB peak SPL and handles 50 Watts of program power. A passive crossover network helps the treated fiber cone and coaxial dome tweeter produce smoothly conical coverage of 150°. During demos, Xplore found that just three SGX41s could cover the passenger seating.

“The production is not too complicated,” Deneen says. “We chose a Biamp MXA-150 mixer/amplifier because it has multiple mic and line inputs, a built-in limiter and a remote level control. We were able to put a remote station in the middle of each car.” Sources are Sennheiser EW500 Generation 2 wireless units and MP3 players that hold backing tracks.

Thanks to Xplore’s careful planning, actors holding live microphones “are able to move freely through the train car with no feedback from the speakers,” reports Xplore’s President John Evans. “The sonic experience overwhelmed the Essex Steam Train staff when we presented the finished project. It really does provide visitors with a uniquely entertaining experience.”

“The children’s expressions and enjoyment are what it is all about,” Valley Railroad President Bob Bell comments. “As my grandchildren say, ‘It is magical.’ The freedom of the actors and

crew to make everyone on board a part of the magic has proved to be a great enhancement to a holiday tradition.”

North Pole Express tickets are usually gone by the end of October, and no wonder. After all, where else can you experience both steam power and the latest in audio technology at the same time?

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Headquartered in Foothill Ranch, California, Renkus-Heinz, Inc. is the worldwide leader in the design and manufacture of audio operations networks, digitally steerable arrays, powered and non-powered loudspeakers, system specific electronics and fully integrated Reference Point Array systems. For additional information contact:

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