

NEWS RELEASE

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Lighting Up The GOP Presidential Debate

Academy Lighting Consultants turn massive pavilion into TV studio, calling on Entertainment Lighting Services for lighting gear and installation services

Sun Valley, CA – June 6, 2007 – As the 10 Republican Presidential hopefuls faced the cameras and the nation for their first televised debate on May 3, 2007, Academy Lighting Consultants and Entertainment Lighting Services (ELS) were behind the scenes, shining the light on this early battle in the 2008 presidential election campaign.

What better stage for the GOP debate than the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, CA? Home to more than 55 million pages of Reagan's presidential, California gubernatorial and personal papers, the Reagan Library is awash in history, containing, among other items of interest, the Boeing 707 jetliner, better known as Air Force One – the "Flying White House".

Retired from service in 2001, the aircraft that ferried seven U.S. presidents across the country and around the globe now resides in the Reagan Library's mammoth Air Force One Pavilion. Resting on pylons, the 707 jet juts out over the lower level of the pavilion, facing a glass wall 60 feet high, and 200 feet wide. Tucked between one of the giant wings and the fuselage, the debaters' platform, television cameras and audience were positioned to make history. But first, the location had to be made ready for broadcast.

To oversee the lighting for the production, Emmy-winning producer Marian Porges for NBC News tapped LD Robin Gray of Academy Lighting Consultants. Robin brought in gaffer K.C. Illes to handle the "Hardball" set, Rob Kerwath to gaff the main stage and ELS for the equipment and technical support for it all. In addition to the lighting system for the main stage, a second setup was required in the balcony overlooking the debate stage for the MSNBC television program *Hardball* whose host, Chris Matthews, served as moderator for the debate.

The Reagan Library Republican candidates debate presented a challenge nearly as big as Air Force One itself. Robin was charged with turning a cavernous location into a complete and functional set for television broadcast. And “oh, by the way”, there was a 707 jetliner smack in the middle of it all. Accomplishing that took truck-loads of gear provided by ELS and three days of prep and technical rehearsal.

The first obstacle was the aircraft. To get the television lights in place, Robin called on Kish Rigging of Los Angeles to rig the lighting trusses to the ceiling, working within three inches of the wing of the aircraft and assuring that there was no damage to the facility or its contents.

“We moved the original location of the debate stage to make the best use of the very limited open space between the fuselage and the wing, and to allow the centerline of the floor plan to line up with the center line of the lighting rig. This was crucial to the success of the lighting plot. We were already facing enough challenges without a quarter of the stage being under the tail,” Robin said.

The second major obstacle was clear as glass... actually it was nearly 1/3 of an acre of glass on the opposing wall.

“The daylight pouring in was a challenge,” Robin recalled. “Our output had to overcome and model the participants despite the 100 to 125 foot-candles of ambient daylight from the north-facing window wall. The participants needed to balance with the set and with the audience – and all of this in a building with white walls and a shiny, highly reflective airplane.”

“Fortunately ELS had just expanded its rental inventory to include new, dimmable Arrisun 1200 Pluses, which allowed us to balance the light for that particular day’s cloud cover and ambient light level. Last-minute camera maskings reduced the fill on the audience as well. Combined with their amazing lens kits, the Arrisuns gave us every kind of edge we needed for this job,” she added.

The event used 36 Arrisun 1200-watt HMI par lights, and some conventional Source 4 ellipsoidals and pars, along with an assortment of grip, rigging, dimming and console equipment, according to ELS President John Chuck.

Judging by the look of the debate on television, the vote is in and lighting job was a winner.

About Academy Lighting Consultants

Glendale, CA-based Academy Lighting Consultants is an association of eight, award-winning Lighting Designers and Directors of Photography with almost 225 years of cumulative experience in television, live events, large-scale industrials and facility design.

Academy Lighting Consultants provides a complete production service including consultation, budget preparation, equipment packaging, crewing, team support and design execution. Academy Lighting Consultants was established in 1972 by partners Carl Gibson and Jeff Engel. For more information, visit www.academylighting.com.

About Entertainment Lighting Services

Established in 1991, ELS is one of the country's leading suppliers of lighting and staging products, providing the most technologically advanced lighting equipment for rental and sales, as well as a full range of production services. ELS serves the entertainment industry, corporate customers, event planners, themed locations and theater professionals.

For more information please visit the Entertainment Lighting Services Web site at www.elslights.com.

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