CNN Democratic Party Presidential Debate 2016

Data Display Audio Visual chooses Christie MicroTiles

▲ Dynamic stage for CNN's live television broadcast, built using 320 Christie MicroTiles.
Photo credit: Data Display Audio Visual

Christie MicroTiles operate flawlessly at live, high-profile event

"We're like the circus: we arrive in town, set up, operate, tear down and move on to the next event," explains Shawn Rockefeller, vice president, Data Display Audio Visual, a division of ON Event Services. "All of our work is temporary or rental staging. We don't do permanent installations. And there's no room for error."

When Data Display, a rental staging company specializing in AV solutions, was asked to create a dynamic display wall for CNN's live television broadcast of the first Democratic Party Presidential Debate 2016, they were confident that Christie® MicroTiles® DLP® LED rear-projection cubes were the best option.

Data Display traveled to CNN's New York offices twice to do camera tests with Christie MicroTiles.

"We did a mock-up of a section of the wall

we wanted to build, to test the graphics and see what colors would work best. Naturally, you'll see a lot of red, white and blue on the MicroTiles during the debate," Rockefeller says, laughing. "At first, CNN had considered using another product but it didn't work well in tests. MicroTiles worked great and we're all very happy with them."

"We like Christie MicroTiles because they're a creative tool: I equate them to Lego because you can create almost any shape you want."

Shawn Rockefeller,
Vice president, Data Display Audio Visual

"We probably use MicroTiles more than any other stager in the country; we drive ours for a lot of hours," Rockefeller explains. "In addition to being flexible, there's the contrast and then the resolution. For most of our shows we need extremely high

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resolution because of the software we're using that direct-view LED tiles just can't match. Space is always an issue with us and Christie MicroTiles are compact, with a depth of just 10 inches. They beat out front- and even rear-projection when it comes to space requirements. Space is money."

Building the Christie MicroTiles wall

In October 2015, Data Display headed to Las Vegas where they would build a massive 50-foot wide by 8-foot high video wall with 320 Christie MicroTiles. The dynamic wall, created to display high-resolution graphics during the debates, was positioned to appear behind the presidential candidates.

"Building the wall was a lot of work: there was a lot of cabling involved and we needed to create cut-outs where CNN's logo would appear," shares Mark Swanson, technology director, Data Display, "but it was a straightforward installation that went well."

To ensure optimum brightness, the team replaced the light engines in the 17 MicroTiles that had logged the most operating hours. Next, they adjusted color and brightness across the entire wall to ensure colors didn't appear washed out under CNN's bright studio lighting.

"We did a good color balance the first day, which took around four hours," explains Swanson. "The next day, CNN had their content up and it looked great. Once we had done our testing and had everything locked in, the wall was rock solid."

Under pressure

"Given that the debates are broadcast live to a huge global audience, this installation certainly put more pressure on us," Rockefeller explains. "Were we nervous? Maybe a little; live national television is certainly more pressure-packed than trade shows."

"My biggest fear was losing a light engine in the middle of the show," Swanson shares, "even though we have never had that happen on any show we've ever done."

"One of the beautiful aspects of MicroTiles' design is how easy the light engines are to replace. It only takes our team around four minutes: you just remove the screen from the front using a suction cup, pull out the screws, pop in the new light and you're all set. Plus, the rest of the wall is still up and running during this change," explains Rockefeller. "We made sure we had spare light engines and that everything worked well before going live. We were fully prepared; there was no way any section of the wall wasn't going to work. Failure was not an option."

Flawless performance

In the end, none of Data Display's spare light engines would be needed: the technology performed flawlessly during the debate.
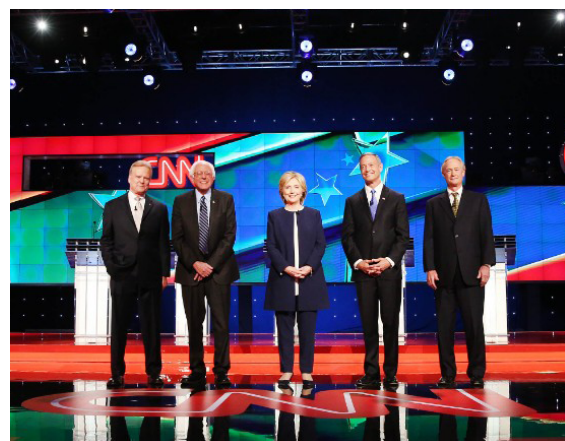
"After the Democratic debate, we took everything down, headed to our next show in New Orleans," laughs Swanson, "and built another wall out of MicroTiles."

Contact Christie

Contact us today to find out how your organization can benefit from Christie solutions.

▲ Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton shake hands and share a laugh during the debates

▲ The candidates, from left to right: Jim Webb, Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton, Martin O'Malley, Lincoln Chaffey

Photo credit (this page): CNN

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