

Double Take

These fiber-optic sign projects are making people stop for a second look

B Y B I L L D U N D A S

Bill Dundas is a freelance writer and editor who has written for a variety of trade magazines and websites.

EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT FIBER OPTICS CAN'T COMPETE WITH neon in outdoor sign applications. Everybody, that is, except the managers of AMC Theatres and Cleveland's Gund Arena. Here are two projects by SuperVision Intl., Inc. (Orlando, FL) that boldly challenge the industry's conventional wisdom on fiber-optics' feasibility.

Fiber Fashion

Southern California is nothing if not *stylish*. Here, in the land of Hollywood stars, trendy boutiques and restaurants, lies the happy hunting ground of the hoity-toity. For the hoi polloi, however, catching a movie is probably a more typical diversion. In keeping with the California chic, the AMC Theatre in Ontario, CA, insisted on having avant-garde identification. The new fiber-optic (FO) sign created by SuperVision, Orlando, FL, (Fig. 1) certainly fits the bill.

Installed on a skeletal globe measuring 26 ft. in diameter, SuperVision's 1/8-in. Sideglow™ FO cable accents the latitudinal and longitudinal supports with brilliant light (Fig. 2). An equatorial starfield band surrounds the globe, providing a stunning background for the "AMC" neon channel letters. The band is composed of sheet aluminum perforated by thousands of small holes containing SuperVision's Endglow™ FO cables.

What no photograph can show, however, are the eye-popping animations and color changes offered by this impressive sign. The FO latitude lines are stepper-controlled, which makes the entire globe appear to rotate. Longitude lines are synchronized to change among four different colors. More than 3000 ft. of 1/8-in. Sideglow™ FO cable is mounted to



Fig. 1: With beauty and pizzazz, the AMC Theatre's fiber-optic sign catches the eye from all directions.

the globe using clear, plastic U-channels. This cable is illuminated by 27 separate light sources (Figs. 3 and 5). In addition, approximately 8000 end-lit fibers in the equatorial band give the sign a twinkling, shimmering effect. Depth is created in the lighted starfield by incorporating two different diameters of cable.

The sign's aluminum structure and lettering were fabricated and installed by Signage Solutions Inc., Anaheim, CA. SuperVision hired Dan Myers of

Fiber Productions (Fig. 4), Lakeland, FL, to install the fiber optics, illuminators and accessory controls.

The finished product stands as a striking example of the versatility of fiber optics for signage applications. Fiber optics clearly excels in applications that highlight and energize structural themes. I didn't ask SuperVision's Fritz Meyne about the cost of the AMC project, but, considering the prices in this part of the country, I surmised that I probably *shouldn't*.



Fig. 2: A rear view from the theater roof shows the brightness of SuperVision's 1/4-in. FO cables after dark.

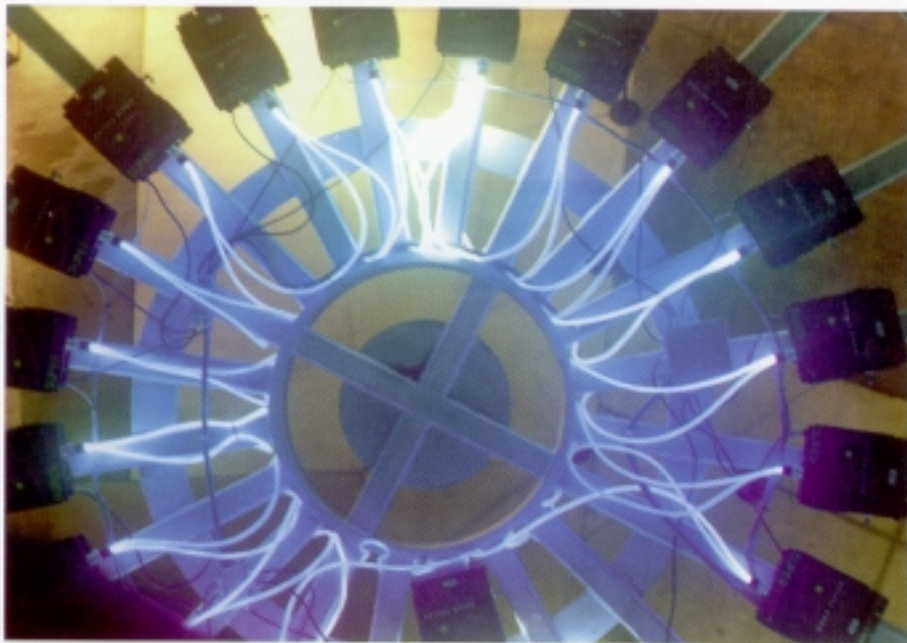


Fig. 3: Illuminators for the cable are mounted around the base inside the skeletal globe.



Fig. 4: Dan Myers of Fiber Productions installs thousands of tiny FO strands through small holes in sections of the equatorial aluminum band.

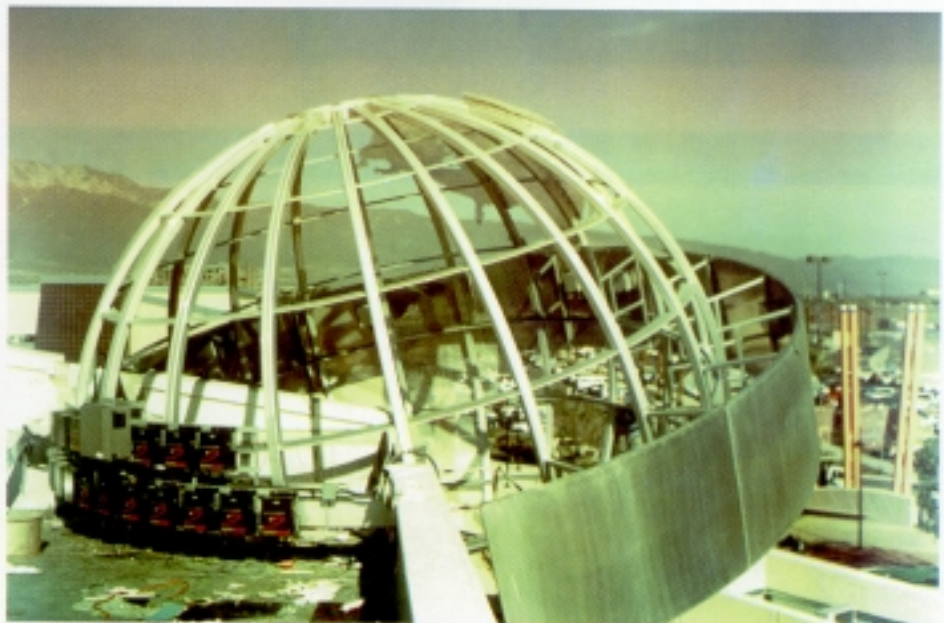


Fig. 5: Illuminators for the starfield band cables are installed on the rear of the globe for easy access from the roof.

Changing Channels

If the new sign at Cleveland's Gund Arena is a harbinger of the future, sign electricians could one day have about as much work as the Maytag repairman. Incorporating SuperVision's Sideglow™ fiber-optic (FO) cable to illuminate the facility's 10-ft.-high channel letters (Fig. 1), Architectural Graphics, Inc. (AGI), Virginia Beach, VA, brings fiber optics into the mainstream of outdoor signage.

AGI fabricated the 12-in.-deep channel letters using six rows of 3/8-in.-diameter cable placed 3/8 in. from the inside of the letter faces (Fig. 2). A total of 33 illuminators (150-watt metal-halide type) are required for the job. This translates to a total electrical load of 132 amps at 120V. The illuminator boxes are attached directly to the backs of the channel letters where the FO cables enter (Fig. 3). These boxes contain rotating, tri-color wheels that are synchronized, allowing the letter colors to be changed as desired (Figs. 4 and 5). The letter faces are composed of white Lexan™.

This ambitious project was truly a cooperative effort. The conceptual design for the letters was created by Sussman/Prejza & Co., Inc., Culver City, CA. SuperVision and AGI collaborated in the production and engineering of the letters, and McBride Signs of Birmingham, AL, performed the installation. Viewing the impressive results of this application, it seems that fiber optics has a bright future in the conventional sphere of sign construction. ■



Fig. 1: The new fiber-optic sign at Cleveland's Gund Arena will make you say, "I can't believe it's not neon."



Fig. 2: SuperVision's Sideglow™ FO cables are looped to form six rows in each of the 10-ft. letters.



Fig. 3: The illuminator boxes containing 150-watt metal-halide lamps and color wheels are attached to the backs of the letters.



Figs. 4, 5 and 6: These letters are plain white by day, but can be blue, green, orange or white after dark.

