Above the Roar: lighting Niagara Falls from the inside

Posted on November 1, 2026



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Above the Roar: Lighting Niagara Falls from the Inside

Before visitors experience the vastness of Niagara Falls itself, they can now rise above it inside Above the Roar, an immersive VR attraction at Niagara Falls State Park.

Created by VR/XR company Positron and operated by Delaware North Parks and Resorts, the attraction combines VR, projection, sound, and lighting inside a cavernous environment designed by MDSX.

Behind the experience, Luna Lux designed and integrated the audiovisual and lighting systems, using Visual Productions' SpiNode and CueCore3 to bring the space to life.

Lighting That Supports the Experience

The lighting was designed to complement the VR content rather than compete with it. It gives the physical space an identity before and after the experience, while also creating an engaging environment for visitors who are not wearing a headset.

"The lighting objectives of the project were really to be somewhat auxiliary to the experience itself," explains Colin Postley, Controls Designer at Luna Lux. "The venue's team wanted to give life to the space before and after the experience, for those who were in the VR pod, but then also to add some visual texture for those who are in the space but encountering it without the VR element."

The installation includes suspended pixel fixtures, pathway lighting, coloured accents, LED tape around courtesy monitors, and projected arrows that guide visitors through the venue.

One Control System, Many Outputs

One of the project's main challenges was the sheer number of independently controlled pixel fixtures.

Each suspended fixture was wired separately, creating considerable cabling and output-management requirements.

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To handle this, Luna Lux installed 48 SpiNode, arranged in six enclosures containing eight units each. Their compact form factor made it possible to distribute the controllers throughout the installation, placing the hardware close to the fixtures they control and keeping cable runs

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manageable.

“With the sheer quantity of outputs needed, the ease of using the SpiNodes was extremely beneficial,” says Postley. “The compact size of the devices made it easier to physically get them where they needed to be, and then the software and user interfaces were helpful for managing that number of outputs.”

At the centre of the system, a CueCore3 serves as the playback engine.

Lighting sequences were programmed on a grandMA3 console and recorded to the CueCore3 for reliable standalone playback. The CueCore3 then works alongside the SpiNodes to deliver the programmed lighting states throughout the attraction, without requiring a full lighting console during daily operation.

Together, the two Visual Productions solutions provide a flexible and dependable control system that can be adapted as the attraction develops. “Flexibility and reliability are largely my two top factors when selecting a device,” Postley explains. “When I can trust a device to do what it’s supposed to do consistently, it is very easy for me to recommend it to a client.”

A Lighting Journey Through the Cave

The lighting follows the narrative of the experience, shifting through several distinct visual states.

Blue tones welcome visitors into the space, evoking water moving through a cave. During the VR experience, brighter whites and pinks reflect the colours and energy of the video content. As the experience comes to an end, the lighting transitions into green and earthy tones, suggesting the journey out of the cave and back into Niagara Falls’ natural landscape.

These transitions help guide visitors through the attraction while ensuring that guests without VR headsets remain immersed in the environment.

As Postley puts it, the lighting “helps give the non-VR attendees a timer, but also to not keep them in a cave while everybody else is in the sky.”

At Above the Roar, Visual Productions’ SpiNode and CueCore3 provide the control infrastructure needed to keep the lighting subtle, responsive, and closely connected to the story — helping visitors begin their Niagara Falls experience before they ever step outside.

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Lighting and AV design, integration, and programming by Luna Lux.

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Visual Productions products in use:
SpiNode (48x)
CueCore3

Project: Above the Roar
Client: Delaware North Parks and Resorts
Lighting Designer: Luna Lux
Location: Niagara Falls, New York
Year: 2026

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