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Telemundo Fan Village at Rockefeller Center

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Posted on October 21, 2026

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When the NYNJ World Cup 26 & Telemundo Fan Village took over Rockefeller Center for two weeks in July, Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging, Inc., turned to RCF to deliver sound reinforcement capable of matching the scale of the event and withstanding nearly everything a New York summer could throw at it.

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Held July 6–19, the official New York/New Jersey FIFA World Cup Fan Village transformed Rockefeller Center into a gathering place for soccer fans, with a pitch installed where The Rink normally sits, large-screen match viewing, live Telemundo broadcasts, sponsor activations, clinics, movie nights and other fan experiences. The outdoor event operated daily and served as a global watch party for fans gathering in the heart of Midtown Manhattan.

Providing the event's production services was Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging, Inc., a New York-based event production company specializing in lighting, audio, staging and technical production for high-profile events, corporate productions, galas, fashion, entertainment and private celebrations. The company provides comprehensive production solutions for events ranging from intimate gatherings to large-scale productions, with an emphasis on combining creative design with technical execution.

For the Fan Village, the production team faced a straightforward but demanding requirement: provide clear, powerful audio for live programming and match viewing across an entirely outdoor installation that had to remain operational regardless of the weather.

"It was 100 percent outside, so rain or shine, whatever it was, we needed to be ready," says Bentley Meeker, President of Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging. "The weather resistance really drove us to look at RCF. I've known the brand for 30 years and have always liked the way it sounded. Once we looked at the specifications and knew we could trust the quality of the audio, we went with it."

The main RCF system featured two flown line arrays incorporating eight X 28L two-way line array modules, configured with four cabinets per side. Low-frequency reinforcement was provided by S 29 high-power dual 19-inch subwoofers positioned on the ground, while four weather-protected COMPACT C 45 WP two-way loudspeakers, mounted vertically, provided additional coverage. The system was powered by RCF XPS 16KD four-channel Dante®-equipped DSP amplifiers.

Weather resistance quickly became more than a specification on a product sheet. During the two-week run, the system encountered conditions ranging from light rain to severe downpours, flash flooding and tornado watches. At the opposite extreme, the equipment also operated through several days of temperatures exceeding 100 degrees.

"Through the course of the Fan Village, it didn't just rain," says Jeff Ledford, COO and partner at Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging. "We went from light rain to monsoon rain, flash flooding and

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tornado watches. We also experienced four or five days where temperatures were over 102 degrees on campus, and the units were still cranking away.”

For Meeker and Ledford, the ability to leave the loudspeaker system deployed outdoors while maintaining confidence in its performance was central to the decision to invest in RCF.

The project marked Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging’s first major deployment with RCF. According to Ledford, RCF’s involvement extended beyond supplying the equipment, with the company providing system recommendations, logistical support and technical assistance as the production team prepared the system for the extended run.

“From the moment we approached RCF, there was full commitment to the project,” Ledford says. “There was zero hesitation. They immediately helped us determine the right equipment, get the system to us and provided technical support to make sure everything was properly configured. There was a real investment on RCF’s behalf in our success.”

That support, combined with the performance of the system itself, proved especially important for an event where production equipment remained exposed to the elements for two weeks while supporting live broadcasts, programming and match viewing.

When asked to characterize the system’s performance throughout the run, Meeker’s assessment was simple: “Flawless.”

Ledford agrees. “When Bentley used the word flawless, it really was flawless. We did not have a single problem through the duration of the run with the amplifiers, the cabling or the system. It performed exactly as described.”

Just as important was the response from the people gathered throughout Rockefeller Center. “Everybody was thrilled,” says Meeker. “It was a fabulous project, and when the games were on, the attendees were totally engaged. It was outstanding.”

For Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging, the Fan Village also served as a demanding real-world introduction to RCF, one that has the company already looking toward additional systems.

“It was a wonderful way for us to get a meaningful introduction to the brand,” concludes Meeker. “We were very happy with the system.”