

VEGAS INC

Sign builder takes pride in helping brand Las Vegas for decades

BY BRYAN HORWATH

Whenever Jeff Young drives past Allegiant Stadium, he can't help smiling about his company's contributions to the new venue.

YESCO Custom Electric

Signs built the freestanding sign at the east end of the stadium site, which stands more than 120 feet off the ground and features full-color video on both sides of a massive LED screen. It's visible to those driving on Interstate 15 past the stadium.

"It was night, and the sign was lit with black-and-white content," Young, YESCO's senior vice president and chief marketing officer, said. "It just knocks my socks off. That is a beautiful facility."

YESCO—based in Utah, but with a large presence in Las Vegas—is celebrating 100 years in business.

Young's grandfather, Thomas Young, came to North America from England as a teenager during the early part of the 20th century, eventually settling in Ogden, Utah, where he founded what was then called Thomas Young Signs in 1920.

It wasn't long before Young's grandfather realized there was an opportunity to grow the business in Las Vegas, where, during the early 1930s, gambling was legalized and work began on the federal dam project just outside town.

Thomas Young's first big break in Las Vegas came when he was selected to design and build a sign for the old Boulder Club on Fremont Street.

Since then, YESCO has been behind some of the area's most recognized displays, including Vegas Vic, the old Mint Hotel sign, the Circus Circus clown and what was at the time a cutting-edge electronic display at Caesars Palace in the mid-1980s.

"The Boulder Club was a big breakthrough for my grandfather," Jeff Young said. "When he visited and

got the request for that sign, they wanted to make that corner more exciting. He went to his hotel room that night, took butcher paper and some colored pencils and created what he thought the sign should look like. They just loved it."

Today, YESCO, including its franchise service operation arm, has about 2,000 employees in the U.S. and Canada, with about 400 in Las Vegas.

It's one of the largest and most well-known U.S. sign companies in an industry that, according to the International Sign Association, is responsible for

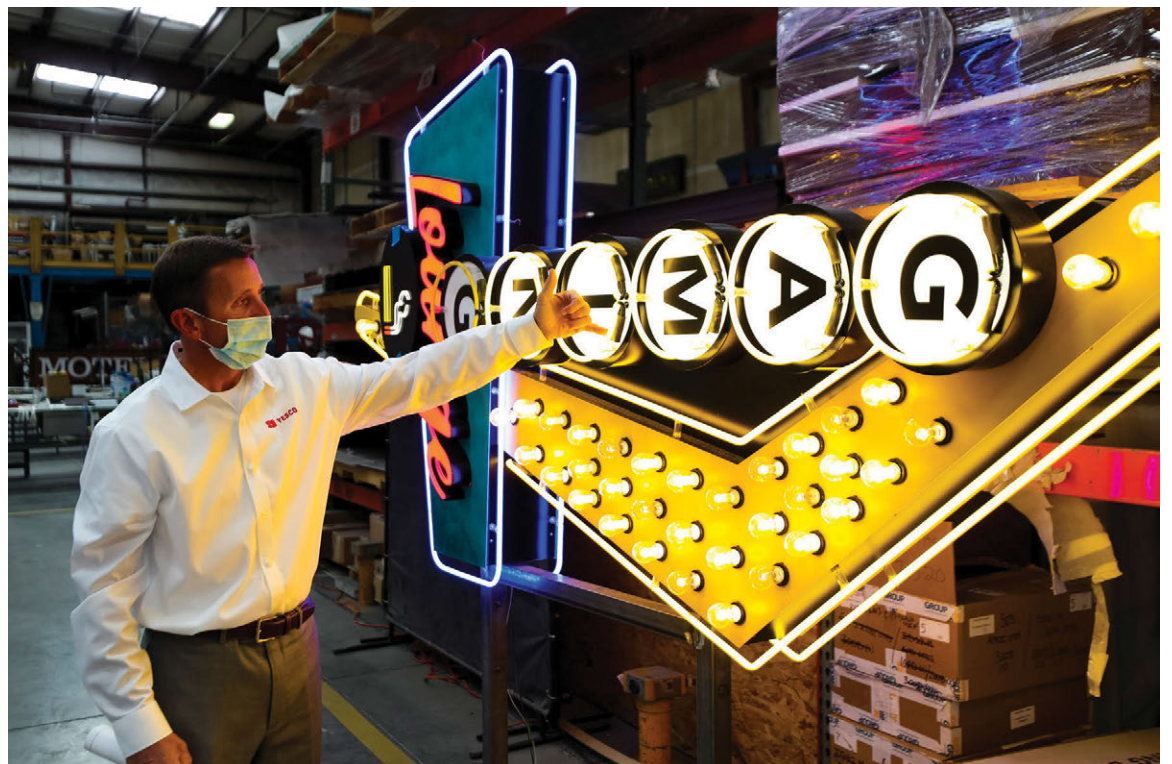
about \$37 billion worth of business annually in the U.S. Besides highly visible Las Vegas signs like the old Stardust display or the larger-than-life 260-foot tall LED sign outside Aria, YESCO also creates displays for shopping centers, restaurants and even Starbucks' corporate headquarters in Seattle.

Once work for the Allegiant Stadium project wrapped—YESCO created more than 4,000 signs of seemingly all size and shape for the \$2 billion stadium—much of the focus turned to Circa, which opened October 28 in Downtown Las Vegas.

YESCO rehabilitated Vegas Vickie, the leg-kicking, gun-toting, blond cowgirl sign that used to grace the old Glitter Gulch adult club on Fremont Street. The sign is now the centerpiece of Vegas Vickie's lounge at Circa, thanks to the makeover work of Eric Elizondo and John Robbins, who carefully manipulated the neon glass tubing that's part of the one of the gloves for the refurbished Vickie.

YESCO is also building signage for the Resorts World casino complex on the Strip, which is expected to be finished next year. It'll join a long list of signs the company has made over the years for resorts—many of which are now on display at the Neon Museum in Downtown. About half of the old neon signs at the museum are on loan from the company.

"There's no place on earth that shows color and light and excitement like this community," Young said. "The reason why it's so exciting and so vibrant is largely because of the signs. To have been a part of that, we're honored as a family and as an organization."



Jeff Young, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of YESCO Custom Electric Signs, explains the mechanics of a sign for the new Circa casino. (Wade Vandervort/Staff)