

PEAK EFFECT

SPOTLIGHT ON PEAKSLANT32™ AND PEAKSLANT49™

By Christine McCrory

An Interview with Anthony Baerlocher,
Phil O'Toole, and Roger Pettersson

The Peak family of cabinets is setting a new standard for hardware in nearly every gaming category, and the two newest on the scene are the PeakSlant49™ and the PeakSlant32™. To get a better understanding of what these cabinets have to offer and how the process of research and development went, we sat down to talk with Anthony Baerlocher, Vice President of Innovation and Mechanical Reels for IGT, Roger Pettersson, Senior Director of Marketing Research for Core Video, and Phil O'Toole, Director of Core Video & PMM, to get their perspectives on what makes these two new cabinets special.



Anthony Baerlocher
Vice President of Innovation and
Mechanical Reels



Phil O'Toole
Director of Core Video & PMM



Roger Pettersson
Senior Director of Marketing Research
for Core Video

Can you tell us about the research that went into developing the new PeakSlant49™ cabinet and what sets it apart?

Baerlocher: “What we saw in market and heard from players and customers around floor diversity requirements drove our thinking – from there, we looked critically at macro trends and how we could improve the player experience for future needs. This drove our vision. With the whole Peak family, we vetted several design options and went through multiple rounds of internal and customer reviews.

The first one we were really focused on was doing a 49-inch curved portrait display. So, really looking at that and saying, what are our priorities? Typically, our priorities are content, player ergonomics, cost, and serviceability. We started asking ourselves, which one is really the most important? And we said, it’s really about player ergonomics. So, at every point of contact, design, and value discussion, we asked, how can we go through and make this machine comfortable to play?

Something we came up with that was different in the industry was the progressive curve. We did a double curve. So, it starts out at a wider-angle curve and then sharpens upward and then almost goes flat. This progressive curve is

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beneficial for a couple of reasons. One, the player viewing angle is the most comfortable for the neck, and it puts the game interface right in the player’s face. As it goes up and becomes more vertical, it’s attractive for people walking by and grabs their attention better. And that was a huge discussion, do we go with a C curve, a J curve, or this progressive curve? We had our monitor vendors bring in different samples, and we were looking for what feels right. I believe we made a great choice.”

What about the research for the PeakSlant32™?

Baerlocher: “We built this chassis for the 49-inch portrait, and we realized how comfortable it was to sit down and play: larger DPP (digital player panel), the bash button, a built-in charging station for your phone. So, we wanted to see if we could reinvent what a dual screen slant would be like using the base we had for the PeakSlant49™. Fairly quickly, we decided to do 32-inch monitors, which is bigger than most. Slants had always been 27 inches. But the 32-inch screens actually made the cabinet a little bit wider. You can’t fit a 32-inch monitor into the space we typically build machines, but we decided it was the right thing to do. We modified the design by adding some fillers on the side of the machine, which made it about three inches wider than the PeakSlant49™, and then we did the three 32-inch screens going up the machine. We’re really proud to be innovators in this space.



Just by making some small changes, we became the first in the market with the triple 32. When you physically see it, stand next to it, it's breathtaking. It's different. And man, does it play well. We know we've got everybody's attention, and the best thing is, we see the performance of games on this cabinet, and it really drives higher performance, sometimes fairly substantially."

Variety on the Casino Floor

"...Operators a lot of times are looking for a difference in height with cabinets, so they can lay out their floors with more variety and better sightlines to expose restaurants, venues, or other features they have on the casino floor. And the biggest thing is variety. If every cabinet on the casino floor was a 43- or 49-inch curved cabinet, it would look a little boring, very uniform, and not very exciting. Dual screen cabinets are important for operators for floor diversification and for improvement in sightlines when needed."

O'Toole: "The PeakSlant32™ was born out of the desire to have something a little bit unique in the market. We wanted to be a little bit different, a little bit bigger. We saw a market gap that we wanted to fill, and we wanted to make an impression with a large, eye-catching cabinet, and we did that with the PeakSlant32™."

In the Core Video area, both the PeakSlant32™ and PeakSlant49™ cabinets are used. What do you consider when deciding on whether to release a specific game on one or the other of these cabinets, or on both?

O'Toole: "Sometimes the screen actually dictates that to a degree. The portrait cabinet can give you a little bit more creative freedom to do things like expanding reels where the graphics go up and down, uninterrupted by the break in the screens. The main difference is really how to best utilize the formats that are available."

Where do you see the demand for dual versus portrait screen format heading in the future?

Pettersson: "There's no question that portrait screens have kind of stolen the show over the last few years from a performance perspective, but that being said, that's where most of the focus has been from a hardware and a content development standpoint. It's almost a self-fulfilling prophecy that the portrait screens would do better. At the same time, operators are looking for variety on the casino floor."

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The PeakSlant32™ is the only triple 32-inch screen cabinet on the market. Why do you think this design has not yet been developed elsewhere?

Baerlocher: “It seems like such a simple idea, but it’s really because it is larger, and it doesn’t fit in that standard space. But we just felt so strongly when we started putting these 32-inch screens together that this is a game changer, that we had to actually break that form factor. I think that’s why people really haven’t gone there, because even though it seems so simple and like such a small change, it could disrupt things.”

Pettersson: “Most of the focus from manufacturers over the last five years has been on the portrait screens, starting with a 43-inch then going to 49-inches. If you’re going to put a cabinet on the base, you really can’t go 32-inch, because the base is only 28-inches wide. But once you go to a slant, the base is built into the cabinet, so you have the opportunity to go bigger. I think obviously that was the right move. If you’re going to build a slant, go as big as you can without getting too big. Twenty-seven inches still looks a little smaller, especially for a slant. People are used to that 49-inch curved cabinet now, and so going to a 32-inch makes the cabinet that much more visually appealing from afar, and it looks more impactful and powerful.”

The PeakSlant32™ has some great performance metrics. In your opinion, what drives that positive performance?

Baerlocher: “It goes back to our design philosophy of focusing on the player. Our players continually tell us “bigger is better.” The cabinets in this industry keep getting taller and using bigger displays, so the 32-inch screen gives us a big advantage. But the difference was really in the design process. It’s hard to believe how many weeks we spent trying to get the right angle on each of those displays. Lots of debate, lots of discussion, lots of sitting in front of it for hours to see, ok, am I getting tired? Does this hurt? What about the glare from the lights? It just has different proportions that I personally feel are much more comfortable.

I remember the first time I really sat at one of our prototypes. We had had the PeakSlant49™ first, which I am a huge fan of. But then I sat down at the PeakSlant32™, spun the reels a couple of times, and to me, it was just so compelling to sit there. I thought, this is an awesome

machine, this is going to do great. It has pretty much lived up to my expectations and exceeded them in some cases.”

Pettersson: “They look new! You walk on the casino floor, they stand out. Some of the other cabinets that some of these games are on have been out there for years now. Customers are used to seeing them. So, when they see the PeakSlant32™, it excites them. It’s like, what’s this new piece of hardware? At the end of the day, it just advertises itself better on the casino floor. Where the other dual screens can sometimes get lost with these big 49-inch curved screens and big cabinets, a PeakSlant32™ on the floor stands out significantly better.”

O’Toole: “I would also add, it’s self-merchandising. It’s big, so it advertises itself. It doesn’t need all of the signage to go with it. That’s an operator benefit as well.”

Pettersson: “It’s like a billboard effect!”



Can you talk a little bit about the content strategy for these two cabinets?

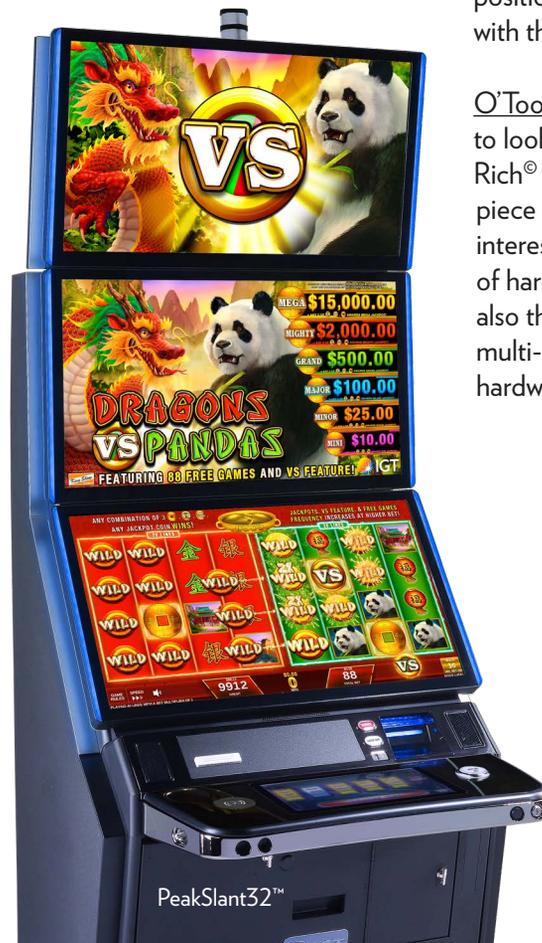
Pettersson: “We put a lot of thought into what’s the best content to launch the PeakSlant49™, and we’re super excited about the premier launch title, Stinkin’ Rich® Skunks Gone Wild. Stinkin’ Rich® has been one of the best games that IGT has ever made. It’s more than 15 years old, and it’s still a fan favorite. This is the new and improved Stinkin’ Rich® on a brand-new piece of hardware, so that will create a lot of excitement. There are a lot of Stinkin’ Rich® players out there who are still playing the game or used to play the game. I think seeing a new sequel to their current favorite games or prior favorite game is going to create a lot of excitement from players.

There’s a lot of splash about Regal Riches™ as well. Regal Riches™ hit number one in February on Eiler’s performance reports, and...that’s a big deal to get to number one on that report. We’re very excited about having Regal Riches™ as a launch title on the PeakSlant49™. And then we’ve got an update to Scarab™ with a multi-level progressive as well.

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A lot of players now are looking for progressives to play, and so adding these progressives to Scarab™ and using the PeakSlant49™ cabinet should make a big splash in the market. Additionally, we have a couple of new titles with a wheel feature and progressives that are very attractive. We have a great roadmap for the launch titles that we’re excited about, with some legacy titles brought forward with sequels, a proven performer with Regal Riches™, and a brand new innovative game family as well. I think we are well-positioned to have a successful launch with this cabinet.”

O’Toole: “It’s not an uncommon strategy to look at brand evolution like Stinkin’ Rich® Skunks Gone Wild with a new piece of hardware. That can get players interested to migrate to a new piece of hardware. With Scarab Link™, it is also the first time we’re selling a linked multi-level progressive game on portrait hardware, so that’s big news as well.” ■



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