

Meyer Sound and McCune Make Magic Monterey Jazz Festival

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Since its inception in 1958, the Monterey Jazz Festival has played host to a comprehensive "Who's Who" of jazz giants and witnessed countless historic musical moments, earning the annual event a reputation as one of the world's most prestigious music festivals. In its 46th year, the weekend-long concert series boasted more than 500 artists on five stages, ranging from the delicate solo guitar of Ralph Towner to a plethora of big bands, from high school to professional level. The audience listened to every one of these acts through Meyer Sound speakers provided by San Francisco's McCune Audio/Video/Lighting. Having supplied sound systems for the festival nearly every year since it started, McCune was well acquainted with meeting the needs of the event's variety and reputation. Sound Supervisor Mike Neal has worked the festival for McCune for so many years the only way he can date his tenure there is by noting the earliest stage credential he can find...which is from 1970.

For all of its years, the festival has been held on the Monterey Fairgrounds, which presents considerable rigging issues for McCune due to its age: the venues were decidedly not built with hanging speakers in mind. The largest venue on the site is the outdoor Arena Stage (also known as the "Jimmy Lyons" stage to honor the festival's founder), a mini-stadium that seats 7,000.

McCune engineer Hal Soogian, who has mixed sound for the Arena Stage for the last 20 years, was eager to bring the MILO cabinets in this year. Soogian's first experience with MILO was when he took a chance on them sight unseen (or, "hearing unheard") at a Shoreline Amphitheater show, with jaw-dropping results.

Coverage was achieved by supplying each side of the stage with an array of six MILO high-power curvilinear array loudspeakers, two M3D-Sub directional subwoofers, and an MSL-4 horn-loaded long-throw loudspeaker for side fill coverage of the nearest section of bleacher seats.

"Purists might wonder why we used a long-throw MSL-4 for side fill," Neal elaborates. "The answer is the tight pattern control of the MSL-4. With a lot of brick and concrete in these areas, the MSL-4s are just the ticket."

Rigging height limitations prevented flying the subwoofers, which sat on the stage beneath the MILO arrays. In fact, rigging the MILO cabinets at all was an effort. Front and back rigging points are the best way to hang line array speakers, since that presents the simplest method of tilting the cabinets to the desired vertical splay angle. However, the Arena Stage only provided side-to-side rigging points. McCune worked with the festival to get new front-to-back rigging points installed, as well as to gain approval for the additional weight that six MILO loudspeakers presented over McCune's old way of covering the venue with three MSL-4 cabinets per side plus delay stacks.

"MILO did a fantastic job in the Arena Theater," enthused Neal, "giving us very even coverage. We were covering 280 feet from the speakers to last seat in the house and everyone within the predicted pattern got a good show. Those that fell outside the pattern, we knew would fall outside the pattern, so we were able to cover them with fill speakers."

Neal's knowledge of who would need fill speakers and who would not came from using Meyer Sound MAPP Online acoustical prediction program. Soogian had just used MAPP Online to plan his system for a show featuring George Benson and Natalie Cole, with results that so closely matched MAPP Online's predictions that he achieved a 280-foot throw, the same as at the Arena Stage, with no delay stacks. Soogian called Neal and related what he had just experienced. Neal soon found MAPP Online to be as accurate as Soogian had said.

"MILO works with the MAPP software very, very well. You really can look at your physical



"The Monterey Jazz crowd is not shy, people will come up and visit with me, since I've been there for 20 years. I had nobody come up to me from the front saying it was too loud, or from the back saying it was too soft. All I had was people coming from both ends of the arena and saying 'We don't know what those (loudspeakers) are, but we want to see you and them every year.' Working for Meyer Sound is a dream come true for me. It is a well-respected company and a leader in the industry with the best products. Meyer Sound is a company anyone in professional audio would want to work for."

- Hal Soogian,
Engineer, McCune Audio/Video/Lighting

FEATURED PRODUCTS

[MILO](#)
[M3D](#)
[M3D-Sub](#)
[M2D](#)
[MSL-4](#)
[650-P](#)
[CO-1](#)
[CO-2](#)
[UPM-1P](#)
[MAPP Online](#)
[LD-3](#)

These were the first columns they had, from the team, but look at your physical environment (in MAPP Online) and how the system is going to work in it, and damned if it doesn't work that way. It allowed us to get rid of all of our delay speakers, and a number of fill speakers. The MAPP software told us we wouldn't need them and sure enough we didn't."

But this was more than a technical achievement and Soogian and Neal were far from the only ones to notice. The festival audience is a discriminating one containing many attendees who have been listening to jazz from the Arena Stage for as long as Soogian has been mixing there, and they have their own opinions about sound, as Soogian explains: "The Monterey Jazz crowd is not shy, people will come up and visit with me, since I've been there for 20 years. I had nobody come up to me from the front saying it was too loud, or from the back saying it was too soft. All I had was people coming from both ends of the arena and saying 'We don't know what those (loudspeakers) are, but we want to see you and them every year.' Even the ushers, who've been there forever, said it was the first time ever where the sound was present and they could hear everything, but they weren't blown away from the front of the stage (by volume). And that's the audience. Of all the band engineers that came through, only one had experience with MILO, but only one act even touched the third-octave (system) EQ."

Four UPM-1P ultra-compact wide coverage loudspeakers were mounted on the front face of the stage just below the lip to provide frontfill (foam padding was placed around the UPM-1Ps to prevent inadvertent injury to audience members) and two more MSL-4s were used for stage monitoring for some acts. The front-of-house system was equalized with an LD-3 compensating line driver to aid in handling both the low-mid frequency buildup endemic to line arrays and the changeable weather common to coastal areas such as Monterey.

The other outdoor venue was the Garden Stage, a small, sylvan glade surrounded by an ivy-covered fence, with a capacity of 1,800. The Garden was easily covered by three MSL-4s and a 650-P high-power subwoofer on each side, plus two UPM-1Ps for frontfill.

The largest of the three indoor venues was Dizzy's Den, the size of small warehouse and with a peaked roof. The Den was the site for a number of big bands, particularly from high schools and colleges, requiring more punch than the Garden. Five M2D compact curvilinear array loudspeakers and a 650-P subwoofer per side gave ample coverage and power for all that brass.

The Nightclub Stage hosted everything from the solo guitar of Ralph Towner to the classic two horn, piano, bass and drums lineup of the Clayton Brothers Quintet, plus "Jazz Discussions" presentations such as Andrew Gilbert's talk with jazz educator and vibraphone legend Gary Burton. The Nightclub posed a particular sound reinforcement challenge because of the paucity of rigging points. In the end, it was not possible to hang an array at the front of the stage, so Neal devised a novel solution: a 50-foot truss was hung lengthwise down each side of the room, starting from the stage and running towards the back of the hall. At the stage end of each truss was hung a CQ-1 wide coverage main loudspeaker, while a CQ-2 narrow coverage main loudspeaker was cantilevered off the back end of each truss.

The festival's most intimate performance space was the plush Coffee House Gallery, which normally serves as an off-track betting parlor for the Golden Gates Fields, Santa Anita, Bay Meadows, Del Mar, Cal Expo and Woodbine racetracks. The Gallery seats only 200, yet still saw performances ranging from solo to quintet groupings. The intimacy of the space rendered subwoofers unnecessary, since there was not enough volume in the venue for such low frequencies to develop. One CQ-1 loudspeaker per side was more than adequate to cover the space. Similarly, the Jazz Theater required only one CQ-1 on each side for its needs, which was not live music performances, but projected programming, such as a preview of Festival board member Clint Eastwood's upcoming film for PBS, Piano Blues, and speech events, such as the panel discussion where Eastwood and others discussed PBS's currently airing film series, "The Blues."

With its proximity to the ocean, the Monterey Jazz Festival presents a classic challenge in managing the effects of environmental change. Already pleased by the close correlation between the predictions of the MAPP Online software and the actual performance of the MILO system, Neal found a simple way to maintain that performance when the temperature and humidity changed: the LD-3 compensating line driver. In a satisfied tone, Neal related that "the other thing that really worked well for us was the LD-3. We went from very hot, dry days to cool, even foggy, nights. The difference in environment from daytime shows to evening shows was significant, but the LD-3 helped us keep it all under control."

The 100-plus degree weather, unusual for the area, kept cold drink and ice cream vendors busy all day cooling off overheated jazz fans, but the heat was the only thing that brought sweat to Mike Neal's brow as he added his stage pass from another flawless Monterey Jazz Festival to his collection.

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