
Snaring the Perfect Sound

Bartha Audio/Visual Helps a Skin-Care Firm Pull Out All the Stops for Its Annual Celebration.

Corporate gigs don't have the glamour of a rock show, but they also don't have the same requirements — a lot of times they have more. Corporate events aren't only about pumping lung-crushing SPLs — trying to maintain intelligibility and fidelity with a larger dynamic range than a rock show, while battling video, and lighting, is where the skill portion comes in. Bartha Audio/Visual recently used all its skills to turn the MGM Garden Arena into a convention hall for skin-care firm Arbonne's annual National Training Celebration, and then reinforced a marching band to rock out the attendees.

The Arbonne 2007 NTC ran from April 24–26 at the MGM Garden Arena at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Bartha Audio/Visual, based out of Columbus, Oh., was charged with bringing it to life. Chris Zervos, production manager for Bartha, started working with Arbonne in July 2006 for the 2007 event, which was to be organized around the theme "A Million Reasons Why." "The General Session is mainly training on current products, a release for their new products and a bunch of recognition for people's achievements throughout the year," says Zervos. "And they knew they had to be in the round to get the capacity out of the venue."

They placed four video screens over the stage, and placed four Meyer arrays at the corners, with an additional two arrays at either end of the arena.

"There were six clusters flown, all of which used an array of 10 Meyer MILO boxes," says Zervos. "And then four of the six arrays had two M3D subs on top, plus four more on the ground. Seven UPAs were also used for downfill off of the scoreboard structure." Which was fine by FOH mixer Mike Burt.

"It's always easy to make the Meyers sound good," says Burt. "We got a lot of compliments from people. I always get a number of people who come down to FOH, especially with these types of groups, and they're like, I sat way up there in section 219, and I could hear every word."

In order to get that sound, Burt uses a blend of new tools and experience. Burt will use SIM or Smaart to measure a room, and then work with his own ears to make sure the sound is true. He also works his delays a little differently when dealing with a corporate presentation.

"Most people just put the mains right up front, and everything's delayed to mains," says Burt. "I delay my mains to the kick drum or to my center focus on stage." Burt says this especially helps intelligibility when dealing with corporate speakers who are being projected onto huge video screens. When dealing with corporate events, he also finds it's helpful to meet with the speakers beforehand to get a sense of their voice so he can reinforce that, as opposed to flattening it through predetermined EQs.

"I want to hear what their voice sounds like, what the timbre of their voice sounds like, and that's what I try to mimic in the P.A.," says Burt. "I don't want to necessarily electronically enhance them. I want to do what our business is; I want to reinforce them."

Anyone who's worked a corporate gig knows there's usually one show-stopping number, and, as opposed to a rock show, it's usually at the beginning of the gig. This was no different. To publicize their new product, a line of makeup marketed to teenagers, Arbonne had the UNLV Marching Band and Drill Team rush the arena, playing along to a modified Gwen Stefani track. To start the number, though, Bartha lowered a single snare drum player from the video structure above the stage, miked with a Countryman E6 to capture the snare. As he started playing, the rest of the band entered the arena; their live audio was supplemented with the track in the rig.

“The important thing with running a live band with recorded audio like this — especially in a space like the arena — is to communicate with the band director and have them really try and listen to it. You can get a lot of weird delay happening with the kids on that,” says Burt. “I usually pump the track loud at the beginning to make sure that the players play in sync, and then I slowly try and drag the level down into the players a little bit. So I try and play off of it a little. I try and give them a hint of that lead beat and let them get on track, and when I sense them on rhythm, then I slowly try and track it back down a little bit.” And did that work?

“It really carried itself pretty well — even after you added about 17,000 screaming women.”

Screaming fans? Maybe those corporate gigs aren’t so different than rock shows after all.

GEAR

50 Meyer Milos

12 Meyer M3D Sub

4 Meyer MSL-4

4 Meyer CQ-1

2 Meyer PSW-2

2 Meyer UPJ

7 Meyer UPA

4 Meyer UPM

8 Meyer UM1P

1 Yamaha PM5D (FOH)

1 Yamaha M7 (MON)

2 Meyer Galileo System Processors

2 Instant Replay

12 Shure Wireless

6 Countryman E6 headsets

CREW

FOH Engineer: Mike Burt

MON Engineer: Jeff Higgins

Wireless Tech: Jason Fritz

System Tech: Frank Snipes

System Design: Kevin Conley/Jason Brentlinger

