

A perspective of the tour system, including flown EV X-Line arrays on delay, at a tour stop in Oakland.



In It Together

Revitalized concert sound for Kenny Chesney.
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Photos by Steve Jennings



Chesney performing with his Shure Axient wireless system outfitted with KSM9HS element.

What do you do when you're all dressed-up in a warehouse full of line array components and looking for a place to go? Maybe hitting the road with Kenny Chesney isn't a bad idea, especially if you're known around Nashville and have already been seen out cavorting with the likes of Alabama, Big & Rich, and other top-drawing country artists.

"There's a funny thing going on in the Music City," John Mills of Morris Light & Sound notes. "There are a lot of big sound companies in town. Trouble is, right now there are only about five artists who can support them. Three of them are locked-up so tight they'll probably never go anywhere else, one is kind of up for grabs a little, and then we have the other: Kenny Chesney."

John Mills wears the title of vice president of audio at Morris Light & Sound, and along with Morris president David Haskell, frequently jokes that the firm is the industry's "only 20-year-old, one-year-old company." An oxymoron at first glance, there is truth in the statement. While Morris Light & Sound is indeed a rather new entity, it sprang to life out of Morris Leasing, a division of Morris Management.

"The original company was not a rental company in the sense that it was only created to serve artists residing under the Morris Management umbrella," Mills explains. "Then one day not long ago the owner decided that his audio inventory needed to be making money on its own. Thus was born Morris Light & Sound."

Fixing & Learning

Despite the odds, Chesney and the new Morris Light & Sound had a good year, "fixing, learning, and digesting," according to Mills. At the end of last summer, Mills did some contract work for Haskell, then was subsequently offered the Morris VP position in January of this year. To better insure the new company's sonic reputation, between January and May, every loudspeaker, amplifier, and cable was taken all the way down and rebuilt as needed to factory specs.

"The original Morris Leasing systems were all customized for the Morris stable of artists,"

Mills notes. "Therefore, while in theory Kenny's stadium rig could have been made into an arena system, in reality it was only for stadiums, because there was no way to use the existing DSP to separate it."

Chesney's "Brothers of the Sun" tour this year, also featuring fellow country superstar Tim McGraw, kicked off with a system capable of meeting the needs of different-size shows for years to come, showcasing a new design incorporating the company's fleet of Electro-Voice X-Line line array boxes and Precision Series P3000 amplifiers. "Making us more efficient, high-performing, and adaptable is the fact that now we're entirely digital before the preamps," Mills explains. "I took everything this year to (Audinate) Dante.

"In combination with the digital drive, the Dante transport made a stunning difference compared to last year. Everyone is blown away and asking what we did to change things so noticeably."

With Dante serving as the drive system behind the interconnects to virtually everything, five EV N8000-1500 NetMax matrix controllers are spread throughout the system serving in a multitude of capacities ranging from switcher and controller to provider of EQ.

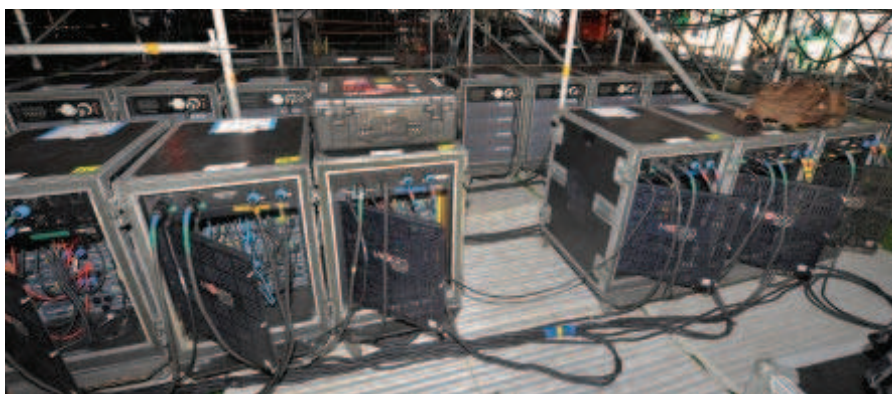
"That's what my tablet talks to," Mills says of the digital NetMax devices, "and they allow me to perform an endless series of tasks. I have one NetMax at front of house that I use as a console switcher, zone controller, and for EQ; units at each of the delay towers, and another stage left and stage right to process all the FIR filtering to the arrays."

The Right Thing

Typically there are three X-Line line array columns hanging on each side. Spanning 20 deep for mains, another 20 deep for the sub hang, and 16 deep for the out hang per side, the system is further buttressed by delay towers weighing-in with another 16 boxes apiece.



System designer John Mills keeping an eye on system parameters with Rational Acoustics Smaart.



The EV Precision amplifiers and Dante-networked NetMax matrix controllers tucked under the stage.



Dual PRO9 consoles for monitor engineers Phillip Robinson and Brian Baxley.