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Brand New & Modest Mouse

by Kathy Vargo ▪ in Production Profile ▪ Created: 16 August, 2016



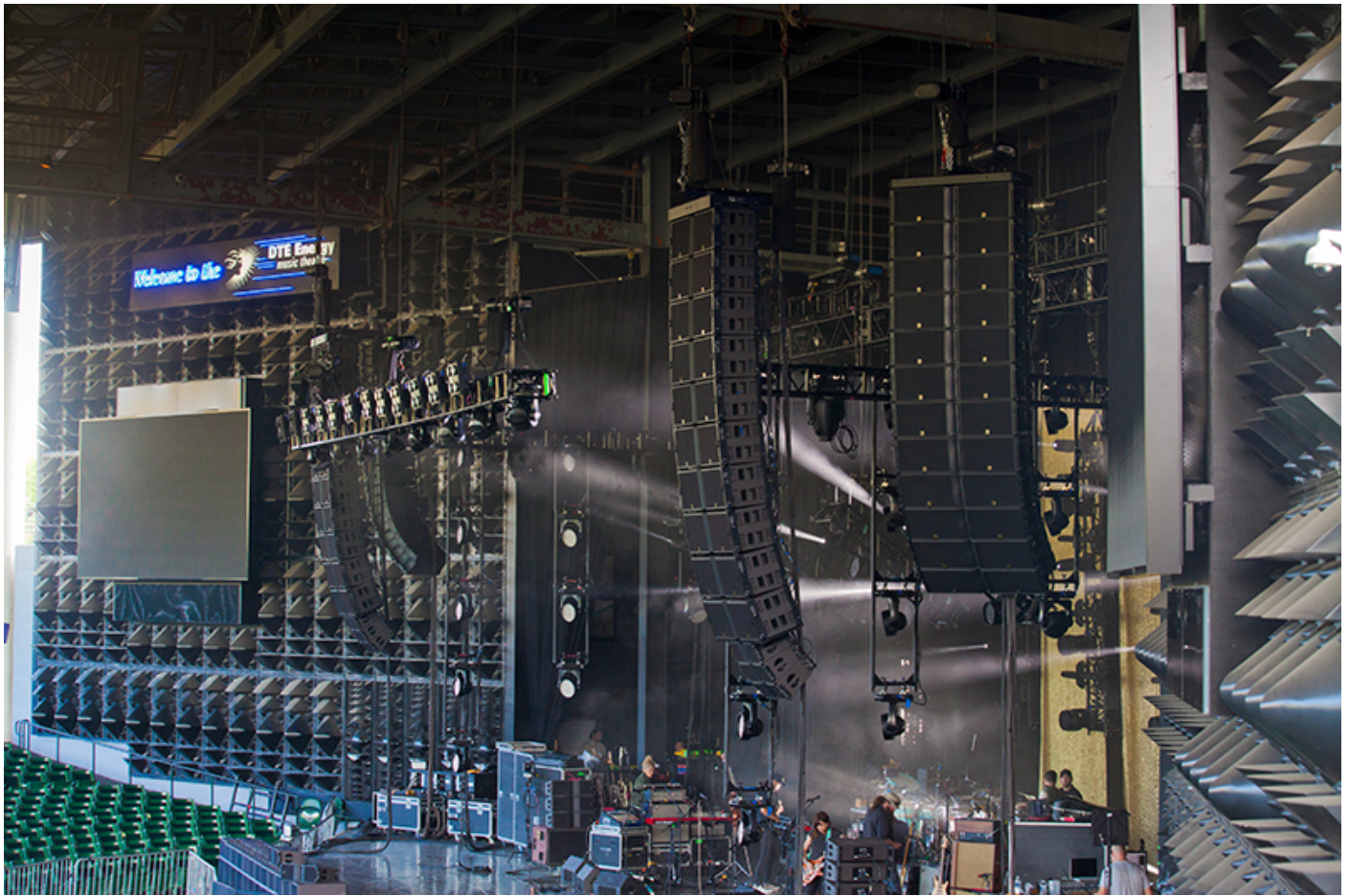
Brand New tour photo by Greg Good/Pixel Oasis

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Thunder Audio Makes Mighty Sounds on Co-Headlining Tour

Two major modern rock bands ignite on a blistering co-headlining tour. Twenty-four U.S. cities in just a month's time, no additional support acts, both bands to play full headlining sets and alternate closing the show. Primarily playing major outdoor amphitheaters, Portland-based alt-rock veterans Modest Mouse and Long Island, NY emo-grunge band Brand New are artists whose styles demand both power and finesse.



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From an audio perspective, this was clearly an undertaking for a skilled and seasoned company. System provider Thunder Audio of Livonia Michigan — Modest Mouse's audio touring vendor — selected an L-Acoustics K1/K2 rig to bring this tour to life. Tour audio crew chief Paul Villarreal is the son of Thunder Audio owners Tony and Jocelyn Villarreal, and he has virtually grown up on tour. At 28, Paul has coordinated many major festivals and in fact, headed up his very first tour as audio crew chief for Modest Mouse in 2007.



Modest Mouse tour photo by Greg Good/Pixel Oasis

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The Tour Challenge

Having familiarized himself with Brand New's audio needs on several one-off shows, Villarreal was well prepared to put together an L-Acoustics package to meet the tour's unique challenges. "Proper planning and the ability to very quickly adapt have been crucial," he says. "The great thing about the K1/K2 system is that it's so flexible — we can reconfigure the system depending on the venue and perform quick load-ins and changeovers."



The audio crew, from left - Joel Livesey, Ethan Thompson, Paul Villarreal, Matt Bitz, Jacob Feinberg, Mike Grabarczyk and Joe Hawley

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System tech Mike Grabarczyk (a.k.a. “Mikey-G”) confirms that the L-Acoustics system’s ease of use has been essential with the tight tour schedule.

With the unique situation of two headlining bands, each with their own touring crew, the need for seamless integration and a quick workflow is essential. “L-Acoustics’ Soundvision prediction software gives super-accurate measurements,” says Grabarczyk. “Once in the air, we know that we have the best possible configuration, and never need to bring it back in for tweaking.”

Modest Mouse FOH engineer Jacob Feinberg says that the K1/K2 system has made a real difference in Modest Mouse lead singer Isaac Brock’s vocals. “I’ve mixed Isaac on about every box out there, and this package has given Isaac’s vocals noticeable clarity,” he says. Modest Mouse can have up to ten musicians onstage — everything from horns to sleigh bells to chimes and even a propane tank — and “being able to hear all of these details is really specific to this rig — many have commented on the difference,” he adds.

Feinberg also notes that the strong relationship between Thunder Audio’s team and the Modest Mouse crew has paved the way for some creative FOH innovation. Feinberg and Paul Villarreal crafted a unique FOH mixing board for this tour, consisting of a Midas DL43124-channel preamp/splitter with an Avid console. Feinberg emphasizes that Thunder Audio’s resources and their commitment to designing this tour package for the most optimal results gave them the ability to perform this successful package. “It was a challenge to get the two to interface,” says Feinberg, “but we love the results!”

Joe Hawley, FOH for Brand New, agrees. “The Midas/Avid rig took a couple of shows to get 100 percent dialed in, but it’s really clear and opened up,” he says. “I’m using fewer plug-ins and less compression. The system itself is very musical, and I have less of a need to add color to vocals, drums, and so on.

“This is the first time I’ve worked with Thunder, and I’ve really appreciated their expertise and the L-Acoustics system,” Hawley continues. “With two bands used to headlining, changeovers can really be a challenge. We share monitors and in-ear packs, but everything else needs to be specific to the band. With this crew and equipment, we’ve been managing to do the changeover in less than 45 minutes.”

The Monitor Side

Joel Livesey, monitor engineer for Brand New, says that working with Thunder Audio and the L-Acoustics gear has been fantastic. “Brand New is a very loud band, and we need to give the audience the appearance of volume — lots of heavy riff guitars and drums — without having to rip faces off,” he says.

“We need to safely achieve volume while still retaining the musicians’ natural sound, and the L-Acoustics KARA side fills and SB28 subs give us that full coverage.” he explains. “For monitors, you want volume, clarity and zero feedback. We’ve definitely achieved that here — this is the best-sounding monitor package I’ve ever worked with.”

Modest Mouse/Brand New Tour

AUDIO CREW

- **Sound Company:** Thunder Audio

- **Modest Mouse FOH Engineer:** Jacob Feinberg

- **Brand New FOH Engineer:** Joe Hawley

- **Crew Chief:** Paul Villarreal

- **Systems Engineer:** Mike “Mikey-G” Grabarczyk

- **Modest Mouse Monitor Engineer:** Matt Bitz

- **Brand New Monitor Engineer:** Joel Livesey

- **P.A. Tech/Mon Assistant:** Ethan Thompson

P.A. SYSTEM

- **Main Speakers:** L-Acoustics K1/K2 (configurable)

- **Side Hangs:** L-Acoustics K2 (configurable)

- **Front/Out Fills:** L-Acoustics KARA

- **Subwoofers:** L-Acoustics SB28

- **Amplification:** L-Acoustics LA8

- **System Control/Drive:** Lake

FOH GEAR

- **FOH Console:** Avid Profile

- **Outboard:** Midas DL431 preamps

- **Ancillary:** Rational Acoustics Smaart 7.5 software

- **Microphones:** Neumann, Sennheiser, AKG, Shure, DPA, Crown, EV, Audio-Technica, Earthworks

MONITOR GEAR

- **Monitor Consoles:** Avid Profile

- **Monitor Speakers:** Meyer Sound MJF-212a wedges, d&b M2/D12

- **Side Fills:** L-Acoustics Kara over SB28

- **IEM Hardware:** Shure PSM-900

- **Wireless:** Shure UHF-R with Professional Wireless GX-8 antenna combiner