

mobile *monthly* PRODUCTION

Bob Seger

JUST LIKE IT'S ALWAYS BEEN

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Grand Ole Opry House

Post-Diluvium and Post-Bellum, An Improved Opry House Rises Out of the Flood

BY HANK BORDOWITZ

On any normal day, The Opry House, home to the Grand Ole Opry since 1974, has a lovely view of the Cumberland River. People can park for the Opry right on the river's bank. When the river overflowed its banks during the first weekend of May 2010, the new expanded Cumberland River inundated the Opry House and grounds with water as deep in places as 13 feet. One of the world's most famous stages, usually occupied by stars like Mel Tillis and Brad Paisley, hosted 4 feet of water.

While the building underwent repairs and renovation, the Opry went on. Over the course of the almost five months it took to put the Opry House back into fighting shape, the Grand Ole Opry itself – the longest running regular broadcast on the planet – never missed a beat. Instead, it took a journey back in history, moving back to Nashville's War Memorial Auditorium for that Tuesday's performance. The War Memorial, along with the Ryman Auditorium were two of the many venues from which housed the show since the first broadcast of the WSM Barn Dance in 1925 – the show that turned into the Grand Ole Opry two years later. During the five months it took to refurbish the Opry House, the Grand Ole Opry played in half a dozen Nashville venues. "The Grand Ole Opry is a show, it's not a place," says the Opry's VP Pete Fisher. "It's where a family of country music performers – we like to use the phrase 'New Stars, Superstars and Legends' – come together every week and present all the diversity of country music. It's really a celebration of the past, present and future, with a high regard to the legacy of country music."

The Opry House, however, *is* a place and an important Nashville venue. Since it opened in 1974, the building has had little down time. As the world's hub of country music, the Opry is booked nearly all year. It has its own shows two or three times a week and also book the venue out. During the day, the Opry is a major tourist mecca. This has made major upgrades to the Opry a challenge. Upgrades include: replacing the front of house speakers a couple of years ago and putting in new stage monitors weeks before the flood, but it has never been



easy. In this way the flood had a silver lining.

"We were given the opportunity to really upgrade the Opry House in a manner which we would not normally do," Fisher confirms. "With the support of our parent company, Gaylord Entertainment, and the city of Nashville, we were able to do it the way we felt is should be done. There was no request that was denied in bringing the building to the incredible quality that it's at now."

After spending days under water, much of the wiring needed to be replaced. As they took care of that, they also did an extensive run of fiber-optic cable. They changed the FOH amplification system and put in another new monitor system. A new Vari*Lite system took the place of the old Martin moving lights. Of course all the curtains and other soft goods had to be scrapped in favor of new, un-water-stained cloth. Additionally, the old rigging system had to be



replaced as well as the preexisting video components, which were replaced with a HD projection system. The old staging was torn out and a new, dark teak stage floor put in.

"The signature Opry barn now has an HD digital wall," Fisher muses. "Probably nothing that Roy Acuff or Minnie Pearl ever imagined. These upgrades make the Opry House one of the finest venues in the world. It's now not only one of the world's most famous venues, it has



process went something like, “This is the home of country music, so let’s do this up like a home,” Fisher says. “The furnishings, fabrics, the decorating touches all strove for that homey touch. There’s a real comfortable, warm feeling backstage. The artists just rave about it, and we couldn’t be happier with the end result. The new dressing rooms really tell the story of the Opry, and our green room is more like a family room. I think the artists gain a greater sense of what the Opry stands for. That has translated on the stage and on the airwaves in every show we’ve presented since our opening night.”

These new dressing rooms honor the storied history of the Opry. However, when you have something with this much history, certain iconic items exemplify that bond with that past. One of the most performed songs at the Grand Ole Opry may well be “Will The Circle Be Unbroken.” Indeed, it was the closing hymn, if you will, at the May 4, 2011 show. They might have been singing about one of the most cherished items of the Grand Ole Opry House, a six-foot circle of oak taken from the Opry’s longtime home at the Ryman, and placed front and center on the new venue’s stage. A highlight of any country stars’ career is the moment they get asked to

with polyurethane kept actual damage to the country music talisman to a minimum. Brad Paisley and Little Jimmy Dickens unveiled it at the press conference announcing the grand re-opening of the Opry House on September 28, 2010.

Country music fans can see the Circle and the new dressing rooms and all the rest on a daily basis, as, along with the shows, tours of the Opry House have resumed. A year after the flood, the Opry House is back and better than ever.

“It’s not only great to be back in one place,” says Fisher, “it’s nice to be in such a great facility, too. We’re looking forward to a lot of great shows in the future.” 🙌

Schermerhorn Symphony Hall

Restoration of a New Building

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

One of the places that got hit the hardest by the flood was Nashville’s Schermerhorn Symphony Hall. Whereas places like the Grand Ole Opry and Soundcheck were inundated by water flowing over the banks of the Cumberland River, the water that encroached on the Schermerhorn came as the result of an inundated water table. The result was 24 feet of water that completely submerged the basement and sub-basement of the building. The vast majority of everything on both floors was lost including the floor of the basement where seating dollies for the main floor concert hall are stored.

One of the main concerns in restoring the building was making sure something like this couldn’t happen again in the future. When the flood occurred, the building had only 1,000 gallons per minute of pumping capacity. That was the equivalent of draining a bathtub with a soup spoon. Another problem was pressure. Because the building was being pressed on all sides with water wanting to get into the building, the PSI at the point of entry was astronomical. The result was hydrostatic pressure that destroyed the floor between the basement and the sub-basement.

The first step was to allow the water to come into the building, thus being able to choose the path of entry as opposed to allowing the water to make that decision. Once it’s in the structure, it now has to be pumped out. However, no matter how much one tries to mitigate the outside pressure it will always have the capability of winning the battle unless the mode and path of egress are engineered beyond what one might ever imagine. The answer there was to install pumping capability to remove 20,000 gallons a minute.

Massive water evacuation capability notwith-



all kinds of enhanced technical capabilities.”

In addition to this, the backstage area received a major face-lift. All of the dressing rooms got stripped down and not just rebuilt but re-envisioned. Each of the 19 dressing rooms now has a theme, ranging from rooms honoring Opry legends like Porter Wagoner to rooms celebrating the Opry’s roots on WSM.

“In redoing the dressing rooms, the thought

“step into the circle.” In the refurbished Opry House, the circle remains unbroken.

“It was the first item to come out of the building,” Fisher confirms. “It was the item that most of the fans and artists and media were interested in.”

Fortunately, the circle was well made. Years of polishing, preservation and protection

M.L. Procise & Clair

Making It Happen for Bob Seger...Again

BY HANK BORDOWITZ

M.L. Procise III has had a long and illustrious career, mixed over 4,000 stadium and arena concerts and now serves as the Senior Director for Clair Global Touring. In all, he's been at this for 36 years, first with Showco and since 2000 when Clair bought Showco. Among many other clients, he has cared for Bob Seger's live audio needs for over a quarter of a century now, starting in the early 80s when Seger needed the kind of service that only companies like Showco and Clair could offer.



"Before they bought us back in 2000, Clair would say that their only real competition in quality was Showco, and Showco would say their only real competition in quality was Clair," Procise holds forth. "Both of our companies are global companies. We could send our systems all over the world, other companies don't have the wherewithal to do that."

Their relationship started simply – Showco bid on the tour and won. However, Procise has worked with Seger and his management ever since. That's a longstanding relationship in this capricious business. Seger isn't the only one. Many of Procise's clients have been with him for even longer.

"We still have the clients we started with back in the 1970s," he says. "We have a very loyal client roster. That's because we have a make-it-happen attitude. No matter what it cost, no matter what hoops we have to jump through to solve the problem, we spare no effort and expense."

Renowned in the live sound business, Procise never actually *mixed* for Seger. "When we started working with them, a guy named Jay Barth, better known as 'Hot Sam' was the sound mixer," he recalls. "He was Detroit born and bred. He had worked with a lot of R&B acts. They went with Rob 'Cubby'

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Management Team

Manager - Punch Andrews
Tour Mgr / Accountant - Bill Blackwell
Asst. Tour Mgr / Dir. Tour Security - John Rapp
Cpa Punch Enterprises - Frank Copeland
Publicity Punch Enterprises - Michael Boila
Radio Web Promotion - Art Penhallow Jr.
Office Mgr / Graphic Design - Anne Tenbusch
Detroit Prod. Coordinator - Jim Kaatz
Production Mgr - Tim Lamb
Production Assistant - Corey Vadala
Stage Mgr - Steve Nimmer
Tour Merchandise Mgr - Rob Feinstein

Crew

Bob's Tech - Skip Gildersleeve
Key Tech - Kurt Wolak
Alto Tech - Marty Gelhaar
Bass Tech - Mike Rush
Moose Tech - Steve Cohen
Guitar Tech - Andy Harrison
Drum Tech - Dave Johnson
FOH Engineer - Brad Divens
Monitor Engineer - Peter Thompson
Systems Engineer - Brett Stec
Audio Techs: Joshua Weibel, Michael Gamble
Lighting Designer - Bob Peterson
Lighting Director - Larry Boster
Lighting Crew Chef Steve Schumi
Lighting Crew: Jim Michaelis, Mike Caporale,
Kile McClure
Rigger - Billy Humphreys
Gr. Rigger / Carp. - Hector Mimosa
Bus Drivers: Ronnie Knox, Mike Edlin
Lead Truck Driver - Edgar Stuckey
Truck Drivers: Randy McDonald, Rob Tison,
Tony Sparrow, Rodger Baughman, (Merch
Truck) Jack Crawford



photographed

- 1: Mike Caporale
- 2: Peter Thompson - Monitor Engineer, John Rapp - Asst. Tour Mgr/ Dir. Tour Security
- 3: Marty Gelhaar - Alto Tech, Andy Harrison - Guitar Tech, Kurt Wolak - Key Tech, Steve Cohen - Moose Tech, Mike Rush - Bass Tech
- 4: Steve Nimmer - Stage Mgr
- 5: Steve Schumi - Lighting Crew Chef, Jim Michaelis - Lighting Tech, Mike Caporale - Lighting Tech, Kile McClure - Lighting Tech
- 6: Tim Lamb - Production Mgr
- 7: Michael Gamble - Audio Tech, Brad Divens - FOH Engineer, Joshua Weibel - Audio Tech, Brett Stec - Systems Engineer, Peter Thompson - Monitor Engineer
- 8: Corey Vadala - Production Assistant, Bill Blackwell - Tour Mgr / Tour Accountant, John Rapp - Asst. Tour Mgr / Dir. Tour Security
- 9: Larry Boster - Lighting Director



Bob Seger



LA8 amplified controllers.

Marcio Pilot, co-owner of Loudness and director of the company's sound reinforcement and live recording divisions, notes that Bocelli's FOH engineer, Andrea Taglia, was highly pleased with the K1 system's performance. "Andrea Taglia is a brilliant audio engineer with a tremendous ear for detail," he says. "He normally specifies KUDO and V-DOSC for Bocelli, but we were able to provide him with K1 for this performance and it sounded truly fantastic--extremely clear and natural--under his control. We heard glowing comments from many people on how incredible the entire performance sounded that evening."

According to Taglia, himself, "Working with Loudness was even better than I could have imagined. They provided the same standard

that I am accustomed to in Europe and the US, offering the highest quality gear like K1 and a hard-working professional crew to support it. It was a real dream!"

In the months since taking delivery of its K1 system, Loudness has used it on a diverse range of artists, including Bon Jovi, Rush, Eminem (F1 Rocks Festival), Rammstein, Tiesto, Motorhead, Norah Jones, Paramore and many Brazilian performers. The sound company also deployed the system at a huge New Year's Eve celebration for more than two million people on Rio's Copacabana Beach. Pilot adds that "the impressions of the system are always positive. It's a joy for engineers to use, and we even hear the audiences comment on the sound quality and power. From Bocelli to Rush, K1 is a perfect system for any stadium-sized performance." 🙌

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"Of course the biggest challenge is to get it to sound great everywhere in the room," said FOH Engineer Brad Divens. "Within that challenge, I have to get Bob's vocal to sit right up on top of the music. I want to look up on that stage and hear every single instrument. I hate looking at a stage and seeing instruments or vocals that I can't hear."

This show traveled in five trucks (plus one merch truck). There was no video, pyro, lasers or gags of any kind. It was done just like it's been done from the beginning. Maybe it's the historical nature of the show. Maybe it's the style of music. Regardless of what the X-factor is about this gig, there is a hyper-cohesive sense of camaraderie that is uncommon even in the tight knit culture of touring.

When Tim Lamb spoke of the loyalty of Bob Seger's fan base, he didn't leave himself and his crew out of the family portrait of people who have walked through their lives with Bob Seger's music. "It's about conveying this man's legacy and these songs and the way they were written, and it's about that to all of us on the crew," said Lamb. "It's a wonderful experience to watch this crew flow though the day. They do a great job out here, and they do it because they love their work, but they also love Bob and his music."

I guess working with Bob Seger is the thing I am the proudest of in my career," said Bob Peterson, "I'm very proud of this relationship. It's the first job I got out of high school, and I'll never let go of it." 🙌

it's easy to get involved with artists off-stage interests. Good things come from long hours on the bus together," says Browning.

Growing by leaps daily, The Browning Group looks to a bright future, adding artist management, full event production and staffing from key personnel to stagehand labor to logistics and gear. The Browning Group is a company on the move. Adding to an already impressive roster of skilled production professionals, it vets all members of their team to best utilize crew members talents matching their clients' needs to the right crew members and vendors globally.

Looking down the road and to be on the road for a long time to come, Browning and his team of passionate, talented, music loving touring professionals are proud to announce signing Debbie Gibson and the B-52s to management recently. In conclusion Mr. Phelps, your investigation complete, facts checked and insight into The Browning Group gained. Safe in the knowledge that The Browning Group is a company of dedicated professionals bound together by a passion for music and those who create it living and loving life on the road. 🙌

M.L. Procise & Clair continued from 26

Colby after that. For the last two tours, Brad Divens has been the engineer."

However, he remains a major part of the tour. Procise still hits the road with the acts and equipment during the early days of the Seger tours as a trouble shooter and expeditor. "I start tours off with him, solve problems," he says. "I have a dialogue with the manager. I've been with them since the beginning."

That said, Seger is not what he would regard as a "problematic" artist. "He's not a terribly needy musician," Procise says. "He's like a rock (no pun intended). One thing that we provide for him is the Prism Speaker system, which is a trapezoidal enclosure, an integrated system. Back in those days, everybody had conventional systems, a two box or a single box system. The Prism was introduced in 1986 or 87. He still uses it today. He doesn't like the line array, what he calls the 'banana peel.'"

Just one of the ways that Procise and Clair "make it happen." 🙌

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