



Crew

Sound Co: DBS Audio Systems
FOH Engineer: Andy Lytle
System Designer/Engineer: David Brotman
Crew Chief: Michael Shoulson
House A1: Mike Shinko

Gear

P.A. Speakers: (32) Meyer Sound Leopard (16/side)
Subwoofers: (12) Meyer 1100 LFC
Delay System: Two towers, each with (2) Meyer MSL4
System Tuning: Rational Acoustics Smaart Live; Meyer Compass; Lectrosonics TM system; (4) iSEMcon EMX-7150 mics
Drive Processing: (4) Meyer Galaxy 816 + RMServer; (2) Meyer Callisto/Galileo 616
FOH/Monitor Console: Midas M32 (artist-supplied)
FOH Near-Field Monitors: (2) Meyer Amie
IEMs: Artist-supplied
Power Distro: Lex 400-amp, 3-phase
Snakes: Whirlwind Audio W2 looms
Holts: (4) CM Lodestar 1-ton; Motion Labs 8-way controller

Unknown a year ago, the drive-in concert phenomenon continues to provide an interim solution in the live sound market, bringing Billy Strings to his fans, with the bluegrass sensation's first shows with a live audience since everything shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic in March. After making its television debut on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* in July, the band has been gaining national attention. For the three consecutive nights that opened String's "Meet Me at the Drive-In" tour (Sept. 11-13, 2020), the parking lot of the Mohegan Sun Arena in Wilkes-Barre, PA was transformed into an open-air venue with a capacity for 530 cars, creating a vast audience area.

As is common these days with most outdoor/drive-in shows, social distancing rules were in effect. Cars were spaced nine feet apart, with each vehicle allotted a tailgating/lawn chair space on the driver's side of the car. Masks were required for entry and would be worn whenever patrons left their area to visit concessions or restrooms. Five video screens

added visual impact, along with delay stacks on either side of the screen behind FOH. In addition to a 32-box Meyer Sound Labs Leopard FOH P.A. system, a low-power FM radio feed (from the FOH console and time-aligned to the main P.A.) was available for anyone preferring in-car listening.

» **The System**

Dave Brotman and Mike Shoulson of Coatesville, PA-based sound company DBS Audio Systems provided the audio solutions and support to the Strings' production team. Founded in 1992, DBS has been a go-to company throughout the region (and beyond) for more than a quarter-century, supplying production services, installations, sales and rentals to discerning clients ranging from the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival to Drexel and Penn State Universities, the Philadelphia Orchestra and more.

"What a wonderful experience it was to work a large show again — our first since December — and to work with such a professional crew and fabulous band as Billy Strings," beams DBS Audio Systems' president Brotman.

To ensure even coverage and clarity, the audio package consisted of 32 Leopard compact linear line arrays in left/right hangs of 16; and 12 ground-stacked (six/side) 1100-LFC low-frequency control elements. Two Meyer MSL-4s/side powered each of the two delay towers, which flanked the video screen behind the FOH position.

"Once again, the Leopards performed beyond my wildest expectations," Brotman said. "The band's FOH engineer Andy Lytle, Mike and I were absolutely amazed. From a low-end perspective, we opted not to do an end-fire configuration, though it would have helped on stage, due to the extreme width of the parked cars. Once tuned, the 1100-LFCs performed wonderfully and soared happily all the way back to the end of the parking lot, a distance that was easily 500 yards-plus. The 1100-LFC is the most musical sounding subwoofer I have ever heard. With an upright bass and the wonderful overtones it naturally has, the 1100-LFCs only complemented the bass players' sound. No coloration, just an incredibly musical loudspeaker at any volume."

» **It's Complicated...**

Even the most "routine" gig can face some snags along the way. "It was pretty windy on a couple of the days, and thankfully, with the long line of elements (16 Leopards/side), I was able to go really soft on my P.A. angles," Brotman explains. "Even with all the wind, the horns held together and we got a really nice long throw — even at 300 feet. The Leopards were great, and at the FOH position, some 200 feet from the stage, they sounded like they were right in front of you."

Another quirk came from the location itself. "There were some challenges caused by the way the asphalt heats up and cools down, which can affect the way you are tuning the system," says Brotman. "Also, the topography of the property was odd, with a parking lot that sloped upward from the stage about 500 feet out. I had to add a couple degrees of tilt to the main hang just to get above that bump in the far back, 700 feet out. And it was such a massive parking lot that trying to time-align the rig to the FM feed was pretty arbitrary and mostly for people in the far back of the parking lot. But for the most part, everybody was listening from outside their cars."

» **Back In the Saddle Again**

With drive-in concerts serving as a new solution to producing live events, everyone

from the production teams to the artists to the audience was excited to be experiencing live music. "Everyone we came in contact with was just thrilled to be there, be performing, and be reinforced by, in my opinion, one of the best loudspeaker systems on the planet. Also, a big thanks goes out to Pat McGlynn from Mountain Productions, the staging company we have worked with for decades," Brotman notes.

"We've done these style concerts in the past, but nothing on this scale and it was fun to do a much larger show this time," Brotman adds. "Being out there and doing this show for three days was great. It felt wonderful to be back out and working with this really talented, hard-driving bluegrass band, was the icing on the cake because the band was so good."

Billy Strings was slated to continue the "Meet Me at the Drive-In" tour for two sold-out shows Sept. 16 and 17 in McHenry, IL, followed by two nights in Peoria, IL on Sept. 18 and 19 at Expo Gardens. Earlier this summer, Billy Strings hosted livestreams from venues across Nashville for his "Streaming Strings" livestream performances, including two shows from City Winery Nashville that features a Meyer Sound house system. **FH**

For more info about DBS Audio Systems, visit: dbsaudio.com.

Near-Fielding at FOH

At 200 feet from the stage, the front-of-house mixing position was significantly farther away than FOH engineers are used to. Well-known in studio circles, near-field monitors provide a live sound mix solution in difficult or unfamiliar environments. Near-fields are also ideal for pre-show mix tweaking without having to rock the entire venue. This event marked FOH engineer Andy Lytle's first time using Meyer Sound's Amie precision studio monitors at the console, which proved beneficial, especially given the increased distance from the stage.

Tracing its lineage back to Meyer Sound's Acheron screen-channel loudspeakers, the Amie is a compact, self-powered monitor designed for near-field listening. Each front-ported enclosure combines a 6.5" long-excursion woofer with a 1" dome tweeter on a constant-directivity waveguide for 80° x 50° (HxV) coverage. In addition, each box has two channels (one for each driver) of Class-D amplification and onboard DSP — EQ, phase correction, driver protection and signal division. Specs include a 45 Hz to 20 kHz frequency response and 120.5 dB peak SPLs. Each birch-ply cabinet is 15.3 x 9 x 13.25" (HxWxD) and weighs 25 pounds.

"The Amies' sound quality helped my mix drastically," says Lytle. "The clarity of the Amies was unbelievable, not to mention the low-end response. These monitors sound so good that I would trust them mixing the band side-stage any day. I would give these speakers a 10/10 rating and would suggest them to any FOH engineer looking for near-field monitors."