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Good Vibrations

by Clive Young

BRIDGEPORT, CT—Anyone who might think Jamband culture has cooled off in recent times need only have attended the annual Gathering of the Vibes festival this past August in Bridgeport, CT. Marking its 15th year, the fest featured more than 40 bands playing over 90 hours of music during the course of three days. Along with five members of the Grateful Dead performing with their respective bands, audiences got to see Furthur, Damian Marley with Nas, Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings, Primus, Robert Randolph & The Family Band, Little Feat, Galactic featuring Cyrus Neville, Umphrey's McGee, Jimmy Cliff and more.

If Jamband culture hasn't changed, the festival certainly has, as this year's event had a new audio provider in the form of

DBS Audio (Coatesville, PA) as well as a new stage configuration. Previously, GOTV had always alternated between two adjacent main stages in order to keep music flowing continuously. This year found the Vibes moving to a single stage, but the move wasn't dictated by the economy.

"We cut the stage platform in half, going from two to one, but we didn't necessarily cut the budget in half," explained Chris Hubbard, production manager. "We wanted to introduce more technology and go 'more green' by integrating additional LED lights and more of an audio platform."

While monitors were mixed on a pair of Yamaha PM5D-RH consoles and front of house sported a Midas Heritage 3000, many engineers at the festival were intrigued by a new Midas Pro6 desk at the



Helping gather the vibes were (l-r): Adam Correia, lead audio tech; Chris Hubbard, production manager; and Dave Brotman, house systems engineer/co-owner, DBS Audio.

FOH position. Hubbard recalled, "We advance with the artists, starting from the headliner and working our way back, and we'd ask, 'Do you prefer working on the Heritage 3000 or the Pro6?' And every engineer we talked to said, 'You have a Pro6 there? Can I have it? Is there some-

one there that can teach me how to use it?' The head of DBS, Dave Brotman, is the house systems engineer, and he has been an educator this weekend. He's so happy with it, not because it's a selling tool, but because it's a phenomenal console and he

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can show people how to use it.”

Once mixes left the Pro6, the crowd heard them via the new PA setup. In the past, when the festival used dual, adjacent stages, they each sported a main hang on the outside and shared a single array hung between them as well. This meant the outer hangs were a whopping 160 feet apart, so all music had to be heard in mono.

Moving to a single stage allowed the

festival to finally offer a proper stereo image via a sizable Meyer Sound rig featuring two-dozen Milos, as well as CQ-2s, M'elodies, UPJ-1Ps, UPQ-1Ps, 700-HPs, 650-PS, and for the delay towers, MSL-4s.

“They’re right off the factory line,” said Adam Correia, GOTV’s lead audio tech. “In fact, we had a Meyer SIM engineer come out and tune the entire field for us. The guy kept me up all night, but it was

worth it!”

Speaking having already been on-site for a number of days, Brotman was pleased with the event, remarking, “I think it’s really structurally well run, they care about the people and always put it together nicely with the right help. The only way we can make it happen is to have people like Chris and his crew, so we’ve got the right people in the right places. It’s something that really makes it a much easier weekend, even at 20 hours a day.”

Brotman first got interested in audio decades ago when he followed the Grateful Dead, taping shows, so it was fitting that the company that grew out of his hobby was now providing sound for members of that band. It’s a similar story for the festival itself, which developed out of a one-off event to commemorate the passing of Jerry Garcia. That event, Deadhead Heaven, was conceived by Ken Hayes, founder of Terapin Tapes, which used to sell blank media via mail order to tapers like Brotman. With the sound company and festival itself clearly on the same wavelength, it’s no surprise that Hayes happily remarked, “The crew has done an outstanding job, with Dave Brotman and Chris Hubbard at the helm.” That’s called being grateful.

Midas
midasconsoles.com

DBS Audio Systems
dbsaudio.com

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