

CASE STUDY

PERFORMING ARTS



OPPORTUNITY

The Ryman Auditorium needed a consistent audio experience for every seat, especially in under-balcony sections that suffered from limited sight lines and uneven coverage.



SOLUTION

The audio team was won over by the JBL VTX A12, a compact, lightweight loudspeaker aimed at mid- to large-scale touring applications for its clarity, cohesiveness and lack of coloration.



We greatly improved the under-balcony experience for clarity. It's not so much volume; it's definitely coverage. You want everyone who bought a seat to have the same experience. That was the goal."

RYMAN AUDITORIUM, TENNESSEE

For over 125 years, Nashville, Tennessee's Ryman Auditorium has built a reputation as being one of the world's most beloved music entertainment venues. "The Ryman" story starts in 1885 when it became a Union Gospel Tabernacle and was soon referred to as the Carnegie Hall of the South. From the 1940s to the 1970s it served as the long-time home of the Grand Ole Opry and has showcased a who's who of music performers ever since. Today it continues as one of the most sought after, continually booked and sold out music halls for a wide range of music artists.

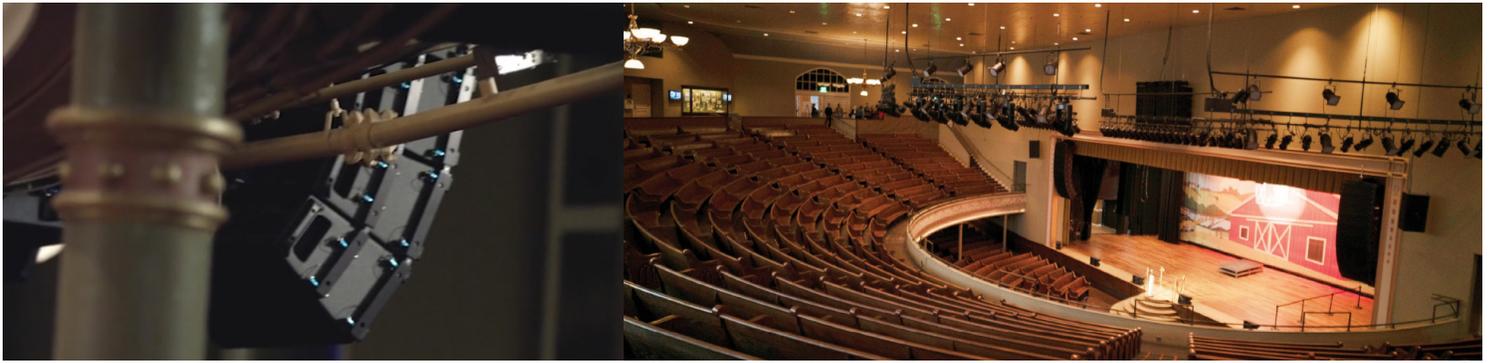
One of the key factors behind the Ryman's storied success, is the level of attention and care it receives by its caretakers and technical staff. Throughout its lifetime, the Ryman has been remodeled, re-configured and re-tooled, numerous times, with the goal each time of reinforcing the venue's legendary acoustics. Since 1994 and through two other sound upgrades, JBL loudspeakers have been chosen again and again to ensure that artists sound their very best from every seat in the house.

Most recently, Ryman staff were challenged to take advantage of the latest loudspeaker innovations to yet again, improve the sound throughout the venue, especially under the balcony. The HARMAN team visited the Ryman to experience the JBL upgrade for ourselves and to talk to staff to get their thoughts on its latest inclusion of JBL VTX A12 Line Arrays, JBL VT4886 Line Arrays and JBL V4883 Subwoofers.

Why do you think the Ryman has become such a popular venue?

"The Ryman is an amazing building, 125 years ago it opened as the Union Gospel Tabernacle and in the last 125 years this building has been a Church, it's been a performance venue for theater and opera," said Sally Williams, Ryman Senior VIP of Operations. "But it was also the home of the Grand Ole Opry from 1943 to 1974. Because of that, the history attracts artists."





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The new system takes the under-balcony from eight passive speakers with eight zones to eight micro-line arrays utilizing JBL VT4886s with time-aligned VT4883 subwoofers.

These zoned arrays have quadrupled the coverage energy for seamless sound in every seat.”

What are some of the challenges in ensuring that the Ryman has the right audio technology in place to support the artists?

“It is technically difficult to meet the challenges of today’s artists in an environment where you have a museum around you,” said Jeff Hatfield, Ryman Technical Director. “The experience has greatly improved in the sense that we’ve got a new level of coverage, particularly in the under-balcony area, that we’ve never experienced before. JBL has been a key component to the audio system here, since it was resurrected back in ‘94.”

How have needs changed over the years in the equipment to ensure technology evolves to support the evolving sound of the artists?

“The older system was really built for Blue Grass in light theatrical stuff,” said Mark Thomas, Ryman Audio Services Director. “The more that the resume got longer and longer with the different acts that were playing here, we were kind of running out of room far as headroom on the system, we couldn’t keep up with some of the louder stage volumes. We realized if we were going to keep trying to do those kinds of shows, it was time to update our system.”

Why were JBL speakers selected for this upgrade?

“You want a really even coverage when you introduce a new sound system, and we chose HARMAN JBL because they delivered the goods with their new A12,” said Les Banks, Ryman Production Manager and Audio Supervisor.

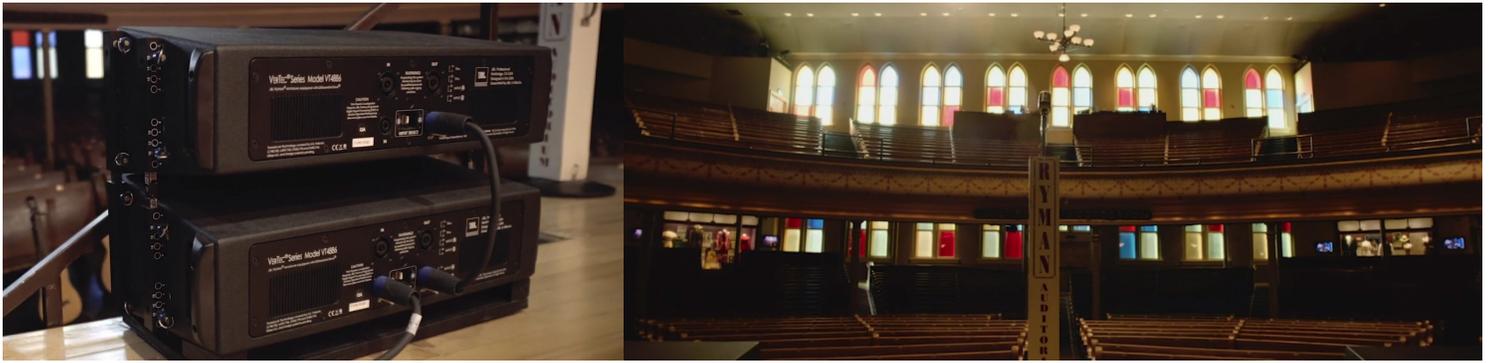
With this upgrade, what kind of coverage were you able to deliver?

“Every seat has a good ability to hear the sound system, hear the performance,” said Dan Heins of Clair Solutions. “Even the ushers are coming up to Les and telling him how much of an improvement it is.” Mark Thomas, Ryman Audio Services Director added, “They (JBL A12s) have the clarity, they have the impact. I think they (the audience) feels like they’re really part of the show now, where that wasn’t the case in the past.”

Why are upgrades, like this one from JBL, important to the Ryman’s future success?

“We’re a living, breathing building and so we can’t stop at the history,” said Williams. “We have to continue to add new technology. We have to continue to welcome new types of artists. And I feel like this system is hitting a home run there.”





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PRODUCTS USED

JBL VTX A12 LINE ARRAY LOUDSPEAKERS

JBL VT4883 AND VT4886 SUBWOOFERS



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