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Heroic Production

Music Act Offers Entire Audio Package

MINNEAPOLIS—Over the past decade, the Temporary Heroes Orchestra has garnered a reputation as one of the Upper Midwest's top entertainment acts for corporate meetings and special events. According to owner/music director Jon Young, the 14-member Minneapolis-based ensemble—amazingly, with only one replacement in 10 years—has become a stable and profitable business “because we over-deliver on the quality of music, the quality of people and the quality of sound.”

Young's passion for impeccable sound, initially focused on the band's own music, recently prompted the creation of a spin-off enterprise: Temporary Heroes Productions. Though the Temporary Heroes Orchestra (THO) is still very much in business, clients may now book a complete audio production package apart from the band.

“As our business has developed over the years, we discovered that the quality of the PA system can be a real market differentiator,” explains Young. “Most bands in our market will spend



Minneapolis' Temporary Heroes Orchestra may be the best-equipped cover band ever, carrying a Yamaha PM1D and Meyer M2D line array (inset) to every gig.

the minimum they have to in order to get the job done, but often with results that aren't satisfactory. We chose a different path, and as a consequence, many clients started asking us to provide sound for their entire event.”

The THO faced a turning crucial turning point in mid-2002. Their Meyer Sound system,

based around the compact UPA-1P boxes, had helped generate considerable add-on work. However, additional mixing tasks were demanding more console inputs, while multiple setups cried out for programmability, so Young took the plunge and invested in a Yamaha PM1D digital console.

"At first, I thought I might have over-purchased with that desk," Young confesses, "but as I got requests to do more meetings, and then larger meetings, I started to see a growing opportunity. Pretty soon, we were not merely augmenting another rental PA, but actually brokering the whole sound package."

After consulting with key regional meeting planners, who promised additional business if he continued forward, Young plunged in even further with the purchase of a Meyer Sound M2D compact curvilinear array system. THO's production arm now has a dozen of the full-range, self-powered cabinets and six of the companion self-powered M2D sub compact subwoofers, all acquired from Crossroads Audio in Dallas.

Young's positive impressions of the M2D system's utility were fixed even before it left for the first gig. "My engineer, Kirk Schutrop, and I had hung six of them in the warehouse," he recalls. "I left while they were still up and—I didn't know this until afterwards—he took them down all by himself and put them back in the cases. It speaks to the simplicity of the rigging that he could do it safely by himself, though I don't really recommend it."

After mixing four events on the M2D system, both with and without the band, Schutrop is satisfied with the new rig. "I

just love it," he says. "The top boxes are transparent right from the high through the mids and lows, and I can't get over the sound of the subs. They are easily the smoothest sounding I've heard yet."

As the lead engineer, Schutrop usually accompanies the new M2D system even when the band stays home, but with two complete production packages and competent backup engineers now available, the band plays on when the "A" rig is elsewhere.

Purchased just over five years ago, the THO "B" rig comprises six compact Meyer Sound UPA-1P loudspeakers and four USW-1P compact subwoofers. Comments Young, "We're still running full program material for a large R&B show band through it in smaller places—though we've used it for up to 5,000 people at an outdoor 4th of July event. It's also a nice system to add on to our M2Ds for front or side fill, or as delays."

When the new PM1D is away, the band relies on a pair of smaller Yamaha boards (M3000 and O1V) along with a 40-input Crest LM monitor board, but Schutrop confesses he's now reluctant to work apart from the new board. "It's by far the best console I've ever worked on," he says. "It has features you can only dream of in an analog desk. The ability able to set up mixes on your laptop and then load them in right before the show is a huge timesaver."

Elsewhere in the THO equipment inventory, the band is heavily invested in a variety of Shure products: a complete PSM600 personal system (with custom ear molds by Sensaphonics), a UC wireless mic package with both handheld and lavalier transmitters, and a large stock of

wired mics (SM58, Beta58, SM57), though with key models from Sennheiser and EV represented as well.

After a few months of augmenting THO's good-time music with "semi-detached" corporate assignments, both Schutrop and Young are finding that their new production venture has proven a risk worth taking. Schutrop admits he enjoys balancing corporate presentations with livelier evening festivities, while Young has found the combination both pleasurable and profitable.

"It's always been my dream to have really good equipment that works all the time, run by people who know what they are doing, and working for clients who care about quality results," says Young. "Now I'm living my dream, and I'm having fun doing it."

Nevertheless, Young is not one to let current success breed complacency. It still boils down to hard work, he notes, referring to his original inspiration for the group's name. "When you're up on stage and everybody's dancing and you're in the groove, you truly are the hero," he admits. "But then an hour later, you're just somebody schlepping equipment back to the truck. You've had your few minutes of fame for the night."

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