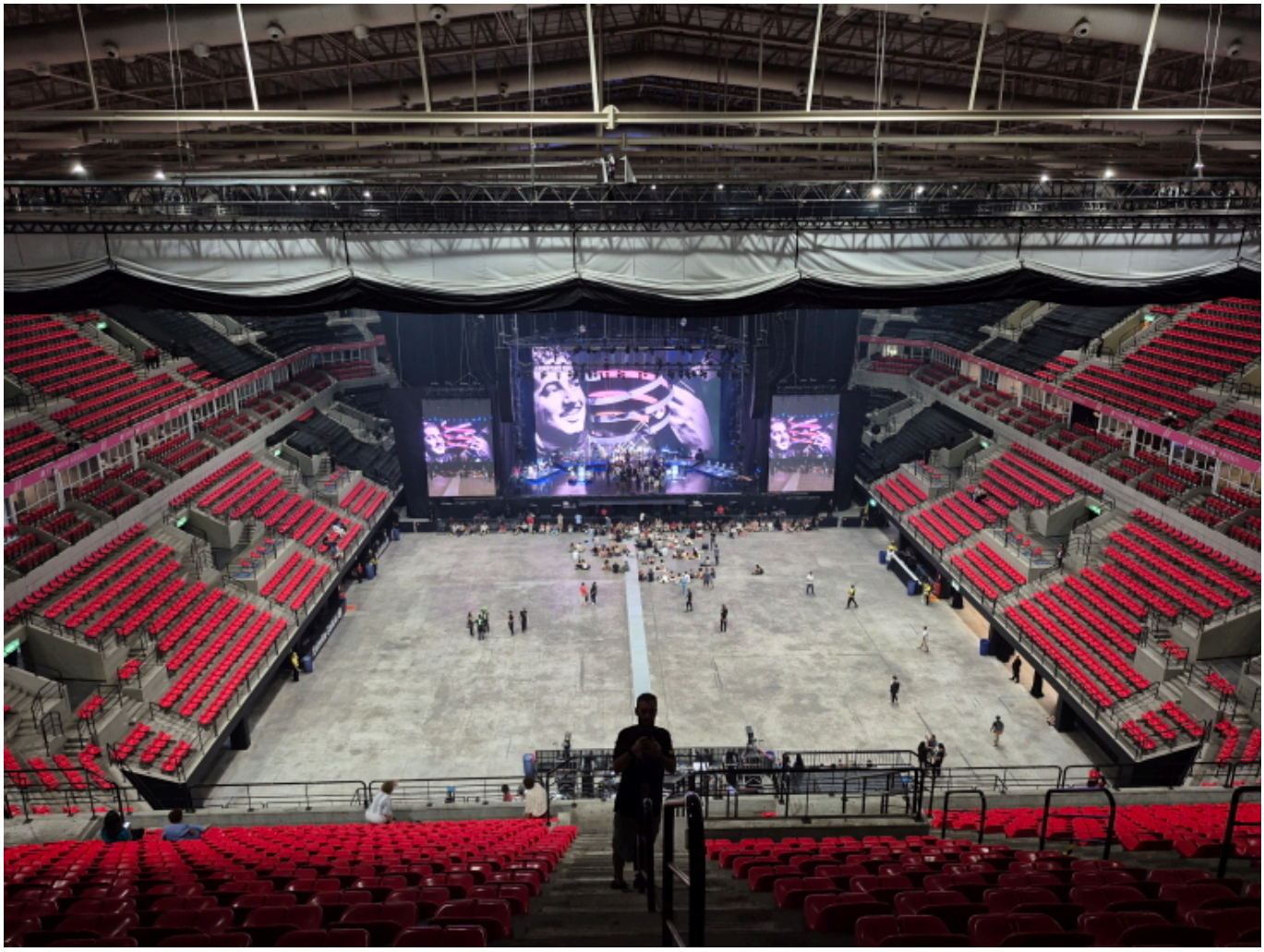
Martin Audio for Gilberto Gil



After a career spanning over six decades, Brazilian music legend Gilberto Gil is midway through a farewell tour titled Tempo Rei. This is taking him through sports palaces and stadiums in nine Brazilian cities - including the 42,000-cap Ligga Arena in Curitiba and the Farmasi Arena in Rio di Janeiro - and is scheduled to run until November. At all but one of the shows he has been playing through an evergreen Martin Audio MLA loudspeaker array, provided by partner Gabisom Audio Equipment.

Responsible for the sound system design, optimisation and recording is Martin Audio devotee, the eight times Latin Grammy award-winning Daniel Carvalho, who has regularly mixed through MLA - a popular presence in Brazil since it first appeared at the famous Rock In Rio festival. “Farmasi Arena [aka the Jeunesse] is not an easy venue,” he admits. “It has a long reverb on the low end and the shows there are known for delivering a muddy sound. But with the low leakage of MLA, side lobe reverberation is much lower in volume and the clarity of the vocal penetrates the field comfortably with the electronic processing. With normal

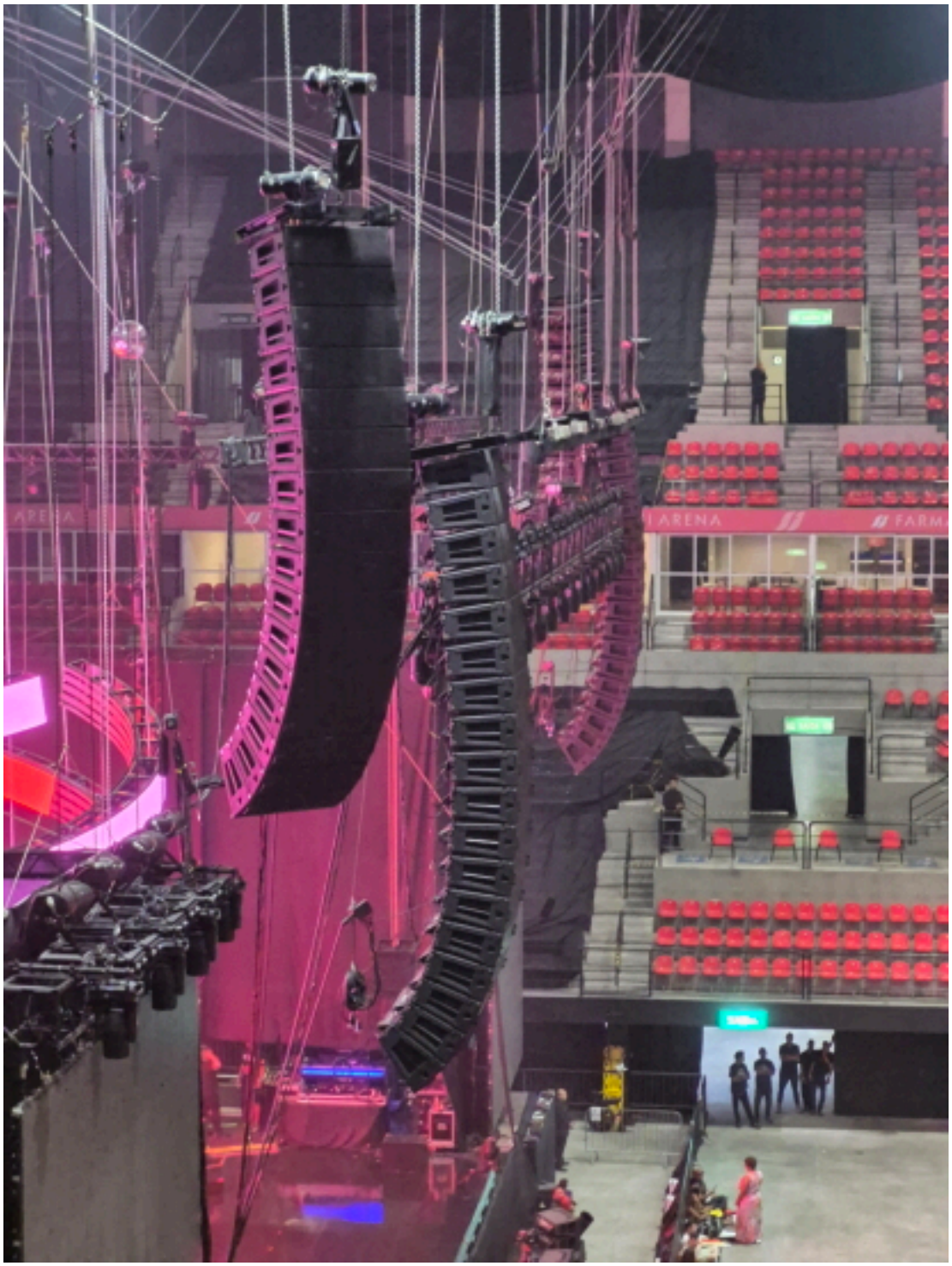
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systems, production uses a delay for upper balcony but with the long throw of the MLA system we were able to do without.”

The PA comprised 17 MLA and an MLD per side, and 17 outfills (also with a single MLD). A castellated subwoofer array of 34 MLX speakers and eight MLA Compact front fills completed the set-up. “Many musicians and producers commented that it was the best sound they had ever heard in the house,” noted Carvalho. “We certainly had no complaints.” This despite being unable to fly the subwoofers due to loading restrictions, as they have been doing in other venues.

Most of the array optimisation was prefigured in Martin Audio’s DISPLAY software. “I use the DISPLAY 3 (with WPL in place of MLA) to gain some insight of the horizontal coverage and azimuth of the arrays. In places, it just required some minor EQ and level in the delayed arrays to align with the main PA. I could then walk around with the venue software and Smaart computer and tune it all.”

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The ’Hard Avoid’ feature was deployed to great effect. “It’s an amazing feature that makes MLA game changing,” he says. “It’s more than a cardioid in the way it keeps sound off the stage. With the PA at full volume Gil asked during sound check: ‘Is the PA really on?’ The volume before feedback we can get, together with the castellated subs makes the stage clean and the musicians comfortable. As Brazilian MPB (Brazilian popular music) songs are noted for having very quiet moments, the Hard Avoid feature makes everything possible in large venues.”

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Gilberto was supported by an exceptional backing band including many of the Gilberto family (sons, grandsons, daughter and extended family) - with a string quartet and horn section. He also introduced some surprise guests at the Farmasi, like Caetano Veloso, Anitta, Marisa Monte and lulu Santos. The shows here extended over four days, with 17,000 people witnessing the legend each night. Describing the experience, Daniel Carvalho, said, “From the very first moment it was clear to all that the sound was at another level.

“Gil is 83 years old, and his voice came through loud and clear on top of a big band with a lot of percussion, horns and guitars. All Brazil’s greatest artists respect Gil and came to the show - many commenting on how impressed they were with the sound; they could hear everything clearly to the point that it sounded like a CD. “Gustavo Mendes, Gil`s FOH sound engineer, was so impressed [with MLA] that he shared the same concerns as I: ‘How can we do a show without this system’? Each time we walk the venue to listen, it is so impressive the way it sounds the same at each seat. Maths really is like magic.” And his final word? “This system was so far ahead of its time that nowadays we see other brands trying to do what MLA was doing an incredible 15 years ago.”

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