Martin Audio's MLA Mini used at Billy Porter’s showcase for Bloomingdale’s



L-R: Ethan Jose, Mike Alvarez, Johnn Fedor, Matthew Duane, Chris Lapke

One of the highlights of New York’s holiday season is the unveiling of the seasonal windows at the City’s premier department store, Bloomingdale’s. Providing the sound for the opening show which marks the occasion, and sees crowds thronging the streets on the corner of 59th Street and Lexington Avenue in midtown Manhattan, is Frost Productions. The service company’s association with Bloomingdale’s extends back to 2016, but this year the store upped the ante, featuring Billy Porter and a full five-piece band, spread across a 40ft stage set in front of four of the feature windows.

Bloomingdale’s theme for its flagship store this year was ‘Best Holiday Ever’ and Frost Productions’ team leader, Mike Alvarez, had no hesitation in specifying a Martin Audio MLA Mini in four hangs for the 20 minute show, knowing they could get the sound exactly where they wanted for the flamboyant stage performer and actor.

The low profile of MLA Mini enabled him to ground stack two MLA Mini rigs, underpinned with WS218X 2 x 18 subwoofers in the centre, without obscuring sightlines. At the same time, two outer hangs of four MLA Mini were pole-mounted to an MSX 1 x 15 sub, while their much deployed Martin Audio CDD-LIVE 8’s provided additional satellite fills and FOH near fields.

As back-up the sound designer also provided three of his favoured Martin Audio XE300 wedges - two downstage centre for a stereo mix and one as a cue wedge for

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the monitor engineer. “The monitor wedges are among my favourites,” he said. “The fact the XE300 is coaxial is so great, nothing too ‘phasey’, and with my choice of mics it delivered a lot of gain before feedback.”



The other benefit of using Martin Audio’s ground-breaking MLA technology was its unique controllability. Alvarez, who designed the system and also optimised the PA, turned immediately to the ‘Hard Avoid’ function. “This feature allowed me to provide coverage for guests across the street without having the PA hit the surrounding walls and windows of the buildings and cause slapback.

“The coverage and response across the listening area was truly optimal, without the annoyance of unwanted audio being where I didn’t want it: great results for our guests and the neighbours as well.

“You would never have known a concert was taking place a couple of blocks away, and a friend of mine - also a few blocks away - didn’t even realise there was a free show that evening! There were no complaints from NYPD and no stoppages for soundcheck during the day … just happy reactions from everyone who was able to check out the performance.” Foremost among these was a VIP area at the front.

Mike Alvarez was also delighted that Porter’s production team had invested full confidence in Frost Productions, entrusting them with the choice of Martin Audio PA and DiGiCo consoles, as well as provision of all personnel. Working with the systems designer was FOH engineer Chris Lapke - stationed at the stage left control position - Carl Lund on monitors, Matthew Duane (PA tech) and Ethan Jose and Johnn Fedor (stage techs).

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The fact that Frost Productions have been working with MLA Mini for the past six years made it a logical choice, once Mike Alvarez had set the optimisations. “As we were already very used to how MLA Mini sounded it was quick for the FOH engineer to dial in.

“For us Martin Audio isn’t just another brand,” he concluded. I” enjoy the products sincerely, especially the Hard Avoid function. As we are a niche company, specialising in events in places where there aren’t normally shows - such as zoos, museums, pop ups etc - Martin Audio is perfect because it’s a lot about focusing the sound where I want it; having a small speaker is great for hitting the listening area without the fear of bounce back.

“I’m driving Martin Audio from a design perspective, and I’d prefer creating a better listening experience by avoiding that slapback than throwing as much out there as I can.”

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