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Meyer Sound's MICA Lends Big Kick to Little Britain

To those unfamiliar with contemporary British pop culture, the magnitude of the *Little Britain* tour challenges credulity. How is it that a staged version of a TV comedy could tour the country for more than a year, quickly selling out cavernous venues where even legendary rock bands sometimes fail to fill the seats? The answer, in brief is that *Little Britain* isn't a typical TV show — or live production, for that matter. It's an over-the-top, push-the-envelope, runaway national phenomenon that punctuates rapid-fire verbal jousting with raucous sound effects and aggrandized incidental music. The *Little Britain* tour also pushes the limits of sound reinforcement, as reverberant acoustics coupled with uninhibited audience jollity often threaten to submerge the show's quirky banter. To ensure that no ticket holder misses a crucial syllable, *Little Britain* relies on a system of Meyer Sound MICA compact high-power curvilinear array loudspeakers as provided by a new U.K. sound hire company, Sonalyst of Crayford, Kent.

"MICA has been absolutely stunning," comments Sonalyst owner Rory Madden, a touring sound veteran whose FOH and monitor mixing credits encompass Tina Turner, Mark Knopfler, Joe Cocker, the Clash, and Dean Martin, among others. "At the Manchester Evening News Arena, which was set up for 12,000 people, we used 16 MICA per side and the sound was crystal clear in every corner. The management told us afterward that it was the first time they'd had a comedy show like this with no complaints about the sound."

The Manchester arena was among the larger venues on the tour, as most *Little Britain* performances play to houses having between 3,000 and 5,000 seat capacity. The typical system deployment on each side of the house is 10 MICA cabinets (usually flown), four groundstacked M1D ultra-compact curvilinear array loudspeakers to cover the front corners, two 600-HP compact high-power subwoofers, and four UPM-1P ultra-compact wide coverage loudspeakers for frontfill from the stage lip. Four UPA-1P compact wide coverage loudspeakers supply monitoring on stage, with six additional UPA-1P units available for fill as needed — though often they are not. "The M1D arrays are the real stars down below," says Madden. "They do so well that we rarely need other fills."

The customary load carried by *Little Britain*'s trucks represents one of two essentially identical systems purchased by Madden when he launched Sonalyst. Each system includes the same complement of Meyer Sound self-powered loudspeakers, along with a Yamaha M7CL digital console, the latest generation of Shure wireless systems, and a generous stock of microphones, such as the DPA 4061 capsules used by *Little Britain* stars Matt Lucas and David Walliams. Throughout much of 2005, the second system was touring with another British comedy phenomenon, the *League of Gentlemen*; judicious scheduling allowed merging the two systems for the larger arena bookings. Shortly after the *League of Gentlemen* tour concluded, the second Sonalyst system

embarked on a tour of Britain with a new musical, *Tonight's the Night*, based on the music of Rod Stewart.

Whether it's classic rock or bleeding-edge comedy, Rory Madden seems convinced that he's found the right combination with the MICA-based system. "Before I started the company, I searched the planet for a box that had plenty of punch as well as exceptional clarity," he says. "My other priority was finding something that could be easily stacked as well as flown. A lot of arrays don't stack well, and that's a problem because often you don't have (fly) points, or they are taken by the front trusses. But with MICA, the stacking is absolutely superb. In many theatres we stack six high, and it carries to the top of the balcony and back underneath it as well."

Madden notes that, by using the combination of the MICA arrays and Meyer Sound's MAPP Online Pro™ acoustical prediction software, his new systems can penetrate to the back rows without deploying delay loudspeakers. "There's no need to come in a day ahead and put up the under-balconies," notes Madden. "It's fabulous. The producers love it because you can do back-to-backs, with no days between for fit-ups."

Madden says the loudspeaker system has changed his whole way of thinking about — surprisingly — microphones. "MICA is the most natural-sounding PA I've ever heard," he claims. "After thirty years, I'm thinking of changing some microphone choices, some that I've been hard and fast on, because MICA makes the cheaper mics sound expensive. Of course, expensive ones now sound even more so."

ABOUT MEYER SOUND

Meyer Sound Laboratories, Inc. designs and manufactures high quality sound reinforcement loudspeakers, studio monitors, equalizers and sound measurement tools for the professional audio industry. Founded in 1979 by John and Helen Meyer, the company has grown to become a leading worldwide supplier of systems for theaters, arenas, stadiums, theme parks, convention centers and touring concert sound rental operations. Meyer Sound's main office and manufacturing facility are located in Berkeley, California, with field offices and authorized distributors located throughout the USA and around the world.

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