



Spider Ranch provided sound for 13 stages (including the main stage shown here) during San Francisco's massive SF Pride Celebration in late-June.

Diversity is Key to Success for SF Bay Area Soundco

By Kevin M. Mitchell

It seems that Bay Area-based Spider Ranch Productions is spinning a wider web. The ambitious, fast-growing company recently invested in a new Outline GTO sound system. But that's not the most surprising news to come out of the regional sound company.

Considering the price of real estate in the Bay Area, manufacturers, bands and live event producers might be pleasantly surprised they can set up in a space to practice or demo products right near the San Francisco Airport. Now instead of going to that airport to fly band and crew to LA or some other destination, they just need to drive a little north of it.

It's all positioning the company to take on bigger projects and even tours.

» Outline for New Gear

Spider Ranch owner Alex Moran has been at the live event biz since he was a 14-year old kid, working for the legendary man himself, Bill Graham. "I'm one of the guys who has been around long enough to remember that when you wanted a sound system, you *built it*," Moran laughs.

He also added that despite having plenty of new cutting edge gear in his 22,000 square foot warehouse, Spider Ranch still has and uses two systems that were built by his lead acoustic design engineer Mark Wayne — rigs that went out with the likes of Devo and Tower of Power back in 1979.

The seeds for his Spider Ranch Productions were planted in 2004, but it was a few more years until it really became a full-fledged company. In 2007 Moran became a licensed contractor and built the company on the smaller corporate gigs, nightclub work, videoconferences and, of course, those bar mitzvahs, which he proudly says is still a specialty.

"We have a lot of E-V powered speakers on sticks, but then we also have a 16-box QSC Wide-Line Series." Other goodies include a VUE Audio-technik al-4 line array system and a McCauley MLA6s system. The VUE rig proved ideal for a Clint

Eastwood-hosted evening party during last year's AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am, held at the Monterey Conference Center in the 19,600 square foot Serra Ballroom that sports a production technology-challenging 15-foot high ceiling. With that limitation, the al-4's were perfectly suited as low-profile, ceiling mounted delay system providing clarity to all seats in this difficult environment

In January of this year Moran invested in an Outline GTO System that includes 30 mains, two GTO-DFs, and 16 GTO SUB flyables. The rig is another step in his self-proclaimed, never-ending expansion (he says the business has grown over 20 percent a year for the last several years). Asked to acknowledge if the decision to invest in a new system is a bit nerve-racking, Moran laughs and says, "It's terrifying! You're like, 'how am I going to pay for this thing?'"

"I always thought of all the area bands that had to go someplace else at great time and expense to rehearse a show, and I felt they deserved to have a spot right here in town."

—Alex Moran



Moran says he'd seen Tom Bensen, senior vice-president at Outline North America, at trade shows and conversations would ensue as tends to happen at those gatherings. At last year's InfoComm, a conversation about the newest from Outline was the topic with Bensen saying Moran should try them out. Moran agreed to demo the system, and first took them for a test drive it at a private event in Spokane.

"We flew nine boxes a side plus down fills," Moran says, and adds that he and his team was indeed impressed. At only 50 percent capacity, the system was blowing mighty fine at 111 dB at 50 feet out. Backing out to 240 feet, it was still a strong 109 dB. "There was no need for delay towers," he says. "And I'm a fan of the tonality, and I

like that it doesn't change when it gets louder. The top-end is open and airy, and the system really throws the highs and mids. The sheer horsepower and headroom is amazing." Outline T11 amplifiers power the system.

In addition to the quality, Moran appreciates the efficiency of the GTO. "The rigging is great, and I like that the entire P.A. is completely pre-pinned. You just lift it up on a chain motor." He says that the software is exceptionally accurate, allowing his team to model the room quickly and tell you what angle to pin the arrays.

So far, he's used it on a host of private events, including for the discriminating ears that reside in Silicon Valley. But he's anxious to take it out on a tour, which he's working on doing. That said, the system got a good workout at the massive 2015 San Francisco Pride Festival from June 27 to 28.

This was Spider Ranch's fifth time serving the raucous world-famous event, which has 13 stages and draws 1.2 million for the weekend.

The main SF Pride stage in front of City Hall on Civic Center Plaza — which featured headliners Shiny Toy Guns, Big Freedia, Kat Robichaud and Steve Grand — was powered by an Outline system, with two main hangs of 12 GTO line array boxes and 12 ground-stacked GTO-SUB subwoofers.

The gig was well earned. Moran says years ago he did a show a techno-parade at San Francisco's Civic Center Plaza a few years back that drew over 100,000 people. Pride Festival officials were there and approached Spider Ranch about doing their event. "Halfway through the first time we did it, the executive director came up and handed me

