



"It's an antique that will definitely end up in the Smithsonian someday," notes Hesse. Meanwhile, Corea's acoustic grand piano is mic'd with an Applied Microphone Technology (AMT) M40 microphone as well as a pair of AKG 414s.

Capturing and amplifying the subtle nuances of this instrument is an ongoing labor of love. Recently Kirsh recently began evaluating a Schertler Dyn-GP Electrodynamic Acoustic Transducer, which Hesse notes is "very warm sounding, duplicating what Bernie is looking for."

Kirsh currently runs 24 inputs out front, with Hesse overseeing the six onstage monitor mixes, including Corea's piano mix, his keyboard mix and downstage KX5 strap-on keyboard mix; a bass mix for bassist Ric Fierabracci (who took over for Patitucci on the U.S. leg); a downstage right mix for saxophone; and a downstage left for guitarist Gambale. Stage volume is kept at "pleasant" levels to enhance the creative conversation among the musicians.

"One time, when Chick was playing in a trio with Miroslav Vitas and

Roy Haynes, I watched the three of them have an uninterrupted musical conversation, and from that point forward, I realized that Chick's whole thing in life is not just playing, but communicating," Hesse offers.

STAYING ON TOP

For this tour, Kirsh elected to go without compressors at FOH. (The same goes for monitors.) He prefers to physically stay on top of the mix, manning the faders in a manner suggesting a conductor interfacing with an orchestra. For a group like CCEB that travels light, Kirsh had to do that on a different house system in each venue.

His main goal is trying to find consistent loudspeaker and console attributes across a wide line of products found at each stop. "I like Midas consoles, and although they come in many different configurations, the sound characteristics remain consistent," Kirsh adds.

"As for speakers, I like (L-ACOUSTICS) V-DOSC and various Meyer systems like the MSL4 and MILO," he adds, "but it all really depends on the venue. In Europe, we were able to get a quality sound in each venue, with the sound companies and crews helpful and knowledgeable."

A portion of the U.S. leg of the tour

put Hesse on familiar West Coast ground, but working with an artist like Corea always means new adventures. Navigating the streets of Beverly Hills, he secured a pair of Meyer UPJ1P loudspeakers, along with some UPA1Ps, for Corea to try out on stage at an upcoming gig. (These were ultimately supplied by Glenn Hatch at Audio West.)

"Chick heard a Meyer loudspeaker in Budapest on the European leg and noted to me how he loved the sound and wanted to try a pair," Hesse says. "He prefers 10- and 12-inch cones for a 'tighter' sound, and will occasionally check out new models and ideas. However, he also still loves his (12-inch-loaded) Bag End Sapphires."

At the Beverly Hills gig (Writers Of The Future Awards), the UPJ1P loudspeakers were placed on a road case behind Corea's Fender Rhodes. Firing into his back like a stereo pair, they acted as piano and keyboard monitors.

For this performance and a following week of engagements at Catalina Bar and Grill in Hollywood, Hesse's company, MSS Audio, supplied the house PA. It included a recently purchased 56-channel Midas Verona console, four Meyer MSL4 loudspeakers and several Meyer UPAs for extreme left/right coverage as well as fill up the middle. Four Bag End TA-6000s filled the front, and two Bag End Quartz subs supplied the bottom end.

Today, many performers don't last long enough to become discerning artists who understand both technical and human communication in producing high art. Many experienced sound folks are likely to say the same thing, so it falls to teams like Corea, Hesse and Kirsh to serve as living examples.

"When you're dealing with art, you push the technical side as high as possible," Hesse finishes. "My job is to come up with workable solutions to make it simple and easy for the band to communicate with each other and most importantly, the audience." ■

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Weckl at the kit, pre-gig, with his Yamaha/Mackie mixer complement close by.

