

The Lion King continues to roar on Broadway with KV2

The Lion King, Broadway, NYC



Twenty years and counting



The Lion King is one of the world's best-loved musicals. The statistics are impressive: since its premiere in November 1997, 24 global productions have been seen by over 100 million people. It is the highest-grossing Broadway production of all time and the third-longest running production in Broadway history.

In 2017 the production underwent a full sound system overhaul to mark its 20th anniversary. Designed by Steve Kennedy, John Shivers and David Patridge, the new KV2 sound system had to be installed on 'dark days' so that performances could continue as scheduled.

Big theatre. Compact system. HUGE sound



The Minskoff theatre in the heart of Times Square has been home to The Lion King since 2006. It is one of the largest theatres on Broadway with a capacity of 1621, yet the KV2 system – A/B hangs of 4 x ESR215 per side with a central cluster of 4 x SL412 - is remarkably compact and unobtrusive.

“The detail and accuracy of the KV2 system makes mixing the show easier and more rewarding. I am able to hear more nuances and respond accordingly, as if I were listening to reference monitors for example. I am confident that with the KV2 system, I am delivering the soundscape that has been envisioned for The Lion King.”

Alain Van Achte

Mixing engineer, The Lion King

Dual hang for minimal phasing



The designers were keen to maintain as many of the original design concepts as possible for The Lion King, one of which was the A/B speaker system design.

“The dual hang configuration minimizes the phasing effect that occurs when two open omnidirectional microphones are presented to the same physical speaker cabinets at the same time. When the actors’ microphones are combined acoustically through the redundant speaker systems, the objectionable phasing artifacts are greatly reduced.

KV2’s point source sound design offers precise clarity and musicality that few, if any other professional speaker systems currently achieve. It’s like using a hi-fi reference speaker for a pro sound application.”

John Shivers
Sound designer

Bottom line



The new system has proved to be a huge success at every level, both amongst professionals and the public. Physically it is extremely compact and unobtrusive – fewer loudspeakers achieve similar coverage and SPL to a line array system, thus reducing physical footprint, weight and cost, and the audio experience is unmatched.

“Much of the success of *The Lion King* can be attributed to the beautifully composed, orchestrated and executed music. The subtlety, nuance and wide dynamics in the score, vocal arrangements, orchestrations and effects all lead to an evocative and at times - visceral experience. The newly installed system enables us to accurately present every detail as it was intended. The KV2 system reveals every nuance.”

John Shivers
Sound designer

Wrap up



The challenge

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of The Lion King with a new, high quality sound system that matches the exacting requirements of the Broadway score from Tim Rice, Elton John, Mark Mancina and many others.

"We have received positive comments from pretty much everyone involved with The Lion King's 20th anniversary. Mark Mancina (composer) and Dave Metzger (orchestrator) both commented that the sound was the "best we have ever heard on any production of The Lion King."

John Shivers
Sound designer

The solution

A powerful yet compact KV2 point source design based on a dual-hanging A/B sound design with a mix of active and passive systems for faithful sound reproduction with minimal phasing.

Main system:

4 x ESR215 per side
4 x SL412 (central cluster)

Balcony delays:

2 x ESR212 per side
2 x SL412 (central cluster)

Under-balcony and fills:

28 x ESD6
5 x EX6
4 x ESD10

Amplification:

6 x ESP4000
4 x ESR3000
2 x ESR2800