

ATOMIC PRO AUDIO

Filling The Gap In The Northeast...

by MICHAEL WADDELL

While covering Linkin Park's All Over the Map tour, *mobile Production monthly* learned that Production Manager Jim Digby and FOH Engineer Kenneth "Pooch" Van Druten wanted to use Adamson sound boxes. As it turned out, the challenge became finding a vendor with enough of the desired gear.

With the assistance of Jesse Adamson, the tour was able to combine Rutland, VT based Atomic Pro Audio to supply the speaker system and Colorado Springs, CO based Audio Analysts, who supplied the crew, consoles, recording package and touring expertise.

mPm had the delightful privilege to speak with Kevin Margolin, founder of Atomic Pro Audio. Those who have spent any time talking with Margolin will attest to his warm, friendly demeanor. Margolin's professionalism and intense desire to "do what's right" in business came through in the phone interview we had, and the hour conversation was full of insights and experiences of a seasoned professional.

Atomic Pro Audio came together more organically rather than with any real preconceived ideas. In 1987 Margolin found himself doing sound for bar bands in and around the New York and Vermont area. "I was just mostly doing this for fun," said Margolin. After three or four years, a friend of his gave him some national promoter rep work as a production manager. After years as a successful production manager, running theater, field, and arena shows, he began looking at sound reinforcement as an additional business. "The PM gig really built the sound company,"

admits Margolin. Business came along to the point where in 1994 Margolin decided that he along with his wife and business partner, Kristin had to do it fulltime.

Since then Atomic has grown into a full-fledged production company supplying lighting, backline, staging, video and much more to a diverse client base in the Northeast Region. As the sound reinforcement focus was met with other emerging production needs, Atomic Pro Audio adapted.

Operating out of a rural area, a growing Atomic faced logistical challenges when equipment was scarce. But as the company's growing client base began demanding that additional elements of production be integrated with sound, Margolin began to weave lighting, backline, staging and video into operation. Able to send a high quality production anywhere within the regional footprint of the Northeast, Atomic became a new choice for the region's entertainment, collegiate, public and corporate communities.

Atomic has several employees who have been with them since nearly the beginning. "I'm really fortunate to have an experienced and versatile staff. I feel a tremendous loyalty towards the people here," Margolin shared. "We're proud that we began offering health care to employees last year. We want this to be a great place to work." Atomic has a heavy office staff, much to the clients benefit. There are six fulltime people capable of discussing technical issues by telephone. With operational and technical tweaks often being time-critical realities of day-to-day operations, Margolin is always looking to fill gaps in efficiently managing more than

20 full-time employees. To aid this balance they recently added a second position to deal with the logistics of gear. "I believe the customer has to come first. If the phone rings, they need to know that they will get a live person on the other end at least 99% of the time and their concerns or needs will be handled."

"One of the challenges we faced was outgrowing smaller customers as the business was building." In Atomic's effort to keep old contacts strong while building new ones, Margolin makes it his business to reach out and touch potential new customers who often have challenging requirements. "We still do about 50 different colleges (many of which are all-in jobs), lots of festival and arena work and corporate gigs." In addition to that, Atomic has installed audio and video systems for theaters, high schools and churches throughout New England and New York. A satellite office in Syracuse, New York was opened in 2000 to better serve western New York customers.

When the call came from Jesse Adamson to supply sound reinforcement to Linkin Park's national tour Margolin admits, "I thought this might be more than we could do. He told me that Digby had a desire to work with Audio Analysts, who didn't have the Adamson gear, and Jesse began putting the two of us together. Adamson helped with the packaging. Audio Analysts was great to deal with, I mean they were fantastic on every level. They were on time with everything and the communication was great. It was truly a wonderful experience. I would be open to another arrangement between anybody with a similar need. We have a nice package for touring." In fact, they still have some gear out on the Linkin Park tour's European leg beginning in May.

Looking 10 years down the road Margolin said, "We'll continue to adapt and grow as our customer's requirements change, and we're built for that." ●

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