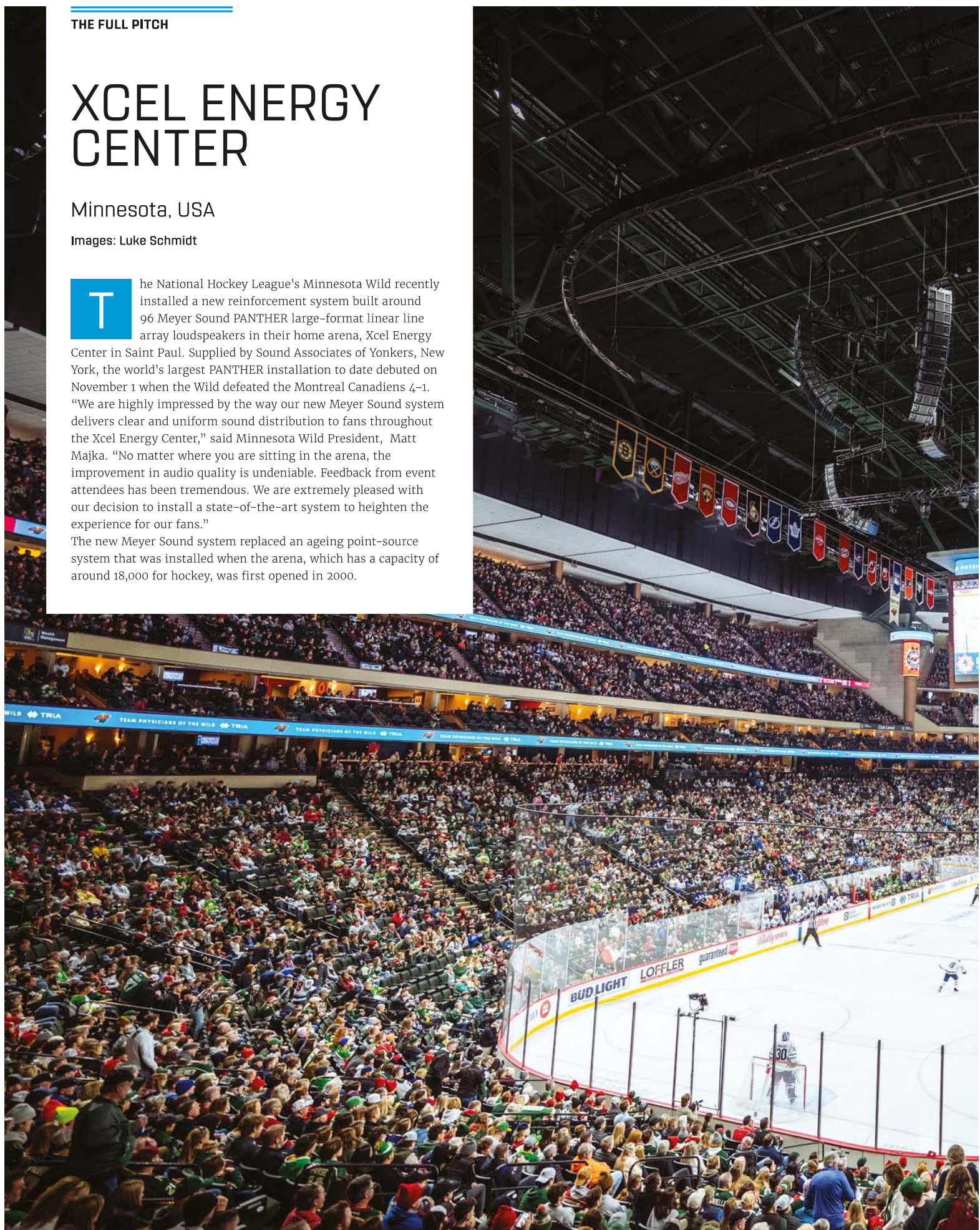


XCEL ENERGY CENTER

Minnesota, USA

Images: Luke Schmidt

The National Hockey League's Minnesota Wild recently installed a new reinforcement system built around 96 Meyer Sound PANTHER large-format linear line array loudspeakers in their home arena, Xcel Energy Center in Saint Paul. Supplied by Sound Associates of Yonkers, New York, the world's largest PANTHER installation to date debuted on November 1 when the Wild defeated the Montreal Canadiens 4-1. "We are highly impressed by the way our new Meyer Sound system delivers clear and uniform sound distribution to fans throughout the Xcel Energy Center," said Minnesota Wild President, Matt Majka. "No matter where you are sitting in the arena, the improvement in audio quality is undeniable. Feedback from event attendees has been tremendous. We are extremely pleased with our decision to install a state-of-the-art system to heighten the experience for our fans." The new Meyer Sound system replaced an ageing point-source system that was installed when the arena, which has a capacity of around 18,000 for hockey, was first opened in 2000.







"What we had was a low bid system with old technology," explained Jim Pfitzinger, the IATSE Local 13 Engineer who has mixed Wild games since the arena opened and who was a key consultant on the upgrade project. "Top team management had heard systems at newer arenas and noticed the difference. Our old system was still intelligible and serviceable but it lacked real impact. No matter how hard you flogged it, you could only get so much out of it." When funding became available in the spring of 2022, management asked Pfitzinger to fast-track a new, state-of-the-art system that would be equal to or better than any other NHL arena. Pfitzinger quickly consulted with Domonic Sack of Sound Associates on possible options at a time when industry supplies were tight. Some makers could not commit to delivering the preferred products on the tight timeline, but Meyer Sound was able to fit the Wild project into their production schedule. In only 11 days, the entire system was wired, hung, and tuned, just in time for the first Minnesota Wild game with the new system.

Bob McCarthy, Director of System Optimisation at Meyer Sound, takes up the story: "Dominic at Sound Associates was asked by the team at Xcel Arena to submit a design proposal, so he contacted me to help create a Meyer design.

"I was told that the venue wanted a self-powered, lightweight system, so that they don't have amp racks flying in the ceiling, as well as that they also wanted the ability to fly the system up and out for touring events and down for service. Another key request was full range coverage for the whole seating area, along with minimal leakage into the press box level and a separate system for ice coverage for the player warmup."

Pfitzinger added: "Dom had just heard Meyer Sound's PANTHER demo in Las Vegas and said he was convinced it was the right solution for this arena. We wanted line arrays with a small footprint to stay clear of touring rock shows, plus low power consumption and reduced weight. Powered speakers were high on the list as we had literally tons of amplifiers and copper cables in the ceiling and we couldn't



You asked for a lighter, more powerful line array.

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at only 68 kilograms.**

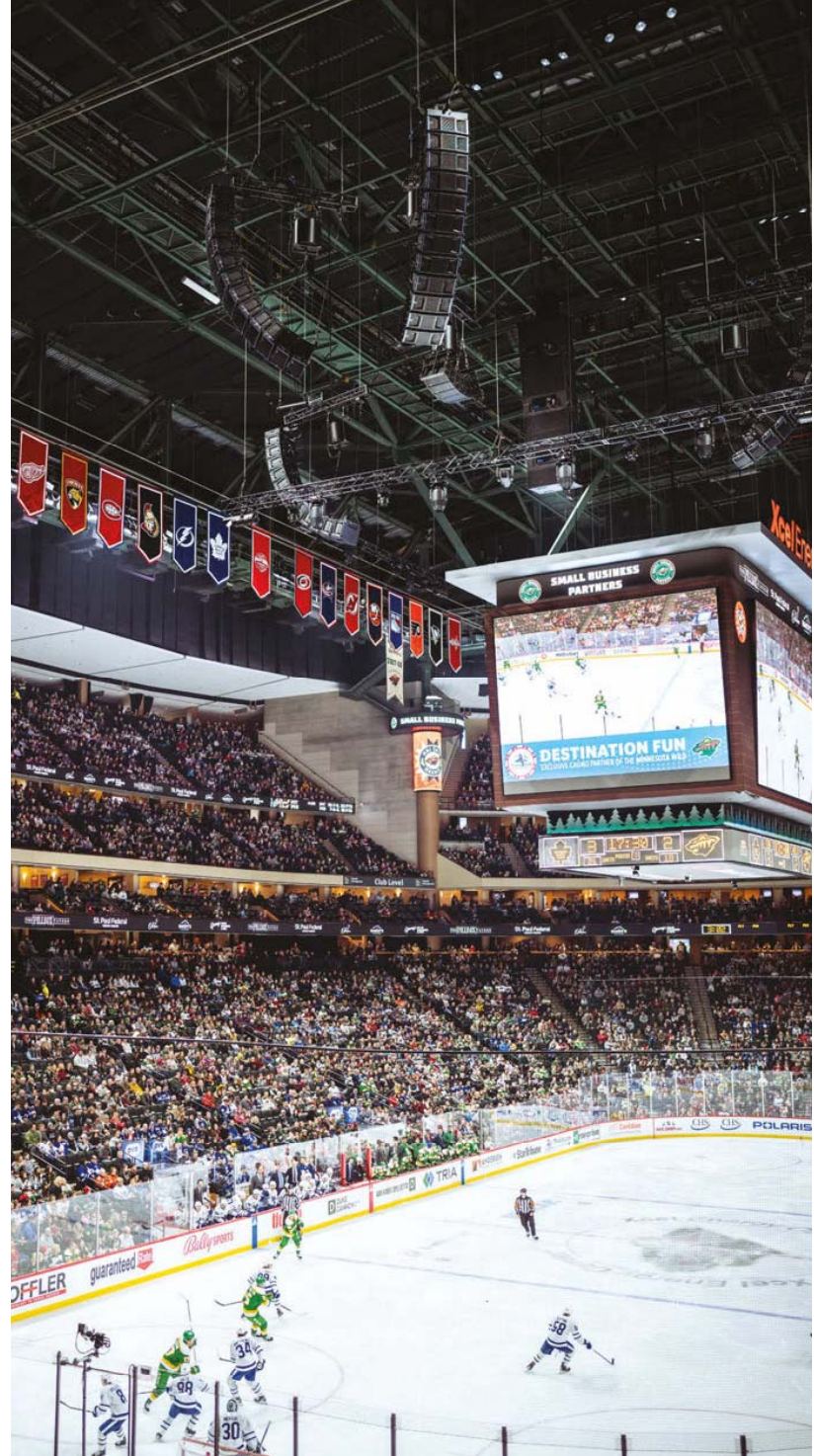


PANTHER

You know what you want in a line array. And now, we're giving you more than you ever thought possible. Introducing PANTHER. Over 150 decibels at only 68 kilograms and 97 centimeters wide. Exactly what you asked for—turned up a notch.

You spoke. We listened. And then we went wild.





take them out until the new system was up and running. Also, everything had to go up and down on the motors. On all counts, PANTHER fit the bill — and Meyer Sound could deliver!”

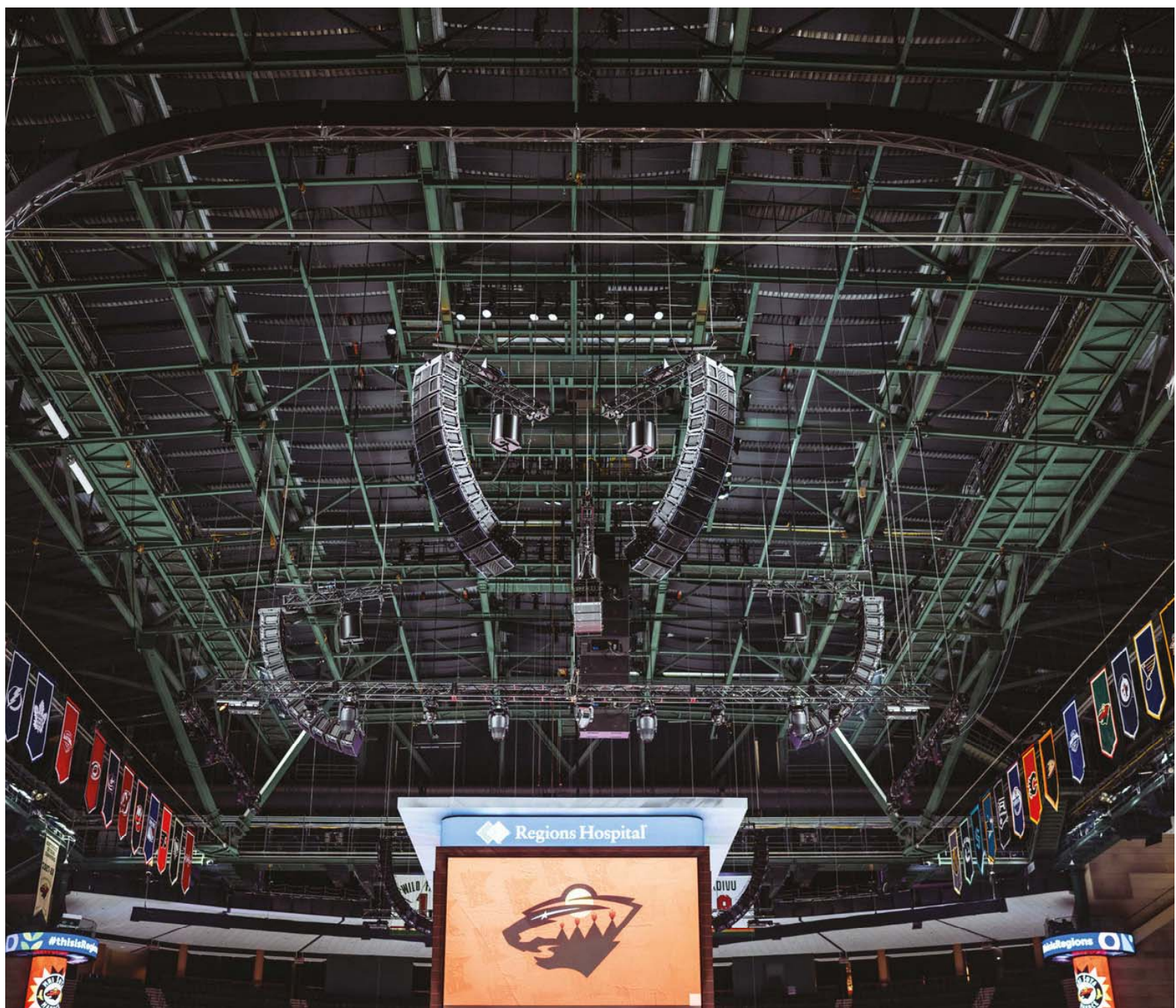
Regarding performance, Domonic Sack sketched out the goals: “The idea was to minimise reflections, increase intelligibility, extend effective frequency response from 40 Hz up to 16 kHz, and with headroom to keep the system running at 20 percent – maybe 40 percent maximum at peak impact.”

Using the MAPP 3D system design and prediction tool, the design particulars were worked out by Sack in consultation with McCarthy and Design Services Supervisor, Alex Harbaugh. As installed, the system comprises eight hangs of 12 PANTHER loudspeakers, all with the 80-degree L horn. Potent bass power is projected uniformly throughout the

space from dual hangs of nine each 1100-LFC low-frequency control elements in cardioid configurations. The entire system is networked for control, monitoring, and audio signal using the Milan AVB protocol, with redundant analog backup.

Two other key members of the project team were Metropolitan Interactive, responsible for the rigging design, under the guidance of Jeff Mele; and Geiger Engineering, responsible for assuring the structural integrity of all rigging points. Members of IATSE Local 13 were charged with the final rigging and flying of the system.

“The response to the new system has been overwhelmingly positive,” said Pfitzinger. “I now have no problem lifting announcer Adam Abrams over the crowd noise when before he was often buried. Now it’s effortless. Nothing ever sounds pushed or distorted. It has clarity and impact, yet even when



the music is up you still can carry on a conversation. And there is an incredible difference in the voice quality and clarity of the referee microphones.”

McCarthy explained that the install wasn’t without its issues: “With supply chain challenges, the install was pushed back a few weeks from the original goal, but otherwise, it was super smooth throughout with everyone working together.

“Overall, the staff are super happy with the new Meyer system. They are having to remaster all their old tracks – because now they can hear them super clearly! Announcements are super clear and the press folks are happy about the reduced leakage up there. The players also love the ice coverage, too. So, it’s been a huge success all round.”

The fan experience in Wild games was the overriding consideration in specifying a PANTHER line array solution,

but the system will be used for dozens of other events throughout the year, including high school and collegiate sports tournaments, an annual rodeo and skating shows, plus special events and large-scale meetings associated with conventions in the adjoining convention center. Although the system is not hung effectively for end-stage rock conferences, portions of it could function as delays or B-stage systems, according to Pfitzinger.

The Xcel Energy Center is owned by the City of Saint Paul and is operated by the Minnesota Wild under a long-term lease agreement. Xcel Energy Center is part of an expansive campus of event, entertainment, and meeting venues that also includes Saint Paul RiverCentre convention facility and The Legendary Roy Wilkins Auditorium.