

Morris: Lighting and Audio Company Takes On New Challenges

By Justin Lang



CMA Music Festival

Morris, formally known as Morris Light & Sound, has been a longtime resident of the Nashville area. For more than two decades, Morris has offered everyone in Music City the same great level of care and service in the entertainment business that they have grown to expect.

Dale Morris started the company in 1985 under the name Morris Leasing in Murfreesboro, TN. Dale began by renting audio equipment to classic touring acts like Alabama. The company steadily increased its services to include lighting, rigging and professional crews, and through positive referrals and service diversification, Morris continued to grow.

In 2012, Morris made the 40-mile move from Murfreesboro to Nashville to be closer to their clients and to the epicenter of the business. Morris now has more than 50 employees and operates a 50,000 square foot state-of-the-art warehouse, an Integration warehouse, a Pre-Visualization Suite, a large assortment of lighting fixtures and a recording studio.

Speaking about company change through the years, Morris President David Haskell attributes the company's success to a blend respecting its founding traditions and values while also investing in the latest technological developments to support changing show production needs. "While Morris still offers its core services, our company's equipment and staff has grown over the years," he notes. "We have also invested in our Integration division, the latest lighting products as well as our recording studio, The Tracking Room."

Haskell began in the music industry by following local bands through North Carolina when he was a teenager, filling any role available. During that time, he began running audio for bands at every opportunity and caught a break with the band Nantucket in 1978, then later with Dale Morris. Haskell has been doing what he loves ever since — for more than 38 years.

In that time, Haskell has surrounded himself with a team of trusted veterans. In 2012, Danny Rosenbalm joined Morris as vice president of Integration. Rosenbalm was then named CEO in 2015. He has more than 18 years of technology, multimedia design and integration experience. "Morris has a long history of creating custom audio and visual experiences for tours, live events, houses of worship, healthcare facilities, and corporate spaces," notes Rosenbalm. "I am proud to lead a creative, experienced team of professionals

that delivers effective systems and best-in-class support everyday."

While both Rosenbalm and Haskell both have had storied careers, neither are resting on their laurels. "The best memories we make are the ones that happen everyday," says Haskell. "The most important part is to be in the moment."

That here-and-now focus has proven to be a good fit with the Nashville marketplace. "Nashville is a fast-growing, progressive city with a history steeped in music, which we have been fortunate to have been a part of over the years," Haskell states.

Another key factor behind the company's success is the willingness to take on huge live music projects — exemplified by its support of Alabama's big shows in the past, and by other touring clients that include Kenny Chesney, Hall & Oates, Jake Owen, Eli Young Band, Old Dominion, Florida Georgia Line, Montgomery Gentry and Festival Productions, Inc. "At Morris, no idea is too big, and we are always up for the challenge," Haskell adds.

» Brimming with Energy

Looking ahead, Haskell points to Nashville's geographic location and the "constant flow of new energy to the area" as key advantages sustaining the business. Another plus is Morris' ability to keep up with changing customer needs.

"At Morris, we offer a place where our clients can comfortably create authentic, immersive live experiences, and we take pride in the partnerships we have made along the way," says Haskell. "We not only take pride in our long-term client relationships and partnerships, but also our long-term employee relationships. Our team is the best in the business."

"For Morris, providing production services in Nashville means that we are not only closer to the acts, but we also have a central geographic location, making logistics easier in many cases," says Rosenbalm. "As the city has grown, all industries have been impacted. The growth in our industry has given customers more options in equipping their tours and live events, which makes our ongoing commitment to service and quality more important than ever."

With long ties and deep roots in Nashville, Morris has a true advantage when it comes to understanding what makes Music City special and the secret hole-in-the-wall spots that make Nashville unique.

Haskell points out, "The East Nashville and Germantown neighborhoods continue to grow, bringing new food bars, restaurants, and venues. The Morris office is located nearby — Germantown Café is a lunch favorite among our staff."

Morris and Rosenbalm understand that the people who work for them are a huge reason for their success. "Nashville is full of professionals who are doing work on par with any other region in the country. We are lucky to employ many of them at Morris," says Rosenbalm. "We believe our team sets us apart. We are passionate about creativity and love working with the best people in the industry. We maintain long-standing client relationships, and a high-performing staff that is widely recognized as the industry standard."

In 2015, Morris underwent a name change to better reflect their wide range of services available to both the production world, as well as aspiring musical acts within Nashville. "As we added new divisions to our company, it became necessary for our name to reflect that change," explains Haskell. "On our website and in our social media channels, we encourage our audience to Experience Morris."

Morris added an Integration division as well as a recording studio, The Tracking Room, to their offerings. "Our Integration division creates and installs custom integrated audio and lighting systems for a wide range of clients both big and small," says Rosenbalm. Some projects that Morris has worked on include Saint Thomas Hospital and Bridgestone Arena [in the Nashville area] and also Community Bible Church [a little farther afield — in San Antonio, TX]. "Each of these projects was unique and required careful planning and design integration."

The integration project at Saint Thomas Hospital (now known as Saint Thomas-West Hospital) is an example of Morris' ability to bring its AV prowess beyond the concert stage, helping a 100-plus-year-old institution with a technology upgrade that helps the hospital's healthcare pros educate, train and treat patients more effectively. The project involved an upgrade to the hospital's Media Learning Center auditorium.

The upgrade at San Antonio's Community Bible Church also involved the installation of new audio and lighting systems, this time for the church's 3,500-capacity auditorium. The space is now ready to support everything from regular Sunday services to special musical productions. It also hosts outside artists and community events and can be used for both live music and DVD recording sessions. That \$5 million upgrade was completed in mid-2015.

Morris' Tracking Room, meanwhile, ranks among the most significant studios in Nashville. Built in the mid-1990s by studio architect Tom Hidley, the 6,500 square-foot space was designed for impeccable sound quality. There are five ISO (isolation) booths, including a reverb chamber called the "Stone Room" that is frequently used for percussion.

Although the name of the company formerly known as Morris Light & Sound has been shortened to just Morris, the company itself has been expanding its array of services and projects. From the 2016 Honda NHL All-Star Weekend to the CMA Fest and events supporting the hometown NFL team, the Tennessee Titans, Morris has been involved with ongoing events and ones-offs that are part of the Nashville way of life.

"Technology has impacted every facet of the production industry," says Haskell, noting Morris' ability to provide a wide range of services from state-of-the-art audio and lighting equipment to professional crews and custom lighting designs. "We are excited about the advances in the visual world right now and believe that as those tools and others continue to develop, the relationship between production and IT is vital."

» A Visit to Italy

Morris embraces new technologies and fixtures as they become available, constantly on the look out for new technologies and products that help make each of these events unique, successful, and crowd-pleasing year after year.

In late 2014, for example, Mike Swinford, LD for Kenny Chesney, joined Haskell for a trip to Italy to check out Clay Paky's latest fixture, the Mythos. They were impressed enough to place one of the first and largest orders of this fixture — and more than 180 of the fixtures lit Chesney's "Big Revival Tour," which ranked as the number-five tour for 2015, according to Billboard. (The same fixtures also play a key role in the aforementioned installation within San Antonio's Community Bible Church)

For nearly 40 years, Morris has become one of the leading names in Tennessee, Nashville and the country music scene. With Haskell and Rosenbalm leading the way into the future, Morris continues gearing up to handle whatever their clients bring to them next. Underlying it all is a core philosophy that gives the company its drive, Haskell notes: to "find your passion and follow it, with everything in your power." **PLSN**

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Morris

- FOUNDER:** Dale Morris
- PRESIDENT:** David Haskell
- CEO:** Danny Rosenbalm
- WHEN FOUNDED:** 1985
- PREVIOUS NAMES:** Morris Light & Sound, Morris Leasing
- MOVE TO NASHVILLE:** 2012 (to 50,000 square foot facility including warehouse, Integration division, Pre-Visualization suite, Tracking Room recording facility)
- CURRENT STAFF:** 50+ employees
- CURRENT ADDRESS:** 220 Cumberland Bend, Nashville, TN 37228; 615.890.6277; experiencemorris.com



David Haskell, President



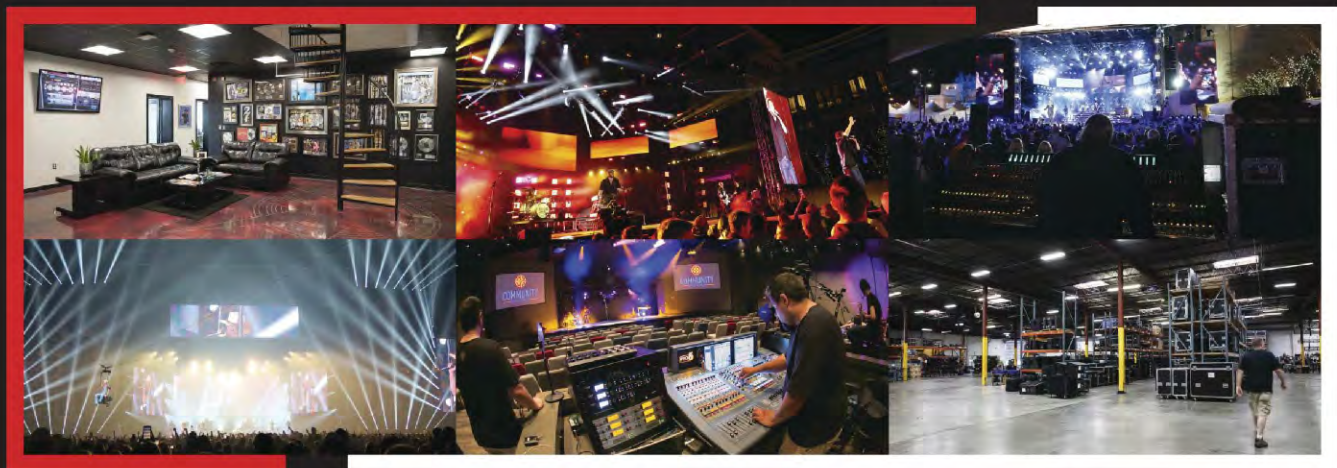
Danny Rosenbalm, CEO

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Located in Nashville, TN, Morris has over 25 years of experience in creating custom audio and visual experiences for tours, live events, houses of worship, healthcare facilities, and corporate spaces.



615.890.6277

www.experiemorris.com