



Case study

RYMAN
AN OPRY ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE

**GRAND OLE
OPRY**

Opry Entertainment Group Continues to Strengthen Live Entertainment in Nashville while Bolstering Security with Evolv®

Opry Entertainment Group

HEADQUARTERS: Nashville, TN

SUBSIDIARY OF: Ryman Hospitality Properties, Inc.

Opry House

BUILT: 1974

CAPACITY: 4,404

GUESTS ANNUALLY: ~700,000

WEBSITE: www.opry.com

Ryman Auditorium

BUILT: 1892

CAPACITY: 2,362

GUESTS ANNUALLY: ~540,000

WEBSITE: www.ryman.com

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Improve screening efficiency
- Reclaim venue footprint used for numerous metal detectors
- Deliver unforgettable security ingress experience for guests and staff
- Reallocate security staff to other venue areas for enhanced security
- Minimize security alarm rates connected to metal detectors
- Streamline ingress security training for new security staff

Solution

People

- Hosted customer security team at an early adopter of Evolv Express®
- Solutions Engineering Team helped configure and implement 5 Express systems at 2 different venues

Technology

- 5 Evolv Express Systems
 - 3 Dual Lane Systems
 - 2 Single Lane Systems
- Evolv Insights®
- Evolv Cortex AI®

Process

- Configured and deployed 3 Express dual-lane systems and 2 Express single-lane systems at 2 venues
- Worked with the customer to implement and standardize operating procedures for regular setup, tear down, and storage of mobile Express systems at the Grand Ole Opry and Ryman Auditorium.
- Trained security staff on Express systems and helped document training processes for new security personnel

Outcomes



Reduced screening time and improved guest ingress experience



Consolidated 22 metal detectors to 3 Express dual-lane and 2 Express single-lane systems—a 77% reduction



Reallocated 21 security staff from ingress to other areas of two venues for enhanced security—a 60% reduction



Reduced false positives, significantly reducing the number of guests flagged for secondary security checks



Improved experience and training of personnel managing ingress security screening



Improved detection of concealed weapons



Dale Duhl, Senior Manager of Security at the Grand Ole Opry House remembers one guest who showed up for the Loretta Lynn memorial last fall. “We had lines of people who showed up before we opened our gates,” he says. “I overheard one person telling her friends, ‘We’re never going to get our seats. Even if they open up right now, we’re still not going to make it.’ The gates opened and the lines started to move.” Duhl continued, “Ten minutes later, when I was in the lobby, the same woman and her friends passed through security. She came over to me and told me, ‘Flawless and seamless. I’m very impressed with how you handled this huge crowd.’ I had to smile to myself. As we had Evolv, I knew that we were going to make it work.”

“

We want guests to leave with a bigger smile on their faces than when they walked in, an experience they tell their kids about, their neighbors, the people in their local houses of worship, and their social media accounts. I’ve literally seen tears of joy shed by some.”

- Dale Duhl, Sr. Manager Security, Grand Ole Opry House



Fond Memories for an Iconic Brand

Ryman Hospitality Properties owns Opry Entertainment Group, which includes the Grand Ole Opry and Ryman Auditorium.

Ron Grimes, the Director of Safety and Security at Ryman Hospitality Properties, and Dale Duhl, the Senior Security Manager at the Grand Ole Opry House, both grew up in the Nashville area and fondly remember coming to the venues as children.

"I am fortunate to be part of an iconic brand that has brought country music entertainment to millions of people," Grimes says. "I have the most awesome job in the world because I get to help people have once-in-a-lifetime moments with their favorite artists." But if a guest has a bad ingress experience, Grimes notes that the entire experience can be ruined.

"Security is the starting point for guests having an 'iconic' experience," Duhl notes. "We want guests to leave with a bigger smile on their faces than when they walked in, an experience they tell their kids about, their neighbors, the people in their local houses of worship, and their social media accounts. I've literally seen tears of joy shed by some."

High Volumes of Diverse Guests

Audiences at both venues are quite diverse.

Children as young as two years old and adults in their 90s attend shows. As a result, accessibility is important. "Parents need to be able to walk through security screening with their children, while adults with mobility challenges need to be able to navigate security ingress easily," Grimes notes. "We want security ingress to be a fantastic guest experience. We want it to be seamless."

Metal Detectors Interrupted the Fan and Employee Experience

Going back over a decade, the Opry Entertainment Group relied on traditional walkthrough metal detectors for security ingress at the Grand Ole Opry and Ryman Auditorium.

The Opry Entertainment Group has continuously utilized the latest technology and ConOps to ensure safety at their venues . Throughout the traditional metal detector's tenure at the Grand Ole Opry and Ryman Auditorium, guests and staff were kept as safe as existing technology and security processes allow. However, like many venues with traditional metal detectors, they dealt with the inevitable side effects of the system.

"Guests become agitated and frustrated when they must stand in a lengthy security ingress line" Grimes notes. "Then, when upwards of half of the guests were flagged for secondary screening, they became even more upset due to the intrusive nature of the security checks."

The process similarly affected security staff, as having each customer divest their belongings and be screened individually can become monotonous and repetitive. To ensure this did not become an issue that led to missed threats, Grimes, and his team had programs in place to continuously retrain security staff. "With the metal detectors, we constantly pushed the team through training and then periodically retrained them on secondary security checks," Grimes says. "It took significant time and energy to train personnel on the metal detectors."

The Opry Entertainment Group is passionate about ensuring every guest and employee has the best experience possible and thus began to look for a solution where they could upkeep the level safety provided, while enhancing experiences all around.



We tell our customers what our system capabilities are, and we prove it. We view ourselves as a trusted advisor and take this role very seriously."

- Bill McAteer, Account Executive, Evolv Technology



Opry Entertainment Group Evaluate Evolv at Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Opry Entertainment Group was first introduced to Evolv before the pandemic and the debut of the Express system.

When the Express became available in 2019, Grimes and others from the team were invited to attend an Atlanta Falcons home game at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

“Frankly, I went to Atlanta with a high degree of skepticism,” Grimes recalls. “I spent a number of years in law enforcement before joining Opry Entertainment Group. I watched the testing by the police department on sending individuals through the Evolv Express system and then through the walkthrough metal detector, and I was convinced very quickly that Evolv was the far superior technology. Not only did I see the expressions on the faces of the customers—the astonishment at the ease and speed of the entire process—but the differences in detection. There was one weapon law enforcement used for testing that the metal detectors failed to detect every time, and which the Evolv caught every time.”

“

I frequently hear guests who have gone through an Express system at one of our venues or one of the sports arenas in Nashville, tell other guests, ‘You’re going to enjoy this security screening. It’s not like other systems.’

- Dale Duhi, Sr. Manager Security,
Grand Ole Opry House



Running a Proof of Concept

After attending the games in Atlanta and seeing the Express system in action, the Opry Entertainment Group and Evolv teams set up a proof of concept back in Nashville at the Ryman Auditorium, famously known as the Mother Church of country music.

"They had three back-to-back shows and we set up an Express dual-lane system to demonstrate the scale and accuracy of our technology," says Bill McAteer, the Account Executive for Evolv who services Opry Entertainment Group. "In addition to lines that moved seamlessly, firearms were also detected. The system performed so well, as compared to the metal detectors, the teams literally gave each other high fives."

Duhl has an interesting perspective when it comes to the Express experience for guests. "I wasn't with the Grand Ole Opry when the Evolv Express was rolled out," he recalls. "I covertly came over to observe the system after taking the job. I immediately thought to myself, 'Holy mackerel, they have hundreds of guests in lines and they're flying through screening.' I had never seen anything like it. I was highly impressed."

The Evolv Cortex AI® artificial intelligence capabilities especially excited Opry Entertainment Group. "We wanted something that went far beyond human intelligence and removed bias from the screening process," Grimes says.

The speed at which the Express systems screen guests is what impressed Duhl. "Our security staff was impressed first and foremost with how fast guests passed through the Express lanes," he says. "This has a direct impact on our security staff and our ability to retain and recruit them."





Evolv Goes Live

Two years ago, Opry Entertainment Group went live with Evolv at Ryman Auditorium and then at the Grand Ole Opry House a few months later.

Evolv's Solution Engineering team was highly involved in assessing where to place and configure the Express systems. They worked with the security team to update their ConOps playbook, determine the best placement for the Express systems, and how to configure them.

"For the Express systems at the Grand Ole Opry, they have been left in place," Grimes relates. "We don't move these systems around," Grimes says. "But the ones at the Ryman Auditorium are highly mobile. We set them up, tear them down, and store them almost every day. The Evolv Express is highly portable and very simple to move in and out on a daily basis. This isn't something that we could do with the metal detectors."

Grimes explains that the Express serves as the second layer of security for Opry Entertainment Group. "For our first layer, we have cameras to observe crowd flow, who's coming in, the eyes and ears of our perimeter," he says. "Both layers are critical for us."

At the Grand Ole Opry, Opry Entertainment Group installed two Express dual-lane systems, and at the Ryman Auditorium one dual-lane Express system at public entrances. For the dedicated entrances at each facility, Opry Entertainment Group installed single-lane Express systems at each. "Even before the deployment of the Express systems, Opry Entertainment Group screened artists and their friends and family," Grimes says. "On average, we see between 40 to 50 people coming through those entrances for each show. Before the migration to Evolv, that screening process was complex and time-consuming due to what they bring with them—things like instrument cases."



The Grand Ole Opry team hit the ground running with Evolv Insights and they generate automated reports that they review every week. For the Ryman Auditorium team, we generate those reports each week and provide them with an interpretive grid. The analytics from Evolv Insights works beautifully for both of them."

- Allison MacHaffie, Customer Success Manager, Evolv Express



Using Evolv Insights® for Operational and Security Direction

Evolv Insights analytics provide Opry Entertainment Group with the ability to improve both security and operational efficiencies and efficacy.

Evolv Insights® analytics provide Opry Entertainment Group with the ability to improve both security and operational efficiencies and efficacy. “Using data is important in the security industry because it gives you valuable information,” Grimes says. “We use Evolv Insights to brief our leadership team and look at analytics to match that information up with our ticketing systems. This includes deciding how many entrances to open up at the Grand Ole Opry based on the time of year and the type of event that is taking place.”

“We also rely heavily on Evolv Insights to learn about new threats and use that information to educate our security officers on what to look for,” Duhl adds. “The training we tied to Evolv Insights enables us to institute a proactive security posture.”



We want security ingress to be a fantastic guest experience. We want it to be seamless.”

- Ron Grimes, Dir. of Safety & Security, Ryman Hospitality Properties

Deep Relationships Have Formed Between Evolv and Opry Entertainment Group

Collaboration between the Evolv and Opry Entertainment Group teams has been key to the relationship.

“Our account executive, Bill McAteer, is the catalyst,” Grimes says. “We have other vendors where the account executive disappears after the sale. That is far from the case with Bill, who is constantly in touch—providing us with improvements on our processes and making recommendations on our use of the Evolv Express. The Solutions Engineering team and our customer success manager, Allison, are out here on a regular basis as well.”

Duhl adds, “We love the communication with Evolv. When we detect a weapon that has been undetected before, that identification gets immediately pushed out through Cortex AI to the rest of the market. We benefit from what other Evolv customers detect at the same time. This is a huge value add.”

When it comes to support issues, Duhl reports Evolv has been outstanding. “On Saturday nights, we can have nearly 9,000 guests come through the Grand Ole Opry alone,” he says. “With Evolv, I know that I have a partner who is invested in our venue and me. The one or two times when we’ve had to call Evolv for support, the response has been excellent. We had a resolution in a matter of minutes, not hours.”

McAteer describes how Evolv approaches relationships with customers like Opry Entertainment Group: “We tell our customers what our system limitations and capabilities are, and we prove it. We view ourselves as a trusted advisor and take this role very seriously.”



“

We haven’t had to delay the start of a show at either the Grand Ole Opry or Ryman Auditorium since we deployed the Evolv Express.”

- Ron Grimes, Dir. of Safety & Security, Ryman Hospitality Properties



Smaller Security Footprint and Reallocated Security Staff

There was a significant change in the number of Express systems versus metal detectors needed at the Grand Ole Opry and Ryman Auditorium.

The goal for the Opry Entertainment Group is to provide world-class entertainment in safe environments for their guests and employees. To do this with metal detectors, the team needed 6X the number of systems compared to their new Evolv deployments.

“We used 12 and sometimes 14 metal detectors at the Grand Ole Opry and 8 of them at the Ryman Auditorium,” Grimes notes. “With Evolv, we reduced that number to two Express dual-lane systems and one single-lane system at the Grand Ole Opry and to one Express dual-lane system and one single-lane system at Ryman Auditorium.” This amounts to a 79% reduction of systems at the Grand Ole Opry and a 75% reduction at the Ryman Auditorium. This reclaimed space increases the security perimeter at both venues while enabling the Opry Entertainment Group to allocate more space and personnel, for ticketing and expanded security perimeters.

“

I wasn't with the Grand Ole Opry when the Evolv Express was rolled out. I covertly came over to observe the system after taking the job. I immediately thought to myself, 'Holy mackerel, they have hundreds of guests in lines and they're flying through screening.' I had never seen anything like it. I was highly impressed.”

- Dale Duhi, Sr. Manager Security, Grand Ole Opry House



A Distinctly Different Guest Experience

Because threat detection is based on technology and not humans, guests view the Evolv experience as distinctly different from the metal detectors—and they often are vocal about their feelings.

“I frequently hear guests, who have gone through an Express system at one of our venues or one of the sports arenas in Nashville, tell other guests, ‘You’re going to enjoy this security screening. It’s not like other systems,’” Duhl relates.

Instances of positive guest experiences are evident in different ways. Duhl remembers one guest who showed up for the Loretta Lynn memorial last fall. “We had lines of people who showed up before we opened our gates,” he says. “I overheard one person telling her friends, ‘We’re never going to get our seats. Even if they open up right now, we’re still not going to make it.’ The gates opened and the lines started to move. Duhl continues, “Ten minutes later, when I was in the lobby, the same woman and her friends passed through security. She came over to me and told me, ‘Flawless and seamless. I’m very impressed with how you handled this huge crowd.’ I had to smile to myself. As we had Evolv, I knew that we were going to make it work.”

Making Nashville an “Evolv Destination”

The adoption of Evolv at Opry Entertainment Group has served as a catalyst for its adoption at other Nashville-area venues—especially sports arenas.

“Virtually every major sports arena in Nashville is now an Evolv customer,” Grimes touts. “Nashville is now an ‘Evolv city.’ We want to be the leader in Nashville when it comes to security. We’re very pleased that other organizations have seen what we’re doing here and also implemented Evolv systems.”

Grimes argues that Evolv can be used at a diversity of events and venues. “Nashville is host to a number of different events—Grand Prix racing, the Country Music Awards, NFL and collegiate football and basketball games, the NFL draft—and Evolv is a great fit for all of them,” he says. “Any public gathering warrants the level of protection Evolv provides.”

Attributing Tangible Value to Security

“When you go to attend a show at the Grand Ole Opry and Ryman Auditorium, you are excited to see the show,” MacHaffie observes.

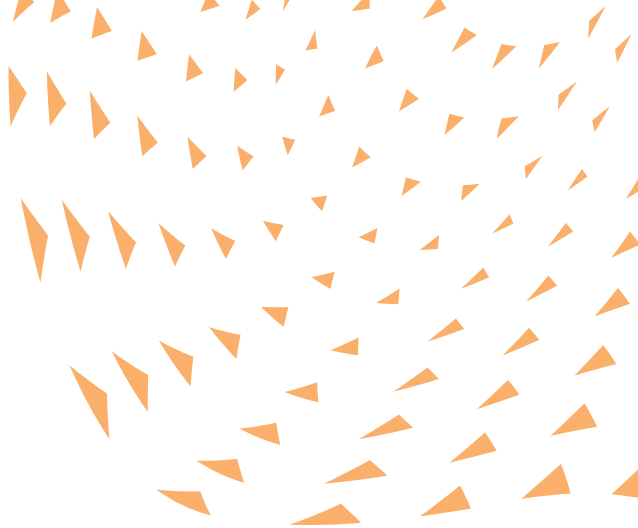
“When you go to attend a show at the Grand Ole Opry and Ryman Auditorium, you are excited to see the show,” MacHaffie observes. “You don’t want to be stopped in a long security queue and to be late to the show. With the Express, this is something that we aren’t worried about with the Express.”

Duhl cites the 5,000th show at the Grand Ole Opry as an example. “This was a big milestone for us,” he says. “Because of Evolv, we were able to have all audience members seated before the curtain call. It was fabulous to hear the cheers, shouting, and applause from every seat in the house. It was magnificent.”



“ We want guests to leave with a bigger smile on their faces than when they walked in, an experience they tell their kids about, their neighbors, the people in their local houses of worship, and their social media accounts. I’ve literally seen tears of joy shed by some.”

- Dale Duhl, Sr. Manager Security, Grand Ole Opry House



Contact us to learn more about helping to create
safer zones where you live, learn, work or play.

info@evolvtechnology.com **+1 781.374.8100**

