

Soundchecks

Written by Neil Watson
Thursday, 05 July 2012 10:32

For a church which has a band playing along with the singers, a sound check is essential. With a soundcheck you can make sure everything is set & working. It helps to make sure everyone can hear themselves. The soundcheck also makes sure the stage levels are as low as possible but loud enough that everyone is comfortable (notice not happy!!!!!!)

One of the hardest things is change. You really cant expect a perfect service if you roll up & expect everything to work. That's not the way.

There are sacrifices which are needed but the benefits far outweigh the negatives. Think about the sacrifice a minister makes is preparing?

They spend their own time, sometimes days, just to bring a word which is only 2 hours long. Then to come to church & everything before that, is a bit ropey!!! One of the hardest things is for a preacher to try & rescue a service just so they can effectively deliver the word!!!!!! Especially if any drama could be avoided just with a soundcheck. Part of the Spirit of excellence is doing things right, BECAUSE it's right!

Soundchecks also help the AV techs practice @ improve their craft & ministry. They can grow & try new things while not under pressure. This also helps if your church is one that has lots of events. They can better serve international recording artists.

If you don't, try doing Soundchecks, give it 6 months & posts your responses f there are any pastors struggling in this area, let us know your thoughts & experiences. Please post your opinions.

A method for a good soundcheck should be as follows:

1) If a soundcheck starts at 9:00, then the AV team should be starting switch on & all checks by 8:30 making sure everything is perfect. The AV team should be refreshed & ready to go by 9:00. They should be in their places ready & attentive to the needs of everyone onstage.

2) The band & singers should be there the very latest by 8:45 warming up & stretching their fingers, loosening up & FULLY warmed up. The musicians should all have their rigs & axes all ready to go by soundcheck start time. Dear singers & musicians, one of the most difficult & irritating things that techs have to deal with, is when it's an early morning start!! When you give 30 percent because you just got up & do this right through the sound check

, we set the input gains & levels, & everything is nice & green on all the LED's. As soon as the first tune starts & excitement catches everybody, the remaining 70 % plus 50% comes raging out & there's red peaking LED's everywhere & all the techs are scrambling to adjust input gains & the nice settings are lost!!! Please always give at least 100% in the soundcheck

!!! It will make for the perfect sound not just for the crowd but also for you all!!!!!!

3) choose which channels you want to start with. Some people start with the kit drum & work

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their way through. Others start with the vocals because getting the vocal blend is more important to them. Others just start with whoever turns up & is ready!!!! One thing to bear in mind here, if you have more than one mixing position, ie; FOH, monitors & broadcast (go Coridon & El Shaddai London) then for each channel you will also adjust your gains for each board. There will be a bit more work between the techs on this one If you have more than one board. While the ONE person is checking, everyone else onstage should be communicating with the monitor tech for what they want of that particular person, whether they want a lot or none at all. This way, by the time you have completed everyone, you have a solid base for everyone's monitor sound to start from. From here everything should be set and ready for your run throughs.

A few Sundays ago, we had a 9am soundcheck at church (of which I arrived @ 9:30!!! Must take my own medicine!!!) the stage was not as loud & I used the IEM monitor system. I do really enjoy coming offstage & NOT having my ears ringing, buzzing, hissing, steaming or hot & red like a cooked beet root!!!! Not only am I really getting used to IEM but I will now always try & use them!! I can now more clearly, hear me mam screaming my name from the top of the stairs (although my response is still the same, "I did not hear you mum!!!)

Remember to be a [# Hearoe](#) to someone else's hearing!!!!

[# Hearoes](#) "Even Ears Need Rescuing!!!!"

Following on from completing all the line soundchecks and now that you have a firm based to start from, you can now dive into a song to run through. Where it now really gets busy is for the monitor engineer.

If you have a dedicated monitor setup, then your time & attention will be divided between everyone on stage. Here, you may have to be firm But VERY kind & understanding as people may all try & shout out you at once!! You really want to start with fixing the vocals levels first as they are what people wants to hear first. For job security, you should then sort the MD!!! Always agree on a simple way of communication for everyone on stage so that it does not become a distraction to the audience. For everyone on stage you really don't want to turn full frontal & start attempting sign language on stage while performing!!!! NOT COOL!!! Hey, this is what soundcheck

is for, so people don't embarrass themselves onstage but also reach a nice mix so you are free to perform!!

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will try & collect "You've-been-framed" clips for your entertainment!! Once everything is perfect & everyone is happy, for the more sophisticated setups, you can now start to add effects to different peoples monitor mixes. At this point you are really earning your stripes. By this time there will not be much more input from the other board positions as they will be building their own mixes for the broadcast &

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FOH

positions. The more run
throughs

you can get through, the more refined everything will sound. Just a few points of note for the monitor engineer. If you are working with

IEM

systems, you will have to be more diligent & very good at interpreting what the performer is asking for because everyone hears things differently.

if its someone who is well used to using IEM then working with them to get their mix will be much easier. But for someone who is not or who hates

IEM

systems, it will require more work & patience. You have to remember

IEM

systems work on the principle of isolation. When those ear plus are in, the shut out most of the live sound a performer would need to "Vibe" on. You will have to start from scratch & build back that environment so they do not feel isolated from everyone onstage, from the ambient noise & the interaction from their audience.

You should never really use IEM systems without ambient room mics especially for the singers. The first thing you want to give them is their own sound then the ambient room mics

. In some hall, because of the level of sound bouncing around the room, this will be all that's needed for some singers but these type are very few & WELL experienced. Once you have these 2 main signals coming through, you can then go ahead & be very confident of being able to build a very nice mix for those

IEM

systems. Also remember, you need to be VERY careful with the levels you are sending "DIRECTLY" into someone's eardrum!!! you need to avoid deafening them (and them giving you a fistful!!).

Always be a responsible [# Hearoe](#) with other people's hearing. Lastly, never get carried away & become engrossed in the performance to the detriment of what you are supposed to be doing. This goes for all sound engineers no matter which mixing position you are working.

Always be attentive & keep ears & eyes focused on what & who is in front of you. This can be very hard for situations like church services where the techs are not professionals but members of the church. Once worship starts its often the case that it's eyes closed & hands up, which could be a problem if the person or persons onstage need your attention. Now you all go ahead, be empowered to mix with Excellence & Passion. Be creative as well in what you are doing. Do it with the best effort you can & always aim to give the performer, firstly, exactly what they need & secondly, what they like providing it does not make them or the sound worse.

If anyone cares to add anything to this session on "Soundchecks", if there are any questions or you just want to share your experiences, please feel free. We at Ko-ach

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hoped this was helpful.

Please don't forget to check our website at ko-ach.co.uk , our Facebook site at [facebook.com /ko.ach.co.uk](https://www.facebook.com/ko.ach.co.uk) and follow our tweets.

Kind regards from [# Ko](#) -ach-tually Speaking