



THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR LIVE SOUND

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August 2004

Sound Sanctuary

From Portable to Permanent

Part Deux

by Richard Rutherford

Okay, in case you missed last month's exciting installment, we have been looking at the challenges of the portable church getting a permanent home. Making sure the job is done right from the start can save you, and the volunteers who will follow, unnecessary headaches in the future.

Lack of Power is our Dilemma

Sometimes great minds really do think alike. Or so I found out when I was told that my fellow columnist Mark Amundson was covering portable power distro for this issue. In a church or at a carnival, besides the safety concerns that Mark addresses, it is a fact that poor power distribution is one of the evils of poor quality sound. I have so written in the past—it was true then, and it's still true now. Consider that you may double the acoustic output of your audio system and add 20dB of signal-to-noise ratio for the cost of a couple 20-amp breakers, and this is a no-brainer. Remember, you no longer have to run those orange extension cords from the ladies room down the hall—this is your house now! Do it right! Project coordination by an expert can be vital here to keep costs in line by handling lighting, video and audio requirements. There are many factors to include that could mean the difference between a new sub-panel or a new 1000kVa transformer.

Infrastructure

Like most flawless stage productions, it's what you don't see that makes the miracles happen. Good planning is the only way to provide the right wiring from point A to point B to point C. Think ahead, plan for success and get a professional who can translate your vision into language the on-site trade professionals can understand. Even if your project doesn't seem that big, you'll be really sad to Sawzall holes in the upstage wall six months from now. Conduit and wire is cheap now. When in doubt, leave a route!

Flexibility

These are just a few items when it comes to the details involved in making the change to a fixed equipment installation. Proper planning is critical, not just for correct technical operation; it can prove to be a great advantage if decisions are made to create different types of worship programs. As several styles of worship gatherings are getting less "linear" and more "organic" in nature, FOH systems need to be flexible enough to follow these changes.

As we mentioned last month, the thought process for square foot usage in many Houses of Worship is shifting, and this can mean adjustments in technical requirements. We are

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developing one project right now that needs to be a proscenium stage one week and theatre in the round the next week. Not too hard to design technically, but it does need to be designed. It's not the same as moving the drum kit from stage left to stage right.

Train and Document

As always, major changes make for an appropriate and excellent opportunity to refresh training for the entire AV staff. Even though you were smart enough to buy that expensive 32- by 8- by 4-channel console and are keeping it, many signal flow patches are likely to have changed. The probable addition of a center cluster may call for fader re-assignment, and a new CD recorder may have different signal processing. Now is a perfect time to request a visit from the factory rep; after all, he did make all those promises last year. This is also the time to have your hired professional document the system, at least in a "one-liner" flow diagram. Having basic documentation always makes future changes easier technically and helps keep those changes coinciding with the original design/operation intent.

Iceberg Let Us

Big changes always bring challenges, and these are just the tip of the iceberg. Let us remember the true purpose and focus of all the efforts involved. Let that be your guide through the process... and hire a professional!

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