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THE ALEX SCHLOESSER COLUMN

Stage Monitoring Solution, Silent Stages

The topic of stage monitoring has been a major challenge throughout the history of our young industry. Evolution and progress has brought new and cool solutions, that have a lot of positive impact all along. What I want to share here today will be well known to anybody who has done monitor mixes for a while, but I still think this is good and important to remember for the future. I want to approach this from a broader

perspective and I strongly encourage your and our discussion and exchange on this now and in the future.

I could not emphasize enough the impact of a clean and silent stage to the F.O.H. job of mixing. In most environments that are not stadium size, the stage volume has a major impact on what you can do out front. Sharing this with the artist and advising them on the problems will usually get you a better understanding and the ever-slightest bit of empathy for your challenge. I have found even the most egocentric performer to be willing to compromise in the interest of the gig.

The main sonic and acoustical problem is the mix of all sources on stage in a very tight and narrow setting. Whatever you hear on stage, will also be picked up by every microphone, so the cleaner this is, the better for the performance. This should be known to artists and sometimes we need to remind ourselves and the artist that the bottom line is to entertain the audience.

Since in-ear solutions have become both more affordable and better in their technical spec, there is a wide selection of very good wired and wireless solutions out there. I would absolutely recommend

going the extra mile of custom molds as anything not fitting well, will make the rest of the job extremely difficult. Good thing is that many manufacturers even offer different adapters to the various driver platforms. On the upside, you can even use the custom molds for hearing protection when going to a very loud show from time to time.

On the personal mixing options, there is also a great variety out there and most of them have quite acceptable sonic performance. If I had to make a choice, I would rather live with less input channels but a great built-in headphone amp, than a hundred channels in mediocre sound quality. Personally, I find that I rather have something sturdy and stable on the stage environment as things go rough occasionally and maintaining sound is imperative for my jobs. The good thing is that most Digital mixer manufacturers offer a good custom platform, that connects very easy with their mixers and hence most rental companies will have a decent option available these days. I found that I need to check Firmware status of all those items before each gig and I have found the need to upgrade units more than I would like to hope for.

In any case, I would very likely bring at least a few wedges for a front of the stage option and a pair of sidefills to any gig, just in case something goes wrong, or some surprise guest shows up to join the band and the performance. As always, it is all about being prepared for the unknown, which will make you stand out.

Please join the discussion and comment back to me, I would love to hear from you. You can reach me at alex@asaudio.de. Happy Monitor Mixing!

