The Sound Check Checklist

Behind the Mixer
teaching church audio artistry

Days Before

- ☐ Get worship band song list and learn the mix (listen to it on Spotify, Rdio, YouTube, etc.)
- ☐ Confirm the musician roster (musician name, instrument and/or vocal)
- ☐ Develop a stage plot with name, instrument and/or vocal, and input number.
- ☐ Get a service order and additional audio needs such as "play backing track for soloist."

Before the Sound Check

- ☐ Confirm musician roster and song list.
- ☐ Place floor monitors in-line and close to musicians. If using in-ear personal mixing systems, make sure personal mixer channels are correctly labeled.
- ☐ Use logical channel layout on house mixing console; vocals next to each other, drum microphones channels together, etc.
- ☐ Group channels appropriately (vocals, guitars, drums, etc.).
- ☐ Make sure last week's settings have been cleared (gates, compressors, etc.) - important when band changes or channels change.
- ☐ Engage phantom power for required channels.
- ☐ Perform battery check; rechargeable batteries charged, new batteries used, old batteries with acceptable life, etc.
- ☐ Check instrument microphone placement (drums, amp microphone, etc.)
- ☐ Check direct box (di box) connections; input cable to input jack, output jack to output cable.
- ☐ Perform safety check on stage; walking paths clear of cables and gear, cables secured to stage if in path, etc.
- ☐ Power equipment on in proper order; power amps on last. Check power lights on equipment to ensure they are on.
- ☐ Perform a line Check. Do this before the sound check if musicians or another person can help, otherwise do at start of sound.
- ☐ Check with all musicians present. Confirm every input sends a signal to the console.

Line Check Problem Solving

Whenever the mixing console isn't receiving a stage input signal, follow the signal flow. Does the console have the gain turned up high enough? Are you on the right channel? If it's a wireless microphone, is the receiver turned on? If so, does it show the transmitter is sending a signal? For wired microphones, is it plugged into the correct stage jack? Then start swapping out equipment such as the cable.

Sound Check

- ☐ For each channel, set fader at zero and turn up gain (trim) until the instrument or vocal can be heard at an appropriate level.
- ☐ Run the master fader a little louder to account for lack of people in the seats. Or, run it just under unity and boost once the service starts. Either way, people soak up sound so account for that.
- ☐ Perform a rough volume balance so lead vocals are on top and other channels fall in place.
- ☐ Perform a rough channel EQ - no more than fifteen seconds spent per channel.
- ☐ Set monitor mixes for floor wedges. If using in-ear systems, allow musicians to set monitors.
- ☐ Blend and contrast channels; backing singers blend, lead guitar stands out over rhythm, etc.
- ☐ Note who leads each song - important if worship team has multiple singers.
- ☐ Note any instrument solos for appropriate mixing - important if arrangement differs from the original recording.
- ☐ Walk the room to ensure an even-sounding mix in a majority of the room. Make mix adjustments if appropriate.
- ☐ Check spoken-word microphones such as pulpit microphones, handhelds, and pastor's microphone.

After the Sound Check

- ☐ Check with musicians for any gear problems.
- ☐ Check with musicians for monitor levels problems.
- ☐ Check battery levels on wireless devices. Lock device settings if possible.
- ☐ Prepare for service recording (computer recording, CD, etc.)
- ☐ Relax

Footnote: Some processes, like developing a stage plot, may be the job of a technical director or other person. In such cases, follow their lead.

Do you find this checklist overwhelming? There is a lot of work to do in the world of church audio, and a lot of people to please. If you are ready to take the next step, then check out the complete guide to church audio production:

➢ Audio Essentials for Church Sound