

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR A GREAT MIX

by Aston Fearon

**W**hen mixing a band live, what we do before the show even begins can have a massive impact on how successful our mix is.

### Preparation

Getting in before the band do is a must because many of the things that can be done without a band on stage (such as tuning the system, labelling the desk, sorting out our effects and processors) probably *should* be done without a band on stage. The ideal scenario we want to start from is that our desk is zeroed, there isn't any old labelling on our satellite boxes or mixing desk and nothing is yet patched in that shouldn't be. This isn't always the case however, as we will often walk into at least some remnant of last night's show. Getting in early means we can reset everything we need to in order to start from square one again.



*Labelling the satellite box*

### Stagecraft

Once we are all set and have tested and tuned our system, we can make sure we label our desk channel strips, our plugins, our satellite boxes and maybe even our stage box. If we are having any changeovers or if we are touring we can label the tail ends of our mic cables- in case they get unplugged. When cabling our stage it's generally best practise to plug in at the end closest to the mixer (i.e. satellite box or stage box) and leave the coil neatly under the mic stand or DI box in question. This means that if mics need to be moved there is enough slack to do so- in the right place.



*Labelling mic tails for easy identification*

### Foldback

If we've never worked with the band before and we are pretty much starting from scratch, it's a good idea to plan their foldback mix and "dial in" the band members preferences when they do arrive- so that they can have a good ball park mix. This saves on time later on but also band members can get into the swing of the sound check much more quickly and band

members are less likely to need urgent changes to their mix all at once. Another method is to start mixing monitors during the lines being checked in the sound check, asking band members about each instrument and setting a level before moving on

### Make Haste, Don't Rush

Time is usually of the essence and who knows what technical issue may arise which we will need to solve before doors open? In light of this it's important to make haste but not to rush. Taking the time to label things and patch them correctly means that we shouldn't have to rectify mistakes later on. Listening for any buzzes, hums or distortion as we begin to check our lines rather than racing ahead means we can be confident of the clarity in the mix. Setting our compressors and our gates put good limits on the dynamics of each instrument and stops unwanted bleed from ruining other aspects of our mix.

Paying attention to these first stages of our working day (or night) can have a positive impact on our mix for the rest of the show.



Aston Fearon is an experienced sound engineer- specialising in mixing Front of House and System Teching - and has worked with a number of venues, PA hire and event production companies in the UK.

[www.astonfearon.co.uk](http://www.astonfearon.co.uk)