
ERGONOMICS

The more ergonomically we set up our working area, the quicker we should be able to access what we need in a given moment while mixing our show- be it turning up the brass section for their solo, pulling in a bit of compression or tweaking our system EQ. Setting up our system in a way that's clear and organised can reap great benefits as we mix.

Office & Desk Layout

It's ideal to be able to see any radio receivers or transmitters within our line of sight so that we can monitor RF and battery life etc. Like-wise, comms belt packs or flashers should be in a visible position and the cable should allow you to move the full length of the desk freely and without restriction- the same with the Talk To Stage mic. I also like to set up my desk so that i can both stand or sit comfortably and preferably as close to the ear height of the audience as possible.

VCAs & Groups



By the end of our sound check it's good to have a good gain structure and the mix set up to kick start the show.

Knowing what the first song of the set will be will mean that we know which instruments will be starting the show- so that we can prime them to have the most impact. Once we have our mix set, we can now focus much of our

attention on our groups or VCAs and this will help us to make broader strokes of automation which can be subtle but dramatic- while at the same time not getting stuck in too much detail. Another advantage of using the groups to mix is that they are so close together that we can stay within a small physical working space and reach for faders quicker than individuals channels. Changes of between 2db and 5db can make a massive difference in this domain and we should always be willing to attenuate as well as amplify.

The Bus Factor

Having a high bus factor means that getting "hit by a bus" (or encountering any other serious event) wouldn't stop the show from continuing if someone else stepped in. Setting up our system in a clear and logical way also means that if we have to ask another engineer to cover our mix for us for whatever reason we can make their job easier so that they can quickly survey the desk and get acquainted with what we have going on. This is often overlooked but things happen- and all of us can fall ill without any warning. In these cases it's valuable to be able to give a gig over to someone which is easy to navigate. Also if we ourselves come back to our show file years later we don't have to spend too long working out where things are and what they are.

Running the sound check and mixing the show should be an efficient, fluid and even comfortable experience. Imagine playing an instrument where all the strings/ keys are in an odd order- frustrating and time consuming. This why it pays to aim for the opposite. As the last member of the band this dexterity will add to the finesse 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.

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