

It is in your control to have a smooth-running Live Recording that sounds great and actually starts on time!

However it requires more than just lip service. You must resist any temptations and follow through on show day for them to be of any use.

These ideas are gleaned from mistakes I see made over and over and over. My goal show day is to give you a great recording, and I need your help.



Lonnie Bedell
owner

Higher Sound Quality

The #1 sound quality problem in a Live Recording is reducing what is called "leakage". It is when one instrument leaks into another's microphone and reduces the overall sound quality.

The worst offender is the drums leaking into the choir mics. Most churches are very reflective to spread the voice without amplification, which doesn't help the situation.

Drums Far Away From Choir

Ideally the drums should be as far as practical. Off to the side, or preferably down front on a lower level. I bring a plexiglass drum shield which also helps.

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If you can, fax me a diagram of where everything is to be in the room (called a stageplot), and I can help you figure out the best place for things. **You should rehearse this way** so it feels normal the day of the performance.

Lower PA System Volume

Another way to reduce leakage is to keep the PA System (sound system inside) at a reasonable level. Many will ask you to turn it up, and it will test your resolve. If you can resist it will save you \$\$\$ later in the studio because you won't have to re-do vocal parts.

Minimal instruments in PA System

Consider running only vocals and keyboards (those without amps) through the PA system to keep things clean. This may seem a little unorthodox, but pleasing the crowd with a wall of sound isn't the main purpose here, it is making you a great Live CD.

A Quieter Drummer?

As the loudest instrument in the room, the drummer really controls the overall sound level in the church. If he/she plays loudly, other musicians will have to turn up just to hear themselves. If you can (and I know it's a big if), try to coax the drummer to take it down a notch. This simple step will do more to reduce leakage than anything else.

Move the Leslie to another room

Same reason...leakage. Mics on the Leslie will allow it to be heard. Ahhh...if only I could put the drumkit in another room!

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Choir Close Together

I've found that choirs that stand close together project a stronger sound, the better to compete with the drums. You can still sway, just try to keep people standing tight. Tight choir = Tight Sound!

No Wireless Mics

Wireless microphones can't begin to handle the volumes in a gospel show without distorting, plus there's the risk of radio interference.

Instruments up to snuff

Fresh drum heads & new guitar and bass strings a few rehearsals prior are a great idea. Make sure guitar cords actually work. Make sure outputs on keyboards actually work as well. Ah...the stories.

Run Smoother

Hire outside PA Company

It's tempting to save money, but an outside company will work hard for your money, and will have the skills and equipment to handle a music event, both of which are usually lacking in the church's sound engineer who is probably used to dealing only with vocals.

Instruments Set Night Before

...or at least before the truck gets there. Waiting for musicians to arrive and moving drums around at the last minute are two ways to guarantee a late start.

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Producer Should Be On-Site

Anything that can be done the day prior should be, and others should run any errands. The producer is needed to make important decisions needed to keep the project moving forward, and starting on time.

Minimal Instrumentation

Consider leaving out excessive number of keyboards, horns, percussion, etc during the live show, and add them in the studio as overdubs. Horns & percussion pose leakage concerns, and because of that are difficult to re-do in the studio because the original playing has leaked onto many other tracks.

Musicians On-time for soundcheck

Musicians should be on-site before soundcheck. I know as well as you that might mean telling them even earlier to actually get them there on time! Do what you have to, have somebody pick them up personally, whatever you have to.

Production Techniques

Record Applause By Itself

This is usually done pre-show and is used in the studio in case the audience isn't as enthusiastic during the later songs.

Try recording different levels from a quiet clap to bringin' down the house level.

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No Cell Phones

You should make the announcement pre-show. Somebody will forget and it will be loud and clear.

Overdub Key Choir Parts In Studio

Called "Stacking" or "Double Tracking" the choir, key choir members re-sing their parts along with the original. This effectively reduces leakage because the choir will be a mix of performance sound (with leakage) and studio sound (without leakage).

Some big-time record labels strip the entire live choir tracks out and re-record them all. While this does create a cleaner sound, it also strips it of feel, but that is a decision you have to make.

Doing Business

An Offering Attracts More People

Shows that sell tickets always seem under-attended, and that means a less enthusiastic show.

Don't Rely On The Collection

What you take in as a collection or tickets may indeed cover your expenses (PA, Recording, etc), but shouldn't be relied upon to do so. Most PA companies want to be paid in full before the performance starts, some even before they will unload their truck.

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Things YOU can do to Improve your Live Recording

- Higher Sound Quality
- Smoother Flow
- Start on time
- Save \$ in the Studio
- Less Stress for YOU!



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