

- Regarding the late sound check, none of us realized they were ready to start. It had been a “hurry up and wait” situation, which is common with shows like this. All of our gear was set, so we were waiting for the band to get prepped and warmed up. Normally this is a good chance for a quick smoke break, so I really can’t fault Karl for that. The issue is that they were ready to go a minute or two after he stepped out. So when they turned around and expected him to be there, he was suddenly missing. I don’t think this is the only reason that their rehearsal ran long, but it was a contributing factor.

- Flautist being very dynamic, with plenty of “Quiet-Loud-Quiet” sections. This can make settings on the pack difficult; If you set it for the quiet sections, it’s over-driven during the loud sections. And if you set it for the loud sections, the quiet sections are nearly inaudible. So finding that Goldilocks zone can be difficult. This is compounded by the fact that it was a different mic than usual (so the usual gain settings we use for the pack go right out the window and need to be figured out from scratch,) and changing the settings requires physically accessing the pack. The mic itself worked perfectly, but getting it set with the pack is often a case of trial and error. So if it’s already on stage during the show, there’s nothing the ABO can actually do (short of physically walking up on stage and interrupting the song,) to adjust the gain on the pack.

- Regarding the monitor mixes, the ABO will typically only give them something in the monitor feed if they ask. Making assumptions about monitor mixes will only have artists grumpy with you. Normally all of this happens during sound check. So my guess is that the announcement mic was simply never used before the show during rehearsal, so nobody realized it was missing from the monitor mix. Frustrating to deal with after the show starts? Sure. But the inverse would also be true; If he assumed they wanted it in the mix and was wrong, they’d be just as frustrated by that instead. Luckily, this one is a quick and easy fix, as it’s just a dial on the console. The pdf mentions that this announcement mic was the entire point of the monitors, but it had been communicated to us when it was all being set up that the flute was the main focus. Especially for percussion, who was far away from the flute and needed to be able to hear it. So the flute was in the monitors, but the announcement mic wasn’t.

- Regarding late mics, I’ve been on both sides of that situation before, as the ABO and as an audience member who knew the band better than the person mixing it. On the one hand, if you’ve only ever heard a song once during rehearsal, it can be difficult to know which instruments are going to come in next. You’re constantly playing catch-up. But simply leaving all of your mics hot with a large group means you’re prone to random band noises; Music pages being turned, band members clearing throats, feet shuffling, etc... On the other hand, it’s incredibly frustrating when you know a song well, and the ABO isn’t as well-versed on that particular song. If you’ve listened to a song for weeks, you know that song like the back of your hand. So when the ABO is lagging behind, it’s easy to take it as if they don’t care about the show as much as you. Again, I’ve been on both sides of issues like this, and it really just depends on which angle you’re looking at the problem from. Both sides are frustrating, and it’s often a cause of the “grumpy sound guy” stereotype whenever an ABO interacts with audience.

• Regarding issues with mics in the second half, I know the second half was much more difficult than the first. There were multiple deck changes, and mics moved several times. This wasn't done during rehearsal due to time constraints, (each change took about 10 minutes, and off the top of my head I think we had five changes total,) so the show was the first time the ABO had actually used the mics in each of those different configurations. As an experienced ABO myself, that's a nightmare. Mics that were previously fine might suddenly start having feedback issues because they were moved across the stage and are now sitting in a hot spot. Or maybe you set it, then the performer stands much closer or farther away from it than you anticipated. Things like that. So with each new setup, you're basically dialing all of your mics back in again. And feedback or level issues sort of come with the territory during that phase

•The compression goes back to the flautist being very dynamic. You need the level to be high enough when it's quiet, without being deafening when it's loud. So compression is an easy way to accomplish this, as it "flattens out" the louder parts. But excess compression can also lead to distortion, which may actually be part of the third bullet point. And EQ settings were probably notched out in a few places to curb feedback issues. The ABO probably also wasn't as familiar with the mic being used when he was Qing it.

• I can't really defend the football game. Depending on the timing, that could have been the cause of some of those missed cues. Even if it didn't impact the show at all, it's still bad optics when the audience sees a technician watching a game during the show. It's definitely easy for many of the technicians to feel like they've got a handle on things, then get too relaxed and miss something. Or start to feel like it's just another easy show. I know I've been guilty of that in the past when freelancing, so I know how easy it is to slip into the "just another day at the office" mindset. I try to occasionally remind myself that every show is somebody's big day; Even if it's just a regular Saturday for me, they've likely worked on this show for weeks or even months before getting to the building. Without those occasional reminders, things like this happen, where you're suddenly caught with your pants down. And the fact of the matter is that even if the show had gone off without a hitch and it wasn't a distraction for him, audience members still noted that he was in the audience watching football.

I've tried to remain fairly objective in this. But I also have a lot of ABO experience, and fully recognize that I've leaned on that pretty heavily in some of my responses. Some of them definitely sympathize with Karl, simply because I've been in his shoes on similar shows before, and can speak from experience on many of those concerns that the client has raised.

Thank You!

  
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