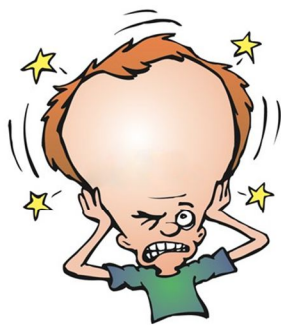


Great Event Audio Part 1 – The Visceral Effects of Sound

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I recently went to the annual fundraiser of one of my favorite charities, a beautiful event with a good crowd and great vibe. It wasn't long, however, before the event started to thin out: first, after the speeches; then again after the DJ started to play. Before it was over there were only the young, die-hard (and drunk) partiers – you know the type.

I wasn't working this event. But, as owner of an AV design company, it was apparent why people were leaving early:



**My head's going to burst
if I don't get out of here!**

***I'm too tired to stay any longer.
I'm going home to bed.***



**I can't do this anymore –
the music is killing me!**

What happened here is something the experts call *audio fatigue*. According to Tim Root who writes for *Sound & Video Contractor* magazine:

"[Audio fatigue] is a very real phenomenon that happens because we have to work hard to make sense of what we're hearing. Research shows that active listening takes a physical toll on the body. Just like when we have to listen extra carefully to someone who speaks with an unfamiliar accent, our brains have to work harder to distinguish sounds."

Audio fatigue will cause people to tire, become irritable and even leave your event.

This isn't just about bad audio, such as hair-raising feedback or microphones going silent.

This is about the subtle, yet very real effects even mediocre sound has on your guests, in ways in which they are not always aware – the ones that spoil their good time or the message of your event, even driving many to the door before it's over.

Events are a visceral experience:

If your audio isn't good, your event won't *feel* good – and neither will your guests.

Think of fingernails scratching a backboard – maybe not as awful as this, but you get the idea. If bad enough, or persists long enough, people will want to leave an event, even if they don't clearly understand why.

How to Avoid Audio Fatigue

There is a list of things that weren't done properly, such as using the same equipment for the speeches and music, using DJ instead of professional PA equipment, too few loudspeakers, overlooking room acoustics, no quiet area for conversations, etc.

The better approach to avoid audio fatigue is to follow these steps for great sound:

Actions to Take for Great Sound:

1. Start with a high-quality, **professional system**
2. Make sure you have **clean, dedicated power**
3. Incorporate audio into your **event layout and design**
4. Select equipment with the best fidelity for your **program material**
5. Provide uniform coverage throughout your **listening area**
6. Minimize distortions caused by **room/venue acoustics**
7. Make sure sound levels are appropriate for **your guests' comfort**
8. Finish with a setup that is **clean, safe and secure**

As you can see, good audio is not separate from your event. Rather,

Great sound is part of, and blends seamlessly into, every aspect of your event design.

As an event professional, your job is complicated with all the moving parts. On top of this, events are costly and subject to never ending budget pressures. Nevertheless, events are taking a bigger role in corporate strategies and promoting company objectives, whether it is higher donations, more effective employee training, increasing customer loyalty, more impactful product roll-outs, or any number of goals. So, I'll make this simple:

An event that sounds good is more successful in achieving the goals of your event.

Good audio creates the emotional connection to convey your message and keep your guests engaged. It says to your guests that you care about their listening experience and leaves them with a lasting positive feeling.

Obviously, there is a lot more behind good sound. For now, here is a useful diagram for thinking about how sound fits into your next event.

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