

*"And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never **heard**?" (Romans 10:14b, RSV)*

*"Faith comes from what is **heard**...." (Romans 10:17, RSV)*

*"... the Holy Spirit came on all who **heard** the message." (Acts 10:44, NIV)*

Among my other theological sins, I fully know that I am about to take the above verses wildly out of context – but only to proof text my point! Yet, I don't think that I am too far out of turn in stating that these texts remind us that our ability to *hear* is very important. Because hearing is important, those blessed gifts from above, *Sound Technicians*, are a very important part of our modern day worshiping community.

Determine to be a blessing

A Great Sound Tech

A great Sound Tech blesses the church by insuring that the communication of the 'word' (speech or music) is clear and understandable to everyone. The quality of sound during a meeting can be a major factor in how people are able to engage in the activities at hand. What good would it do for the best worship set in the world to be played, or the best teaching to be given, if the sound is so bad that no one can bear to listen to it? Bad sound can be a great distraction to those engaging in a worship service. At the worst of moments, the quality of sound can even hinder one's ability to understand and engage at all.

At the best of times, good sound provides an opportunity for clearly communicated material (music or speech) to be received easily. When sound is then *transparent*, and out of mind, the 'word' can become the focus of attention. A prudent Sound Technician is key to achieving this worthy goal.

Serve, Like Jesus

As Sound Technicians, we need to have a clear vision driving why we do this thing called sound. We are not here to simply "be the technician, turn knobs and push faders." *We are here to serve – God and his listeners.* Some people serve God and others by running home groups. Others serve on a worship team. Some people serve by cleaning the toilets. We serve by plugging in cables, turning knobs, pushing faders and making a cohesive mix. As a Sound Tech, hear these words from Jesus:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life..." (Mark 10:45 NIV).

If we put this heart of service into action as Sound Techs, the benefits for us and for those we serve are huge. We may be doing the exact same physical task as any sound tech, but the servant hearts with which we approach the task will strengthen our relationships – and build a sense of community as we minister life to the body. That is a precious, sacred achievement.

Thankful In A Thankless Job

Let's talk turkey for a moment (I like dark meat with gravy, personally). Being a Sound Tech can be a tough, and usually thankless, job. Most often, the only feedback that we get is that of a squealing microphone, or a complaint. It can be very easy to develop a bad attitude when things aren't going well and all we are hearing are complaints. As Sound Techs, we need to be very careful with our attitudes. Poor attitudes can easily have negative effects – that trickle down to the whole church. None of us want that.

We can easily eliminate this temptation to negativity by "zooming out," and viewing a picture bigger than our immediate circumstances. We have a tremendous *opportunity* here. We can help foster an ever-important sense of unity, pursuing a *modus operandi* of teamwork instead of individualism.

We also have the opportunity to be a tremendous blessing to the church with our kind acts of service. *Be determined to be a blessing.* Doing so will bring strength to your church, and glory to Christ.

NATHAN ROUSU

A Great Sound Tech

Pastors and worship leaders, given the nature of this often challenging and thankless task, empower your Sound Techs with frequent words of thanks. Coming from you, these words go a long way.

It's Too Loud – Or Is It?

One of the most common complaints we hear as Sound Technicians is "It's too loud." While sometimes this genuinely is the case, other times it may not, in fact, be too loud. The problem may lie with an improper frequency balance. If the frequencies are not properly balanced, a build up in a particular area of the spectrum may cause discomfort or even pain to the listener. It does not take much of an imbalance to cause discomfort. Of course, the listeners never know to say, "I'm finding it a little too hot at 3.15 KHz; could you please attenuate that frequency?" Because it is uncomfortable or painful, all we usually get told is that "it's too loud." Some churches have painful sound at 90 dB SPL, while for others sound can be enjoyable at 100 dB SPL. The secret lies in a *properly set up system with a nice, even frequency response.*

I highly suggest hiring a professional with proper measurement microphones, and an FFT analyzer like SMAART or SpectraFoo, to come in and do a proper analysis of your sound system. These pros can make the proper adjustments, and/or offer recommendations for changes/upgrades. The improvements in sound quality can often be very gratifying.

A tool that will greatly ease the tension of the 'loudness' issue is a *sound pressure level meter.* A decent meter can be an invaluable tool, and can be acquired for an affordable price (our church bought one from Radio Shack for $50). This tool can be useful in 2 major ways. Firstly, you and your pastor can use it to set an agreed upon sound pressure level (SPL) cap. Next, it can be very hard to stay objective with your levels over the course of a set, so this meter can be invaluable for helping you know at any moment if your running too hot (or in some cases too low). It's a great way to keep things within pre-ordained boundaries and minimize the tensions of loudness issues. Typical levels for Sunday morning services are 90 – 100 dB SPL-C; for youth and outreach services, 95 – 110 dB SPL-C.



The John 5 Principle

A piece of music is a wonderful, dynamic organism. As a Sound Tech, normally we mix actively – listening and responding, always looking to balance the elements to put forward the best representation of the musical message. Within our context of worship, we have an extra opportunity. Our worship is an interactive experience with God. His Spirit moves among us and we can respond to Him. In John 5:19 we see Jesus showing us how he joins in with what he sees the Father doing. As Sound Technicians, we can do the same. Look for what the Lord is doing in worship. Look for where the Holy Spirit is resting with His presence. He may be empowering the drummer to help release joy or an electric guitar player to help release intercession. Be sensitive to these things and give them an appropriate level in the mix – so the body can receive what the Lord desires to do.

Sound is to be transparent

Nathan Rousu is an audio nerd. Along with his gorgeous wife, Charis, and 3 kids (not nerds), he resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada where he is worship pastor at Harvest VCF. Nathan also runs a small studio, and has operated countless sound systems large and small.