# Face Facts: Your Church Is a Concert Venue

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If aliens landed on earth and attended a Saturday night concert at a nightclub and then walked into a church the next morning, they would also call both events a "concert." If we are honest, most of today's modern church environments — on a technical level — are essentially concert venues. We have elevated platforms with instruments, cables, stands, lighting and sound reinforcement, all for the express purpose of amplifying the "talent" on the stage. If you have a stage, you have a church concert venue. The goal of a concert is pure entertainment; the goal of the church is active participation of the people. As Christians, we know that behind the stages, lights, and sound speakers there is a significant and deeper spiritual thing happening.

The spiritual thing happening can be hindered or helped by the gear we use. Many churches try to overcome the rules of rock by purchasing cheap or gimmicky gear in hopes or expectation that the church won't care or notice. My working theory is that the church should at least match (if not outdo) the efforts of entertainment. This isn't a sacred/secular conversation, but a practical one: the church can and should represent God within our contexts.

In one sense the church stage looks like the secular concert stage, but there are differences. Churches have volunteers, meet in the morning, and never stops meeting, 52 weeks a year: over and over again.

Church environments use volunteers with less than "professional" voices and gear. Ideally, we should have the best source sounds, but sometimes that's not what we have to work with. Anything that can help overcome those weaknesses is a wise choice.

With audio, everything starts with a *source sound* (instrumental or vocal) and makes a journey through microphones, cables, direct input boxes, mixers, and then on to the speakers. With video, the pathways are similar, originating from

a CPU and going through countless junctions to reach its destination on the screens. Well built, quality conduits are the lifelines of seamless production. Just one weak link between the source sound and people eyes/ears can be a Sunday-stopper.

When building systems from scratch or re-evaluating upgrades look for weak points and fortify those areas with quality gear. In churches, I can't count the times I've gone to adjust a microphone stand and it's literally fallen apart in my hands. It's common to find very inexpensive vocal microphones given to singers whose task is to proclaim the glory of God. Many churches operate with donated, used computers. This can all be frustrating and hinder the goal at hand.

The more intensely a piece of gear is being used, the better build and quality that item should have. If you are a piano-driven church, then have a great piano (maybe even the best money could buy). If you have a drum set, please buy a great snare drum. The price difference between "good enough" and world-class is minimal when you consider the week in and week out, volunteer-led strain that churches put on their equipment.

On the mission field, I have seen whole villages transformed in worship with a 2-string guitar! This reinforces the truth that Jesus will be glorified and in the church without all the best gear in the world. And yet, in developed countries we must think contextually: if we choose to set up our churches as modern worship expressions, we avoid the production values of the non-church norms.