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Helpful Hints and tip's : Technical Operating Hints: version 06/08

Operating lights

We have all been to events which have bad sound. You can hear 'feedback' (squealing) coming out of the speakers. And the sound just sounds terrible. With lighting, its easy to 'kill the atmosphere' as well, if a few simple steps aren't followed. Once you have set up all your gear, its advisable to check that everything is going properly. It is for this exact reason that you will want to be setting up in plenty of time. It is better to be setup with nothing to do, rather than hang at the beach in the morning and then still be plugging in lights when punters are walking in the door. Once the gear is setup, it's a good idea to label your desk and become familiar with how to use it. Many times I have seen people trying to operate an unfamiliar desk once the gig has started. This has the potential to make the event very unprofessional. Now is the time to also be doing a 'load test', to see if your power supply can handle what it is rated at. **Please note.** A load test does not mean you simply turn on all your equipment. Work out how much equipment can be on at once with that supply and turn on that amount of gear only. (if you have more gear, make sure you turn off others before turning on—this will reduce the possibility of tripping circuits and potentially harming gear)

- Before people are allowed in, the stage should be clear and stage lights set to an appropriate mood.
- As soon as the performer or MC is ready, your hands should be ready to go (fade the lights / brighten the lights).
- Lighting should be controlled in a manner which is appropriate to the surroundings, its not very appropriate turning a strobe on when an important message is trying to be presented etc. likewise puffing out smoke, flashing or using moving lights etc.
- A good lighting operator can flash/ change the lights in time to the beat of the music. This does not necessarily mean every time a drum is hit etc, but choosing key times to change them. Just like the importance of flashing the lights in time, it is also important to stop them on time (at the end of songs etc). There are several ways to do this.
 - 1) Turning all the lights off instantly (blackout). If the drums are hit with a single 'big bang' at the end of a song.
 - 2) Same as blackout, except use 'crowd blinders' on the 'big bang' to 'blind' your audience.
 - 3) Slow the 'fading' of the lights down, so they just fade to being on.
 - 4) Flash the lights faster and faster until the drummer stops, (often followed by blinders or blackout).Especially with numbers 1,2 and 4, they should be used sparingly.

If you are having dance groups or drama teams, find out if they have any special requests for lighting, (as with sound).

Operating Sound

As with controlling the lighting, sound is very similar, read thru the above as much is relevant for both.

Suitable music should be chosen for key moments in your event. When punters enter the event, how do you want them to feel? Play that kind of music. If you are having dance groups perform. It's a good idea to ask for their backing track to be given to you a week before (especially if it is a large event, this way you can test the tracks on your player). These days many dance groups are editing their own songs, if they are not copied properly, then they mightn't play. Make sure the music is clearly labeled and is set to play instantly. Also find out if and when they need the song faded. During the organizing stage, performers should be asked what their requirements are. This includes microphones, amps, etc. You should also have a sound system which will easily be able to cover the areas needed. Running a sound system at max will only damage the gear. Speakers should be placed so that the sound will travel over the people at the front all the way to the back. Many times speakers are placed on the floor at the front. In order for the people at the back to hear, the sound needs to be turned up really loud.... Obviously the people at the front get a real blasting.

Please remember that events where there is a Gospel presentation, it is vital that you allow as much opportunity for people to hear from God for themselves. This means trying not to move around excessively when important messages are on. Not 'playing' with the lights, sound etc, which would be a distraction. If you cant sit still, please leave the room (leaving a 'monkey' to operate lights / sound / video if needed)