

Do we need a sound guy or can we do it ourselves?

This will depend upon a few factors...

#1: the size of the venue you are playing

if you are performing in a small 100 seat bar or venue and the PA required is not huge you can easily mix it yourself. It is best to have the mixer on the right hand side of the stage and who ever is mixing and playing at the same time can easily get to the desk. If it is a guitarist or bassist who is right handed it is easier to do on the right hand side as the neck of the instrument will point away from the mixer and it easier to remove your right hand than your left in mid song if something goes wrong.

There are many very powerful mixer /amp combinations [eg: Yamaha EMX series] that combine high power [up to 1000 watts] multi effects, graphic equalisers and even compressors in a very small easy to use format. It is always a good idea for at least the guy mixing to be positioned just ahead or level with the speakers so he can here what it sounds like "out front". if you are using any monitor[foldback] speakers make sure your front mix [FOH] is correct first then bring up the monitor level. If however you are performing some large venue [500 people up] or outdoors it is probably best to hire a professional who you can hire to supply all the gear and operate the sound and lighting for you.

#2: the audio/mixing knowledge of at least one if your band members.

Whoever you get to mix make sure they have basic knowledge of sound / audio mixing. This would include knowledge associated with amplifier wattage, speaker impedance, graphic and parametric equalisation, compression, effects, and locating troublesome frequencies that will create feedback [squeal or hum].and of course a basic knowledge of dynamic levels, microphone polar patterns, and overall mixing of the sound levels. you can just about learn all this with a bit of practice, and by reading the manual for the sound system thoroughly.

However there are a few things you need to know before setting up your own sound, it is quite easy but it can be disaster if your guy doesn't have this basic knowledge. A simple sound engineering book would help but you don't need to study it like rocket science.

The last thing you want though is having an egomaniac guitarist in control of the sound desk and putting his own mix 80% louder than everybody else... it happens!!

#3: the size of your band

if your band is big and has 23 members!!! or so, all playing different instruments then it better to have a sound guy who know what he is doing. also the requirement for microphones, cabling, DI boxes, stands etc would be huge and possibly too much to do yourself.

Which of course brings us to , like everything else in life, how much money you have to spend!!.....

#4: your budget

you need to decide whether to invest in a sound system of your own or continue to hire and pay out 'dead money' in hire fees. You can virtually buy a good basic PA system for the costs of hiring for year or so if you are playing a few night per week every week and earning some money. Remember you have to buy many accessories in PA systems such as mics, stands, cables, etc etc but if you are mostly doing small

venues and you have someone who can confidently setup and mix your band you are saving a bundle by doing it all yourself. [if you don't mind lugging and setting up/pulling down that is!!]

One last but important point.

Always try to listen at another venue to anyone you may hire prior to them supplying and mixing for your band. Some so called PA/sound guys are atrocious at mixing and have no clue what they doing even though they may tell you they do. I have heard some awful mixes by so called pro sound guys. Don't be blinded by guys who sound technical and speak in numbers and frequencies and 'shop talk' babble.

Quite frankly the best sound guys in my opinion have always been musicians with a basic knowledge of sound mixing, because they KNOW what to listen for and can balance the music.. they know when to boost the guitar for a solo or to put a bit of extra effect on for the singer.

AND!!!!

Recently, due to the prevalence of "karaoke type singers" who pretend to be pros [eg: pop idol shows etc] and also some styles of rap music there has been a trend for singers to hold the microphone by the head, or ball section with their hand all over this section of the mic..

DO NOT DO THIS!!!!

[unless you are looking for a particular effect such as rappers do] as it creates squeal [feedback] and totally lessens the microphone's sound effectiveness. Every time you see someone singing like this it just shows they have no clue as to correct microphone technique and will show that they/you are an amateur singer and will annoy the crap out of the person operating the sound system. [and may well result in a bill for blowing up high frequency horns in the system from creating unnecessary feedback!!] have a look yourself on TV and in "talent shows"etc and see how many young amateur singers and I might add some professional ones too are doing this..it is BAD practice!!!

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