

Production Elements in Worship

I. The Lesson

Have you ever experienced the following situation? You received a new song from the worship leader at rehearsal that really excited you, and so you were motivated to put in *extra* time to figure out parts/fills/vocal lines that you think would work *wonderfully*. At service, you executed your parts flawlessly only to find out later that people couldn't hear you at all! What rises up in your heart after something like this? Frustration? A desire to kill the sound man?

Have you ever considered the possibility that maybe the problem from the beginning was in fact... you? In the world of music production (recording), great records happen when much time and consideration is given to the production of the songs.

Production = the _____ and _____ of a song

Production Elements:

_____ : the perceived volume of parts and sections of a song (ranging from quiet to loud)

_____/Groove: the rhythmic structure of the song/ "feel" of how the rhythm works within the music (usually determined by the drums)

_____ : the organization within each song of when each instrument plays/doesn't play, and how the instruments/voices work together

_____ : the sound each instrument/vocalist makes (eg. guitar tone, keyboard sounds, drum tuning/selection, etc.)

There are other production elements as well, but these are the main ones to consider. In the world of music production, it is when the production elements of a song are considered with great scrutiny that the overall "mix" of the music sounds better. The basic premise for this is the familiar saying, "Garbage in, garbage out." Let's bring further clarification.

If a guitar is out of tune on stage, there is nothing the sound engineer can do to fix it using the sound board (other than turning it off!). If the drummer is not playing consistent "time," there is nothing the sound engineer can do to make him play *in* time. If every person on the stage is playing/singing as *loud* and as *much* as they can for the *entire* song, the mix in the congregation will be very chaotic and messy.

So, our goal as a worship team is to begin to focus on these production elements so that we empower the sound engineer to be able to mix to the best of his/her ability. How can we work together to minimize musical distractions and create the best opportunity for people to meet with God? A good mix helps people meet with God. Good production in the worship team helps achieve a good mix.

Items to focus on in regard to production:

- 1) _____ to each other. In order to “gel” well with the team, you have to be *listening* to what each person on the team is playing/singing. In times of spontaneous/prophetic worship, it is important to see what is being sung/played that may be what God is breathing on in that moment.
 - a. Bass players: What is the groove the drummer is playing? What is the left hand of the piano player doing?
 - b. Electric guitarists: What is the piano playing? What is the acoustic playing? What are the singers singing
 - c. Acoustic players: What is the piano playing? What are the singers singing?
 - d. Singers: What is the worship leader singing/doing. Is he/she backing off of his/her microphone to let the congregation sing? You do the same

- 2) _____ _____ for each other. If everyone is playing the same thing at the same time, it usually “clutters” or “muddies” the mix. If there is a featured vocal line, piano part, or lead solo, it is important that the rest of the instruments/vocalists play or sing less to create more “room” in the music and in the mix for that part to be heard. If the arrangement doesn’t allow for this “room,” the featured part will not translate well in the mix. In a spontaneous/prophetic moment, if the prophetic vocal or instrument cannot be heard, we have hindered its effectiveness in the congregation.
 - a. Examples:
 - i. Acoustic guitar can play only the higher strings to leave room for the bass and piano to carry the lower parts
 - ii. Electric guitar should be careful not to play in the same octaves as the vocals are singing so the words and melodies of the vocalists (especially the lead vocalist) can be heard easily by the congregation
 - iii. Drummer should simplify drum/groove patterns to allow other instruments (eg. acoustic guitar) to carry the rhythm at certain moments.
 - iv. Vocalists should refrain from singing if one of the vocalists begins to sing a spontaneous/prophetic song until a repetitive hook or line is being sung. At that point, singing with that person helps to reinforce that thought/declaration.

- 3) Think in _____.¹ If you think of the arrangement and intensity of a song in terms of gears (like in that of a car), you want to make sure that you don’t get to the highest gear too early. In order to emphasize anthemic, key moments of songs, you have to save the highest gears for that moment.

¹

Thanks to Brent Milligan

For example, in the song “How Great is Our God” by Chris Tomlin, the sixth gear should be saved for the bridge, when the congregation sings, “Name above all names...” If the band is in sixth gear at the chorus, it doesn’t leave any room to build into the bridge and make it sound any different from the chorus. An example of how to think of the production of “How Great is Our God” in terms of gears would be the following:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Gear</u>	<u>Production Example</u>
Verse 1	1 st gear	Acoustic only with lead vocal
Chorus 1	2 nd gear	Acoustic and piano, vocals
Verse 2	3 rd gear	Bass, drums, electric (gently)
Chorus 2	4 th gear	Intensity builds, not 100% yet
Bridge	6 th gear	Powerful! Anthemic!
Chorus 3	4 th gear	Drums and vocals only
Chorus 4	5 th gear	Band back in for final time

II. Discussion

- 1) What are the production elements that we as a team are doing well right now?
- 2) What are the production elements that we need to work on as a team?
- 3) Who in our congregation can help to keep us accountable in regard to paying attention to production elements? (hint: these people should be unbiased and have a musical “ear”)
- 4) What are the spiritual results of a band who pays careful attention to the production elements listed in this lesson?
- 5) What can we do as a band (as a group and individually) to grow in our awareness and execution of production elements in worship?

III. Prayer Points

- 1) God delights in excellence. Pray that God would increase our spirit of excellence as we worship – week in, week out.
- 2) Pray that God would make us sensitive to and aware of His leading and that we would be able to musically facilitate the move of the Spirit more effectively.
- 3) Pray over the atmosphere of your worship services, that distractions of any kind would be minimized and that the services would be a place for people to meet with God easily.
- 4) Pray that the Lord would unify the team to a greater measure. It is then that we are better able to flow together, both musically and spiritually.