

## **EVENTS**

### **BY PETER SINCLAIR**

- **The Role of The Audio-Visual Butler**
- **The Role of the Event Performance Standards Consultant**

#### **PROLOGUE**

In 1989 an earthquake devastated Newcastle, a city approx. 2 hours drive north of Sydney Australia. Lives were lost, people were injured, and property damaged.

The Newcastle Workers club, in the city centre, was destroyed and has since been rebuilt. A magnificent structure housing entertainment, function and leisure facilities, it was re opened in July 1992.

Auditorium 2 has a stage, with full stage lighting, an electric roll down screen, built in video projector and a concert quality sound system. The raised control area at the back of the hall houses a sound desk with FX rack, house light dimmer controls and a programmable stage lighting desk.

All this expensive, sophisticated equipment was installed and paid for by the club at the time of reconstruction.

In March 1998 one of my clients booked this facility for a presentation to local travel agents. The technical requirements were relatively simple.

- Dim the house and stage lights down
- Show a video
- Dim the house and stage lights up to reveal the presenter at the lectern.

The in house technician told me they had never been able to do that. He said "The sound always buzzes when the lights are left dimmed – just use those switches at the back to turn off the house lights and leave the stage lights either on or off."

In 2010 I was involved in an event at Homebush, an area built for events. Once again when I asked how to dim the house lights at the start of each performance segment I was told "you can turn off certain lights but it is not possible to dim them. Once the 'bright lights' were turned off it was too dim for the guests to see to eat, so extra lights had to be brought in to re light the tables. The lighting was not as effective as it would have been if the architects had arranged for wiring so the level of the permanent house lights could have been adjusted to an appropriate level for each segment of the event. The expense for each event organiser would have been less making the venue a more competitive proposition and the result would have been better.

These situations are just a couple of the examples of many types of problems we have encountered when setting up events in venues throughout the world.

Our **Audio-Visual Butler** service is there to help event organisers achieve their objectives through our high standards of competent, creative staging, no matter what the difficulties.

Our **Performance Standard Consultant** service is there so facilities of an appropriate standard for well staged events are built in to new and refurbished venues.

This booklet attempts to show you how we arrive at those standards and the steps that need to be taken to ensure they are maintained.

(By the way it took us about half an hour to eliminate the buzz in Newcastle to a level where it was possible for us to use the dimmers. If you want to know how, call me.)

**Peter Sinclair – Sydney Australia – Mobile 0418 22 00 16**

Email [events@bigpond.com.au](mailto:events@bigpond.com.au)

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Peter Sinclair has spent most of his time for the last 40 years being at the back of the room or up in the control box as the operator at over 6,000 events in various locations around the world. **W**hat started out as a hobby became a career in staging events for a multitude of different kinds of clients. The events varied from private parties in smart London clubs to outdoor rallies in Trafalgar Square.

Many well known multinational companies have used Peter Sinclair's services for their presentations, product launches, sales meetings and press conferences in Europe, the USA and Australia.

Professional and government bodies, community groups and private individuals have had successful trouble free events thanks to Peter's knowledge and experience which he has now turned into a set of laws and procedures that everyone who is organising an event or providing venues for events can benefit from.

In 1982 Peter moved with his family to Sydney and continued staging events and roadshows around Australia and New Zealand. In 2009 a client who used Onstage to provide good clear sound for her events became a Councillor on Bathurst Local Council. A chance question at the end of a telephone conversation 'Can you hear what they are saying at the Council Meetings' was answered in the negative. Since then Onstage has installed new Bosch sound systems specially designed for Council chambers for more than 18 local councils. The installation side of the business now includes curtains, sound and lighting for school halls, nursing homes and other community venues.

The author now lives in Sydney with his wife spending time with 2 children close by and another daughter and grandchildren overseas.

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Page**

**6 Who does what**

**7 Introduction**

**9 About Events**

**10 Event Content**

**12 Sample Run Sheet**

**13 Event Production**

**17 Event Staging**

**21 Getting it right on the night**

**22 Rehearsal**

**24 Benefits and Experiences**

**25 Pre Show Check List**

**26 Building Venues that work**

**30 Tests of a good Venue**

**31 What to look for in a crew**

**The role of the Audio-Visual Butler at an event is to make sure that –**

- **The room set up is comfortable for the guests**
- **Sound and lighting are used to create atmosphere**
- **Projected images are clear and seen by all**
- **The staff are briefed, co-ordinated and managed**
- **Technical run-throughs and rehearsals take place**
- **The event runs smoothly from start to finish**

**The role of the Event Performance Standards Consultant is to make sure that those building or refurbishing spaces to be used for events provide the infrastructure, equipment and controls that are appropriate for events such as –**

- **House light controls that can sit on a control table**
- **Stage light controls that can sit on a control table**
- **Hanging points and cabling for additional lighting**
- **Hanging points for banners and posters**
- **Sound cabling kept away from lighting cabling**
- **Technical earths and power circuits to eliminate buzz**
- **No obstructions that interfere with sight lines or cause shadows from spot lights or projectors**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The term 'Staging an event' has its origins in the Theatre. When you go to the theatre or a concert you are actually going to see and hear the performers. However they are relying to a large extent on having a crew backstage controlling the sound, lighting, and mechanical movements to focus attention and create the appropriate moods and emotional response at the right time to give the audience a total experience..

Without this support the performers could still go on stage and perform but the atmosphere would be nothing like what we have come to expect from a modern professional performance.

**The same is true for an event, but unfortunately this type of properly thought out technical support is the exception rather than the rule.**

In the theatre there is a tradition and discipline that dictates who does what. Everyone knows the responsibilities that go with the titles. The stage manager for example is responsible for scene changes, and supervising the stage crew. The director is responsible for the movement and performance of the actors.

When it comes to an event there are no such clear definitions. Every event has one or more organisers and as event organisers do not have to be qualified the level of skill and experience differs greatly. The organisers title changes depending on the type of event and organisation involved. They can be called professional conference organiser, banquet manager, head waiter, producer, chairman, convenor, secretary, client, host or Mum.

Their task is co-ordinating all the elements that happen from the time the guests arrive to the time they leave. Those involved can include presenters, caterers, musicians, actors, entertainers, decorators, riggers, audio-visual, sound, lighting and special effects operators, photographers, video production teams and all their associated equipment. For outdoor events there can also be a need for extra facilities to be brought in like marquees, chairs, tables, stages, electricity and water.

Frightening isn't it. ? Not any longer

To guide organisers through this maze of detail we now provide the services of an AUDIO-VISUAL BUTLER. You are the master of the event, you know what you want to achieve. Your Audio-Visual Butler is there to be your right hand man and help you achieve it. In the same way you are concerned that every aspect of the event is the way you want it – so too is your Audio-Visual Butler.

A butler in the old tradition is there in the background managing, co-ordinating, suggesting, and cajoling all those employed by the master to perform their tasks to the highest standard.

These are the qualities we provide in our Audio-Visual Butlers with additional skills in the technical area where sound, lighting, and in some cases, projected images play such an important part in enhancing any function if handled effectively.

The rest of this book gives you an insight to the technical details we take into account when assisting to make an event a success. The great thing about using Audio-Visual Butlers is that you don't have to know all these details to have a great event. Your Audio-Visual Butler will be there to look after it anyway.

Audio-Visual Butlers Caring as much about your event as you do

### **Working with your Audio-Visual Butler.**

The relationship starts well before the event ( this timing has ranged in the past from 20 minutes to 6 months) with discussions to determine

- Type of event
- Numbers expected
- Objective
- Venue
- Elements within the event
- Production and technical support required for each element
- Who is supplying what equipment and services
- Budget
- The Run Sheet

The Audio-Visual Butler then checks on the facilities supplied within the chosen venue to determine their suitability for the particular event being held.

In the report back any changes or additions felt appropriate in achieving the objective of the event are proposed and included with detailed costings for further discussion. Once the proposal and costings have been agreed the Audio-Visual Butler works with you to ensure that the objectives of the event are met and all appropriate arrangements have been made.

On site the Audio-Visual Butler ensures the plans become reality and the event runs smoothly for all concerned.

**To make an event a success we first have to define it.**

### **WHAT IS AN EVENT ?**

For the purpose of this book let's define an event as

**'A group of people gathering together for a specific purpose.'**

How many people ? Lets say from 20 - 20,000

What sort of Group ? Corporate,, government, professional, community, social, sporting, public or private

What purpose ? A conference, product launch, fashion show, breakfast, lunch or dinner presentation, press conference, sporting event, celebration, awards night, concert, opening or closing ceremony or just a party for people to have fun.

### **FORMULA FOR SUCCESS**

Whatever the group or the purpose of the event there are certain laws, like the laws of physics that determine if the event will 'work' or be successful or achieve it's objective

or give the guests a great time, or be a great experience or whatever phrase you choose to measure the events overall success by.

## **THE COMPONENTS OF AN EVENT**

For convenience sake I have broken down the components of events into 3 main headings

### **CONTENT**

### **PRODUCTION**

### **STAGING**

## **THE CONTENT.**

### **RUN SHEETS**

The various segments of an event is like the sheet music in a concert or the script of a play.

In an event the content should be found in the run sheet. The run sheet should contain what time people are doing what.. From the run sheet those making it happen can produce their own details.

The head waiter can see when food and drink is to be served so he can ensure the area is free from waiters allowing guests to focus on the entertainment or speeches without interruption.

The chef can organise the kitchen so the food is served at it's best and on time.

Those speaking or performing can see 'when they are on' and prepare accordingly

The staging team can see who is doing what, when and deliver the appropriate technical support.

Sounds so obvious and so necessary but I reckon in 30 years of staging events only 10% of clients have handed me a run sheet when I have requested one. The other 90% ask me if I have a pen and some paper.

From now on your Audio-Visual Butler can help you prepare the run sheet, hopefully in good time so everyone can make good use of it.

### **RUN BOOKS**

As the event takes shape all the details of the segments contained in the run sheets can be combined into a run book so those making the event happen can just turn pages. Those details may be the words that are spoken the pre recorded segments that are shown the music to be played, the menu to be served.

### **CONTENT SUITABILITY**

The content at each type of event obviously varies but the rules remain very similar to achieve the objective.

#### **Is the content relevant to those attending**

**EXAMPLES -** *Is the music suitable for the type of event and those attending. Do the press have all the facts they need to write a favourable story. Is there a technical emphasis for a technical audience and a benefits emphasis for sales people*

## **Does the choice and mix of content help the event achieve its objective**

Is the main objective to inform or impress.?

*EXAMPLES - If the objective is to impress then a well known outside presenter to open the event can add weight.*

*If the objective is to entertain then the entertainment should be selected with the audience in mind..*

*A great act for some events can be a failure at others.*

Even if it's a low key event to inform a regular group, basic presentation standards should be maintained to assist the credibility of the presenters and focus the concentration of the audience.

## **Will the content mix keep people interested, surprised, excited, informed and not bored.**

### **Is there smooth continuity between segments**

*EXAMPLE - Use music or videos between presentations to vary the mood and calm, or excite the guests at relevant points. Use an MC between presenters or a solo musician between large acts while they re set to keep the event flowing smoothly and help the audience re focus their attention for the next segment.*

### **Is the length of the event suitable to the objective and those attending.**

*EXAMPLE If the group you've invited are used to leaving at 5pm in the afternoon don't design the programme to finish at 6pm - Half the audience will leave anyway.*

If you can put over your points in 2 hours then don't spread out the event to a whole day.

### **SPEECH CONTENT.**

At most events somebody speaks. There are a few basic rules which have almost become clichés.

There is the KISS principle - Keep It Simple Stupid. The more complicated the presentation the more chance there is of losing your audience's attention. One way of testing the KISS principle is to read a paragraph and ask yourself 'What does that mean' If the words in your answer are more simple to understand than the words in the paragraph then change the paragraph.

There is also the old adage "Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em - Tell 'em - Then Tell 'em what you've told em. By structuring a speech or presentation in this way the audience knows what to expect, feels involved and are more likely to retain the information because they have heard the main points 3 times.

Once again tailoring the words to the audiences interest and understanding makes them more receptive to the message the presenter is trying to put across.

### **DELIVERING THE CONTENTS**

History is boring, History is exciting. History is History neither boring or exciting. The way history is presented is either boring or exciting. There are many ways to present any subject matter. Through film, video, stage productions, music, interactive programmes, or with a live presenter using PowerPoint style presentations or video segments to bring the presentation alive.

You most likely won't have history as the subject matter for your event but you do have the choice of using all the presentation methods available today to make each segment of your event exciting for those attending.

Deciding what presentation method to use for each segment comes under the heading of production

Your Audio-Visual Butler can help you make the best decisions for your event.

### **EXAMPLE RUN SHEET**

TIME	CUE	SOUND / LIGHT / STAGE	SCREEN
1930	Guests Enter	Walk in Music House lights 75% Entree is on the table	Welcome graphic on screen
1945	On cue from organiser Opening Video	Music stops House Lights to 10%	Screen to blank Start Video 1 after titles with girls face on screen and sound of waterfall
1950	As video 1 ends with car climbing to top of hill and screen fades to blank. MC Goes to Left Lectern	Left Lectern Light 75% House Lights to 50% Left Lectern Mic on	MC Title graphic on screen
1958	MC introduces the chairman ending with the words - So it's my great pleasure to call on the Chairman Mr Gregory Johnson to open the proceedings at this our 10th Anniversary dinner. Chairman to Right Lectern- Presentation with speaker support	Walk up music CD 3 track 1 Right Lectern light to 75% Left Lectern Light off Right Lectern Mic on - Left Lect. Mic off	Chairman Title graphic on screen Graphics as per script Last Graphic is logo
2010	Chairman ends. 'So it's great to see you all here, thank you for joining us tonight to	House light to 75% Lectern off Dinner music starts	Logo continues



	help us celebrate - enjoy your meal and the special surprise` we have for you later in the evening'	Clear Entree serve main course	
2100	On head waiters cue	Clear Main Course	Logo continues
2105	On Head Waiters Cue - Waiters leave MC to Lectern - Intro special Guest	Left Lectern Light 75% House Lights to 50% Left Lectern Mic on	Logo continues
2107	MC ends - So now will you please welcome The Minister for industry who will say a few words Minister speaks from Right Lectern	Right Lectern light to 75% Left Lectern Light off Right Lectern Mic on - Left Lect. Mic off	Ministers Title slide on screen Return to logo app 3 min into speech
2120	Minister Ends MC Back to Left Lectern	Left Lectern Light 75% Right Lect Light off Left Lectern Mic on Right Lect Mic off	
	After MC thanks minister MC announces desert will be served followed by cabaret Waiters enter with Desert, each decorated with 10 sparklers	House lights Off Lect Light and Mic off Music CD 1 Track 4 Congratulations	Screen Graphic of Cake with 10 Candles
	As sparklers die	House light to 75% Dinner music continues	Logo

2155	MC announces comfort break as Cabaret will commence in 5 Mins	Voice over Mic on - Music off	
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### **PRODUCTION**

#### **THE CREATIVE TREATMENT**

Whatever the event, its contents has to be produced in a similar way that a theatrical play or the food at a banquet has to be produced. The creative treatment of the content can be accidental like the way the speech is written or the type of sandwiches that are served. It can also be very deliberate, possibly with a theme as its basis such as a beach theme, a sports theme, a European theme, an animal theme or even a theme that can transport you and your audience through the stars into a future age where technology has finally come to terms with humans and created the perfect environment for us and our children to live. If the creative treatment is new its not on a list because its most likely not even been thought of yet.

#### **TO INFORM – TO IMPRESS – TO POSITION - TO ENJOY – TO HAVE FUN**

When deciding on the creative treatment, the objective of the event should be kept in mind.

If the main objective of the event is to inform then the creative treatment should be designed so the audience is impressed with the content Please note I said **be impressed with the content**, not the production. I have seen too many product launches and sales meetings where management have spent a fortune on technical production only to have the audience leave saying how great the lasers were or how much they enjoyed the video clip shown before the coffee break when they should have left commenting on how impressed they were with the product or service being presented.

If the main objective is to impress then the time, effort and financial resources should be spread over all the elements within the event. If a terrific opening is followed by an under-produced, under-rehearsed, presentation then the good impression produced by the opener is almost completely wasted.

If the objective is for everyone to have spontaneous fun then a menu of activities should be prepared and 'waiting in the wings' so if the energy level and atmosphere deteriorates then the waiting activities can be introduced as required.

If the position of the organisation, or an individual in the hierarchy has to be emphasised then all the elements have to reinforce that image including –

- Publicity
- Invitations,
- Venue
- Decorations

- Atmosphere
- Elements of activity within the event.

Marshall McLuhan once said 'THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE. The event has to appeal to the audience on an emotional as well as a practical level.

## **WHO PROVIDES THE TREATMENT**

**The independent event producer** with no in house facilities. Their contribution is their skill and experience. Their advantage is that they live by their creative talent and reputation. They recommend the treatment they feel is best for your event from the complete range of facilities available in the marketplace.

**Public relation companies and advertising agencies** also fall into a similar category but instead of dealing with an individual talent there is a mix of creative (the jeans) and administrative (the suits) people to work on your event.

**Production company with facilities.** If you want a video made for your event you can go to a video production company. If you want speaker support material produced then a production house specialising in graphics could be your choice. Some production houses also offer an event management service with special facilities geared to events like interactive systems or game shows so the audience is able to participate rather than just sit and watch

**Facilities Houses** can be used where the organiser has the skill, time and experience to make the creative decisions and take responsibility for the production management. Each facility you start talking to will let you know how valuable their particular facility is to your event. Talk to the caterer and you will be told that to impress your guests their extensive and delightful menu and wine list will do the job while someone with a theatrical background may persuade you to put your message over via a short cameo production with live actors or magicians, or impersonators or dancers to enhance the message. Those skilled in technical and stage effects may suggest purpose built sets or drapes, reveals, revolves, smoke, lasers and moving lights.

**In the end it's up to the person who pays the bill to choose the mix and with the aid of the Audio-Visual Butler make sure it works on the day.**

## **THE PRESENTERS AND PERFORMERS**

There are presenters who can hold an audience enthralled for 90 minutes with no audio-visual support and no notes. In my experience I have met very few such people. Most presenters at an event do a far better job when they have a script or notes. The notes can be sheets that sit on a lectern or palm cards or notes projected for all to see on the big screen.

Speaking to a larger audience has different dynamics to a conversation, it becomes a performance.

Unfortunately for a performance to be effective and accurate, it has to be rehearsed. In most cases to be rehearsed it has to be written down so, when improvements are made, it does not rely on the presenter in the excitement of making the presentation to remember those improvements .

### **THE SCRIPT**

For those who tell me 'Ah I don't need to write a script and rehearse, I've done this presentations lots of times before, I can do it off the cuff ' there are various answers depending on the sophistication of the event, the experience of the presenter and the nature of the segment being discussed.

If you are the presenter making the presentation for the first time my advise is to do just that; but do it **before** the event and record it. If you are going to have a few drinks at the event before you speak then have a few drinks before you record it; then listen to it back, have the words transcribed into print and then read it. I bet you'll change it and improve it and even if you don't read it at the event. The presentation or speech you make will be a far better one than if you had not gone through the tedious process before hand.

For a presentation where there is audio-visual support a script helps the technicians prepare cues and 'get back on track' if there is a technical problem. At worst case treat the script as an insurance policy so someone else could present if the original presenter is not able to do so.

### **EVERYTHING HAS TO BE PRODUCED**

Often people tell me 'this is a low key event and doesn't require producing' All events require producing.

Think of producing as looking at all the variables and choosing the right combinations to present the message and create the right image for your event.

### **CASTING**

Whichever treatment or combinations of treatments is chosen there is casting - who is going to speak, sing, play, be the MC be the best man. In all groups there are those who present better than others. The fact that a person presents well does not necessarily mean they know more about their subject. I have seen senior executives present very badly compared to more junior people in the organisation. A senior executive may not have the time to prepare and rehearse that a more junior person can allocate. Some battle on with nobody being able to tell the boss he's not very good at this. An Audio-Visual Butler could suggest that the boss introduces the topic and then hand over to a subordinate to present the details. No loss of face but a much more acceptable event for the audience. It can also work the other way with the boss being introduced to present this very important topic. The same principle applies to non corporate events.

### **PRODUCTION OF GRAPHICS**

At most corporate events the main bulk of the presentation is delivered from the lectern with some sort of speaker support emphasising the spoken word. The same effect can

be created by overheads, slides and PowerPoint style presentations projected onto the big screen.

More important than the method of presentation is the clarity and readability of what's on the screen.

I have seen so many presentations where the visuals are not readable for more than half the audience.

The rules are very hard. If you want to make visuals that contain a lot of information that require a small font size to fit them onto the screen then choose a venue with a very high ceiling that will take a very large screen and use a device with a high light output so you get a big bright clear image.

As a rule of thumb if you can read the words standing two meters away from the computer monitor you are preparing the speaker support on, there is a fair chance that when the words are projected, those at the back of the room will be able to read them.

The ultimate test is to go to the venue before production starts with a visual containing different font sizes, project it onto the biggest screen size that will fit the room so the bottom of the screen is visible above the heads of the people in front of you and see the smallest font size you can read.

You can then brief the production people to make visuals with your specified minimum font size.

To further ensure clarity use a dark background like dark blue or dark red with a light letter or graphic such as white or yellow.

#### FROM PRODUCTION TO STAGING

So we now have a run sheet showing the content and logistics, the creative treatment has been put in place and speaker support and other pre recorded segments are in production it's time to concentrate on the staging..

### **STAGING**

#### **CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT**

The objective of staging is to create the best environment and atmosphere in which to hold the event.

To achieve this objective there are many sub headings to address. We'll start with the Venue.

#### **THE VENUE**

The Venue obviously has to be chosen according to the numbers attending and the type of event.

Some features of the venue can't be changed

Room size

Ceiling height

Access , location and parking.

For some events using a Marquee or a Hocker ( the big brother of marquees) is the answer.

The features of a venue that are superb for one type of event may be a great disadvantage for others. Low ceilings are great for creating an intimate atmosphere for a cocktail party, wedding reception or dinner party but high ceilings are required for an event that involves projection so the people at the back of the room can see the bottom of the large screen over the heads of people seated at the front.

**You can always make a high ceiling appear lower, you can never make a low ceiling higher.**

Blackout and views also have their place. We have staged events in venues chosen for their great views and then had to black out the windows with heavy drapes so the video projection and slides are visible.

Forward planning also comes into venue choosing. Roadshows round the country need similar venues so the same type of event can be staged in similar rooms. Suitable venues are often booked up to 12 months in advance.

Once the venue is chosen it then becomes 'THE THEATRE' If only architects and designers realised this, their whole thought process when designing spaces for events would improve.

### **THE AUDITORIUM**

This is the area where the guests are gathered. Are they standing or seated ?

If they are seated is it theatre or classroom or banquet style ? How is the area to be made attractive and reinforce the theme and the message of the event ?

The worst examples of not having thought this through comes from events where guests are standing while speeches or presentations are being made. It's OK for 5 or ten minutes but if people are asked to stand and listen for longer than this they shuffle and try to find somewhere to sit and start talking among themselves and both the presenter and the guests start to feel uncomfortable.

The temperature of the auditorium is also important. Trying to create a warm friendly atmosphere in a place that's freezing cold just does not work. If the room is warm and stuffy when people are being asked to concentrate on facts and figures, particularly just after lunch, helps to put them to sleep.

The size of the space where the event is to be held is also important in creating the right atmosphere.

If the numbers expected are not known in advance then partitions and plants can be used to change the size according to how the space fills up. Atmosphere at events can be created or destroyed by having too much or too little space for those attending. Check the floor and wall surfaces. It's much easier for guests to hear and understand speech in a carpeted room than one with a hard floor.

### **THE STAGE.**

In many venues the stage is placed in different parts of the auditorium for different events. On Monday in section 1 the stage is for a single presenter with slides and video and placed next to the screen in the centre of the shorter wall opposite to where the guests enter. On Tuesday in section 2 the stage is placed in one corner for the quartet and another stage is placed in another corner for the after dinner speech.

On Friday night the whole room is opened up for a big dinner dance with a band (one stage) cabaret (2 stages) dance floor with an exhibition dance to start things off (3 stages) and top table for speeches (4 stages).

When choosing a venue it's up to the organiser or producer to decide where the best positions are to focus the attention of the audience. In a well designed multi-purpose venue the technical facilities like sound and lighting allow for the attention to be focused in different areas at different times.

Other considerations include where food service is from or if there is the possibility of noise coming from other areas like an adjacent function room, outside or from the kitchen /service area.

### **CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT**

In theatre the set is used to help create the scene. At events settings and props can also be used in the same way. Logos projected onto screens, posters, banners, balloons, backdrops, framed pictures, table decorations, costumes, live human statues, lasers, lights, sound, animals, vehicles and anything else that the imagination and the budget will allow. Whatever settings and props are used the main consideration is 'Are they enhancing the message and atmosphere of the event, are they relevant to those attending.

As the setting and theme become part of the venue for the event, check that the venue can accommodate the items to be used. Facilities like hanging points and walls that can have things attached to them are a great advantage. Set up time is reduced and designers can place things exactly where they want them.

### **LIGHTING**

I feel very strongly that lighting at an event is not there just to illuminate the area. It's there to create the appropriate atmosphere and direct people's attention to the various points of activity as the event progresses.

The extent to which the in house system in the venue allows us to do this differs enormously.

The best venues have all the lighting controlled by a single system with a control board that can be placed on the operators table. The faders on the board control the intensity of the house lights and stage lights. The house lights are split into small sections so the area where the audience is situated for that particular event can be designated as 'HOUSE LIGHTS' The area of activity or special interest can be designated as 'STAGE LIGHTS' The lights used to light 'THE STAGE' can be either the existing fittings such as down lights or track lights or theatre lights or a combination. The beauty of this type of system is that 'SCENES' can be established The top table or buffet or speakers

platform can be highlighted at appropriate times and if a video has to be shown all the lights can be brought down with one master fader.

From that standard of control the lighting gets worse down to the venues with fluorescent lights on switches placed in different section of the room.

Our Audio-Visual Butlers look at the activities within the event determining the level of control and atmosphere required. They then look at the lights and control available at the venue and decide how much equipment has to be brought in on a temporary basis to create the effects we needed for each segment. In the past this has varied from having to re angle and focus a couple of the in house spot lights to re lighting the room with brought in house lights and dimmers as well as a separate stage lighting rig.

## **SOUND**

**At many events if the guests can't hear and understand what is being said, they may as well not have bothered to attend.** If the sound is clear it grabs the audiences attention and allows them to concentrate on the contents rather than having to strain to hear or understand. If the sound is not clear the audience gives up after a while and they start to shuffle and talk among themselves. This shuffling and talking starts in the areas furthest from the points of sound and builds till the people nearer to the points of sound also find it difficult to concentrate so they also start shuffling and talking till the whole presentation is most unpleasant for both the presenter and the audience.

There are different types of microphones designed for different purposes. A microphone like a Shure SM 58 is designed for singers who hold the microphone right up to their mouths. A condenser mic is ideal for a lectern as it will pick up sound from a distance without loss of frequency response giving a rounder more natural quality to the presenter's voice.

Many presenters ask for a radio lapel microphone and then make their presentation within the vicinity to the lectern. The sound quality from a good condenser mic on the lectern is often better than the clarity of a lapel radio mic. This is because the sound projects forward from the mouth, not down towards the chest. where the lapel mic sits. For a presenter to grab and hold the attention of the audience when speaking the delivery has to be confident and contain enough energy to get through. However good the sound system if the presenter mumbles and hesitates the audience will be lost

### **MUSIC MAESTRO PLEASE**

Music can be used to tremendous effect to create different moods throughout an event. Music can create excitement, produce a solemn mood, induce applause at the end of segments or during awards. Music can create a welcoming atmosphere as guests enter and help them to leave on a high or a low as the event demands. Music can wake people up and rejuvenate them ready for the next item on the programme. Music is a wonderful tool at an event and as with most tools requires skill and experience to get the best out of it.



Your Audio-Visual Butler will help you choose the right music and recommend the type of sound system required to reproduce the desired results. The ceiling speaker system found in most venues is usually only adequate for speech.

### **PROJECTION - (AUDIO VISUAL - MULTIMEDIA - POWERPOINT - VIDEO )**

Projected images are being used more and more to enhance all types of events.

The Audio-Visual Butler can assist by ensuring the projectors and computers used at any particular event are compatible and advise on which backgrounds, colour schemes and font sizes are going to be most impressive when presented at the event.

Often the presenter can enter the basic information but has no time to think about backgrounds, builds, transitions, colours and animated sequences. The Audio-Visual Butler can arrange for these enhancements to be put in during the lead up to the event or even onsite.

Prior to set up it's necessary to know who is changing the images during the presentation.

Sometimes the presenter will want to do it from the lectern, other times an operator is required to change images leaving the presenter free to concentrate on the words and the delivery of the presentation.

Backup in the form of a second computer being changed along with the main one, so it can be switched in if the first one fails, can also be set up for important events.

More traditional mediums such as video, slides and overheads still have their place as do white boards and flip charts. More important than the medium used is the need to prepare graphics so that all members of the audience can see the images clearly and read all the words. This in part is dependent on the screen size which in turn is limited by the ceiling height of the chosen venue.

It's amazing how often this basic rule is overlooked in the excitement of using the latest technology.

GETTING IT RIGHT ON THE NIGHT

**If you want to decrease the chances of all the time, effort and care you've put into your home being spoilt by fire, you take the advice of a fire prevention officer.**

**If you want to decrease the chances of all the time, effort and care you've put into your event being spoilt by bad staging, you take the advice of your Audio-Visual Butler.**

**Some of the principles the advise is based on, is laid out below.**

Before setting up at the venue it's most helpful if all the key people have a run sheet or run book as described under 'Contents' on Page 10. It's important that everyone including the presenters, and crew have the same version of scripts and notes prior to the technical run through.

### **LAY OUT**

When the AV equipment is laid out, enough room should be left on the control table for the run book and an adequate work light placed so the operator can read the notes and operate in a comfortable environment.

### **PREPARATION**

Some producers prefer to, or are forced to because of lack of preparation time, keep most of the information on the show to themselves or in their own run book. The operators are given a headset and told when to perform various functions like put up the presenters light or start the video or bring down the house lights as the voice in the headset commands. If the link to the operators was cut nobody would have any idea what to do.

In my view anyone who has anything to do with making the event happen should have a run sheet or run book before rehearsals so that during rehearsals this is the document used to mark updates and changes. The sound operator should know who is using what microphone. Which sound comes through which loudspeakers and a note of what pre recorded sound is to be played at what point. The note should also include how the sound starts and ends.

Speaker support operators should not only have a note of when to change images but what image should be on the screen once the change is made. Video operators should also make a note in the run book how each segment starts and ends.

All pre recorded material should be marked the same way on the run sheet as they are on the label of the tape or CD. If a tape is cued to a certain start point when handed to the operator it's far safer to rewind the tape to the head, mark a '000' point and then run forward again to the start point noting the approximate number on the counter that the tape starts. In a busy rehearsal the start point the tape was cued to originally can be lost and the quickest way for the operator to find it again may be to go the head of the tape and back to the noted start point, especially if there are lots of tapes to be played in the show.

Once all the appropriate notes are made then Technical Run Throughs and Rehearsals OF THE RUN SHEET OR RUN BOOK can take place.

### **REHEARSAL - REHEARSAL - REHEARSAL**

#### **EVENT LAW STATES -**

**BEFORE AN EVENT TAKES PLACE THE RUN SHEET/RUN BOOK SHOULD BE REHEARSED CUE TO CUE WITH ALL TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS BEING**

**PERFORMED AS THEY WOULD BE DURING THE EVENT - THIS PROCESS IS KNOWN AS THE TECHNICAL RUN THROUGH**  
**PENALTIES FOR DISOBEYING THIS LAW BY STARTING AN EVENT WITHOUT FIRST HAVING PERFECTED A TECHNICAL RUN THROUGH RANGE FROM MILD EMBARRASSMENT TO TOTAL DISASTER.**

There are various stages of preparation and rehearsal, each with a specific purpose as laid out below.

**CONTENT REHEARSAL** - When each segment arrives on site it's ideal if the content of that segment has already been prepared and rehearsed. Presenters with visual support should already have checked they are happy with their support. I have seen too many events where the time allocated for either a full rehearsal or Technical Run Through has been taken up with one or more presenters changing either the content or order of their speaker support material.

**RUN SHEET - TECHNICAL FINALISATION**

Prior to the Technical Run Through the operations side of the run sheet should be completed with all sound, lighting, audio-visual and stage management cues marked. If this can be done prior to the event going on site so much the better, if not time has to be allocated prior to the technical run through to complete the task. If there are technical cues during one or more segment then the script or notes containing those cues should be incorporated. The run sheet now becomes THE RUN BOOK

**TECHNICAL RUN THROUGH**

This Means that the RUN SHEET/RUN BOOK is rehearsed from Cue to Cue starting from the time the doors are opened to let the audience in to the time the event ends and the guests depart.

Presenters should walk on, rehearse their opening and any segments that require technical operation such as video, data, sound, lighting or physical changes ending with the end of their presentation or segment. If the actual presenter is not present then a stand in can be used for the Technical Run Through but this is not preferred as the technical run through is often the only time the technical team and presenter interact before they go on in front of the audience. The technical run through is often the last chance for the technical people to check the logistics of performing their changes smoothly and in the time required.

There is another reason for a Technical Run Through. The build up for each event is different no matter how similar it is from the one before. There are potential problems in all technical areas and with walk on, reveals or anything else that happens on stage. The microphone or data control lead can be loose, a certain socket or circuit can be overloaded, there can be a dry joint or loose connection in a piece of equipment that has just been moved even to a slightly different position, a certain combination of

lights and sound can cause buzz or overloading. There can be misunderstandings between the presenters and technical staff which can effect the smooth running of the event. I know it shouldn't happen but in a fast build up it often does. **The technical run through** is the course net that should catch most of these faults and **The Full Rehearsal** is the fine net that is likely to stop all of them. from becoming part of the event in front of the guests.

### **FULL REHEARSAL.**

For many important events the Technical Run Through is not enough.

Managers, producers or organisers of an event that has to be right should insist on time being allocated for a full rehearsal. This means that every word, every piece of music, every action, each sound, lighting and AV cue to be performed in the event is fully rehearsed. In theatrical terms this would be known as a Dress Rehearsal.

**An amateur may rehearse till he or she gets it right a professional will rehearse till he or she never gets it wrong.**

### **SUMMARY**

To sum up on staging. Good, creative staging can't make an event successful it can only enhance good content and production. But bad staging can ruin an event however much thought and effort has gone into the content and production.

### **THE BEFEFITS OF USING AN AUDIO-VISUAL BUTLER**

## **EXAMPLES AND EXPERIENCES**

### **• The speakers in Melbourne**

In one of the best hotel in Melbourne we set up an event where the guests were invited for a cocktail party, a video presentation and a trade show.

After set up I asked for the video to be run and walked round the room to see and hear the quality from various positions in the room.

At the back and the middle it was great. but in the front few rows the sound quality dropped off to the point where the words were indistinct even though the volume was still loud enough.

The speakers were hung from the roof where they were normally positioned in the room and this proved to be the problem. The front of the speakers were over the third row so the high frequency sounds were not being received by those behind the speakers. The in house sound people told me that nobody else complained and did not have a method of fixing the problem. As the VIPs were sitting up front the attitude and solution was unacceptable. I solved the problem by having the foldback speakers normally used for a band to hear themselves placed under the screen facing forward so the front rows could hear clearly.

## **u The slide jam in London**

Based on the principle that whatever can go wrong may go wrong during an event, backup procedures need to be put in place during planning and set up to combat the problems as they arise.

A presenter I staged a show for in London was using slides spread across 3 screens to illustrate his talk.

During the rehearsal period the night before he turned up with his boxes of slides and a script with a star at each point when slides should be changed. His reasoning was that all the operator had to do was push the button at the star and all would be well. I spent the evening marking on the script the slide number and description at each change. During the show a slide jammed. Because of the work the evening before I was able to unjam the slide and put the show back in cinque before even the presenter noticed what had happened.

## **The box at the cocktail party**

**It was a very low key affair, Just a cocktail party, the chief executive from the USA was there to meet the local staff and clients. All we were asked to provide was a microphone for the speeches. The music was to be provided by a guitarist ` who would not need any amplification. The area for the guests to gather was small for the 100 or so invited. When it came to speech time I lifted the loudspeakers onto their stands (they would have looked out of place high up as the guests arrived but nobody would have heard the speeches if we had left them on the floor). What was now required was a stage for the CEO to stand on to make his presentation but nobody had ordered one so I**

**made one out of the road cases used to bring in the sound system. As soon as he stood on 'the stage' this low key affair became an event that impressed the guests and made the management look good.**

#### **AUDIO VISUAL-BUTLER'S PRE SHOW CHECK LIST**

##### **SOUND**

All channels and outputs clearly marked  
Lectern mics ok  
Hand mics ok  
Radio mics ok in all positions  
New batteries for radio mics  
No phasing between mics used together  
Music sources both channels  
All video sound working on **both** channels  
All FOH speakers working  
Foldback and monitor speakers working  
No buzz with all lights dimmed to half  
All communication head sets working

##### **LIGHTS**

All channels marked  
All lights focused in correct position  
Lectern reading light ok  
No lights on projection screen  
Spare bulbs and fuses ready

##### **AUDIOVISUAL**

Video & data on screen clearly  
Colour on video & data ok  
Graphic cues marked on script  
PowerPoint Presentation checked

##### **SETTING**

Drapes and set tidy  
Props set

##### **FRONT OF HOUSE**

Guest area ready  
Catering ready  
Foh staff ready  
Room temperature ok

Fire exits clear, unlocked and marked

### **PRE SET BEFORE WALK IN**

Computer programmes set to run  
Video & PowerPoints cued to start  
Walk in Logo on screen  
Crew in position  
Final communication headset check  
Walk in music cued  
House and stage lights set for walk in  
Phones diverted or off  
Pagers to vibrate  
Open the doors

## **THE ROLE OF THE EVENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS CONSULTANT FOR EVENT SPACES**

The role is to advise those designing, building, and renovating spaces to be used for events.

The aim is to end up with a space where it's simple to change the atmosphere and alter the focus of the guests as the event progresses.

The areas of concern are –

- The house lighting
- The house light patching and controls
- The spot lighting
- The spot light patching and controls
- The sound system
- The sound system patching and controls
- Cable runs, connectors and in room access points for each of the above
- Control room/bio box position design and layout
- Hanging and fixing points for sound, lighting, projection and decorations
- Positioning of AV power sockets with technical earths
- Balance between 'In House' equipment and connection facilities for 'brought in' equipment
- All doors to the area are lockable from both front and back of house

Events organisers and their clients are becoming more and more aware of the advantages of using sound, lighting, projected images, theming and decor to make an event work, to make an event special.

It is of course possible to create the desired atmosphere in any venue. The aim of future event space owners and operators will be to attract event organisers because in their venue it will be simpler and therefore less costly to achieve those desired results

### **DESIGNING EVENT SPACES THAT WORK**

When talking to those responsible for building and renovating venues the owners tell me that it's up to the architects, their designers, electrical and engineering consultants to put in the appropriate facilities. The architects say that it's up to the owners to brief them on what they require. From the results I have experienced it's obvious that nobody on the team puts enough emphasis on the technical facilities required once the venue is up and running.

### **TYPES OF VENUES**

Hotel Ballrooms  
Corporate boardrooms  
Meeting Rooms  
Communal Halls  
Function centres  
Convention Centres

### **TYPES OF EVENTS THAT VENUES WITH GOOD FACILITIES WILL ATTRACT**

**CONFERENCES** with front or rear projection screen setups using anything from overhead or data projectors to multi-media, multi-projector extravaganzas.

**FASHION SHOWS** with catwalks and stages using high quality sound and imaginative lighting

**WEDDINGS** with the ability to change the mood of the room according each segment of the party

**EXHIBITIONS** where each display requires a power point and spot lighting and some displays require water and drainage.

**PARTIES** with a band and/or disco and some form of cabaret entertainment.

**PRODUCT LAUNCHES** involving vehicles, lasers, big concert sound and heavy lighting rigs.

### **SOME OF THE QUESTIONS OUR PERFORMANCE STANDARD CONSULTANTS WILL ASK**

### **ACCESS**



Can equipment get in easily ?  
Can a vehicle get in easily ?

### **THE FLOOR**

Is it flat and more suitable for events with meals and dancing ?  
Is it raked and more suitable for lectures and presentations ?  
Are there pillars or other site line obstacles built in ?  
Is it carpeted so noise from scraping is kept to a minimum ?  
Does the carpet pattern make setting up chairs easy ?  
Is there a permanent stage ?  
Are there portable platforms to build stages and cat walks ?  
Is there a portable dance floor ?

### **THE CEILING**

Is it high enough for the audience to see the bottom of the screen ?  
Is it the same clearance height across the whole room to make lighting and projection easy ?  
Does it have chandeliers or other obstacles hanging down that may interfere with lighting & projection ?  
Are there any mirrored sections that allow the audience to see behind a projection or dressing screen?  
Does it have hanging points for heavy loads across the whole room so hanging lights is easy ?  
Are there patch points for lights and projectors at various points throughout ?  
Is it easy to run extra cables from one point to another ?

### **THE WALLS**

How are banners, poster or other decorations attached or hung ?  
Are the partitions between rooms soundproof ?  
When you turn the lights down do the walls fade into the background because of color and light positions?  
Are there any mirrored sections that could reflect lights back to the audience ?  
When you close the partitions can you leave a gap for a rear projection screen ?  
Are the doors big enough for equipment and vehicles ?  
Are there any built in projection screens ?  
Can screens be masked for multi and single screen shows ?  
Can the room be blacked out completely ?

### **THE SOUND**

Will it buzz when lights are dimmed because sound and lighting cables are run parallel and no technical earths have been installed ?  
Are there good quality ceiling speakers for general speech ?  
Can ceiling speakers be switched to stop feedback ?  
Are there enough microphone sockets around the walls ?  
Can an event operator control the sound from the control table ?

Can the control table be placed in any position in the room ?

**The ideal is for the venue to have a basic sound system with ceiling speakers that can be switched in sectors so the area where the presenter is standing can be lowered or switched off to reduce feedback. It should be possible to plug an auxiliary mixer in at various points in the room so the operator can place the mixer in the best position for the particular event being held. Extra cabling for stereo amps and speakers to be placed in appropriate positions and patchable microphone sockets would also be an advantage.**

**Various easily identifiable power sockets around the room on the same circuit with a separate technical earth would help to eliminate earth hum as would running sound and lighting cables well away from one another.**

### **THE LIGHTING**

Can the presenter be lit without light hitting the screen ?

Can the audience be lit evenly with no light on the screen ?

Can lights be turned out easily behind the rear projection screen ?

Can lights be hung anywhere to light anything ?

Can all the lights be faded with one master fader ?

Is there any florescent lighting or non dimmable energy saving WORK LIGHTS?

With WORK LIGHTS are DIMMABLE EVENT LIGHTS LED bright enough to write ?

Are there 2" pipes in the ceiling to hang lights from ?

Are there sockets by those pipes going back to a central patch bay ?

Are there floor sockets going to the patch bay (Lectern, footlights)?

Will the hanging points support a concert lighting rig ?

Is there a balcony or projection box for follow spots ?

Are there 3 phase 30 amp & 100 amp outlets for extra lighting ?

Is the emergency lighting fluorescent, does it white out the screen ?

Have the lighting cables been run well away from the sound cables ?

Can an event operator control the lights from the control table ?

Can the control table be placed anywhere ?

**The ideal lighting system for an event space allows for dimmable Tougstan Hallogen, Incandescent or LED house lighting to be controlled in sections so that areas over top tables, stages, buffets and rear projection areas can easily be controlled separately. Some low energy lighting will also create this effect but must be chosen carefully so the colour temperature is conducive to an event and will not flicker when dimmed.**

**A lighting grid made up from 2" pipe with sockets that go back to a central patch bay allow easy set up of any extra lights and to highlight areas as the event progresses. These can be concealed in cleverly designed ceilings. Drop**

bars can also be used that push up into the ceiling or unscrew when not being used.

To comply with safety regulations and conserve electricity concealed fluorescent lighting could also be installed with switches at the doors. This could be used as work lights for cleaning and set up as well as emergency lighting.

An operator should be able to place a lighting control board on the control table with faders to control the intensity of the lights. Faders give far better, simpler more instant control for events than buttons requiring light levels and fade times to be programmed before the event starts.

Integrated systems using boards where 'Scenes' incorporating house and spot lights, can be programmed onto selected faders are the easiest and most flexible to use. The 'Scene Control Faders' can also be duplicated and installed as permanent panels on the walls.

### **THE VIDEO AND DATA**

Are there fast internet connections for video conferencing and streaming?

Are there hanging points, cables and power in the roof for hanging a video/data projectors?

Are there patch points for data and video ?

### **THE CONTROL ROOM**

Is the opening of the control room wide enough for follow spots and high power data projectors?

And low enough to project from without shadows from ceiling fittings and ?

Is there obstruction from chandeliers ?

Can one person control sound, projection and lighting easily ?

Is there enough room to store and maintain the AV equipment ?

### **OTHER NICE TOUCHES THAT ARE APPRECIATED**

The Air conditioning can be controlled from inside the room.

There are STD direct dial phones available for organisers,clients and operators

Phone sockets are positioned so phones can go against any wall

There are wired internet connections available for computer hook ups.

All power points are marked with their circuit breaker number.

The lectern light is not fluorescent and does not shine on the screen.

There is water and drainage for lasers & exhibitions stands.

### **SOME TESTS**

#### **A SMALL CONFERENCE**

A small conference is being held in the section without the control room.

There is a rear projection screen, PowerPoint and video for 50 guests.

The presenter is at the lectern.

The house lights are up over the audience but not behind the rear projection screen.

He is speaking, with PowerPoint images projected on the screen.

He can be heard through the ceiling speakers, the operator behind the screen can hear him clearly.

He comes to a point in his speech when he wants to show a new 30 second TV commercial.

With one hand the operator fades down the lights, taking the already dim houselights and the lectern spotlight together.

With the other he starts the video and fades from PowerPoint to video image. He uses the sound mixer to adjust the sound level if required.

During the video there is a change of speaker to the other lectern so he presets the lectern light to come up on the other side and brings up the mike on the other side also.

At the end of the video he fades the lights back up with one hand and fades from video to the PC on the 2<sup>nd</sup> lectern

A new presenter starts speaking from the other lectern and he adjusts the sound.

He then sits for 30 minutes checking the images are correct till he changes the lights and data control back to the other lectern again.

### A FASHION SHOW

The ballroom is set with a backdrop, behind the backdrop is the changing area, the stage is set in front of the backdrop with the catwalk on a T coming from it.

Lights are hung above the stage and catwalk so the guests sitting near to the catwalk do not get the lights shining in their eyes.

The rig consists of many special lights for colour and movement effects on the stage and catwalk between scenes. During the scenes the light is white and colour balanced for video recording.

There are fashion posters around the wall, each one spot lit.

### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE CREW**

The standards of crew members differ greatly. By using the services of an Audio-Visual Butler you are certain of the quality of care you can expect. Below is a guide to what we expect from a senior engineer and a technical director working on an event. In smaller events the Audio-Visual Butler would also take on the role of the technical director.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF SENIOR ENGINEER

Minimum Age 20

Minimum experience in industry 3 years

Intelligent, articulate with a sense of the importance of the occasion.

A desire to provide excellent service and ensure the event is a success.

A sense of responsibility towards the equipment during set up, operation and removal.

Dressing appropriately for get in, rehearsal and show,

## SOUND

Set up sound system using various mixers, amps and speakers.

Knowing the difference between mike and line inputs

Knowledge of phantom powering for condenser microphones

Relationship between balanced and unbalanced connections

Wiring standards for balanced to unbalanced.

Use of graphics

Speaker positioning to avoid feedback

Speaker positioning so the sound comes from where it is required (ie from the screen for an AV or Video)

Causes and elimination of hum

Use of isolating transformers to eliminate hum

Connecting to house systems.

## DATA AND VIDEO

Setting up various data and video projectors

Changing projectors from front to rear to ceiling mounted.

Knowing what computers can be used with what projectors and how to connect them

Use of multiple monitors and Video Distribution Amps

Understanding the difference between PAL, NTSC, SECAM,

" " VHS, Super VHS, 3/4" Low & High band Umatix and Betacam SP

Knowledge of PC based video players capable of instant full screen at start of video

Recognition of earth bars and how to eliminate them

Ability to take the initiative to mark up scripts with correct in and out points for video

Keeping a graphics list so he knows when video or lighting changes come up

## LIGHTING

Dealing with venue lighting systems, removing and replacing bulbs, fuses, chandeliers etc so that the area over the audience is 'house lights'. The area behind a rear

projection screen is dark and the presenter is lit without that light spilling onto the screen.

Understanding power distribution and phase balancing

Running lighting cables so as not to cause buzz in the sound system

Creative set up and operation for atmosphere and effects.

### SETTINGS

Setting up so that if a screen is rear projection the audience can't see behind it.

If a front projection fast fold at least a bottom drape.

Lectern set up with a reading light

Ability to set up a room to gain maximum effect for the event taking place.

Ability to look at a room and make necessary adjustments prior to an event that make the room safe, and aesthetically pleasing ( Gaffer leads down, make sure tables are covered, the drapes are hanging correctly)

### QUALIFICATIONS OF AN AUDIO-VISUAL BUTLER

Minimum Age 25

Minimum experience in industry 5 years

All of the qualifications of a senior engineer as well as -

### DETERMINING A BRIEF

The ability to communicate with an end user client or producer and extract all the information required to prepare a staging specification and quotation.

### SPECIFICATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

The ability to prepare a specification with drawings and quotation involving all technical aspects of the event.

### ON SITE DIRECTION

The ability to head up the staging team to on site and take responsibility for all technical aspects on site whether supplied by the venue or brought in specially for the event.

Peter Sinclair has spent more than 30 years of his working life setting up and operating sound, lighting and image projection systems in venues around the world.

From this experience Peter is able to work with those responsible for

designing, renovating and building spaces where meetings, events, celebrations and performance are likely to take place.

The end result should be the provision of the required infrastructure so sound, lighting and projection equipment can easily be installed, connected and operated. This applies equally whether the equipment is to be installed on a permanent basis or brought in as required for particular events.

More details of what is required are laid out in the event book under the 'Performance Standards' section.

#### Onstage AV

**EVENTS** Onstage Presentation holds an inventory of sound, lighting, projection and other equipment to enhance special events. To assist clients we discuss what they wish to achieve, look at their chosen venue and determine what is required

A proposal is then prepared detailing all the crew and equipment needed to enhance the event. Onstage takes responsibility for all equipment used to stage the event whether supplied by the venue, from our inventory or other supplier. Onstage provides a technical Director to work with you throughout. Prior to the event we help you prepare the run sheet and make sure the appropriate level of technical support is provided for each segment.

On site the TD supervises the set up and makes sure the event runs smoothly to plan.

Since 1982 in Australia and before that in the UK Onstage presentations has provided technical support for Government, corporate, community and private events such as Roadshows, Product Launches, Fashion Shows, AGMs, Concerts and private parties

## **INSTALLATIONS**

The expertise for installing permanent audio-visual systems comes from our experience in staging events in Australia since 1982. We know the equipment and controls required so those responsible can easily provide a professional result for each event.

The areas we get involved in are

### **GOOD CLEAR SOUND**

You know how important it is for those listening to hear clearly no matter the state of their hearing ability. (It's a little more difficult to help some with their speaking ability but we get involved in that too). We provide systems suitable for music, one person speaking to many and specialist systems for situations where many people speak in a discussion situation such as council chambers.

### **COUNCIL CHAMBER SYSTEMS**

Clear sound is only one of the features for council chambers. Facilities also include electronic voting, microphone control by users and or operators, camera control, and recording of sound only or sound and vision for local review or streaming to the web. Onstage has installed over 18 systems for Local Councils in the last 2 years and is ready to assist other councils upgrade their systems so everyone can hear clearly what is being said.

### **SCHOOL HALLS**

Because budgets for school halls are often tight we work with schools to provide a mixture of permanent equipment for general use and the infrastructure to simply add extra equipment on a rental basis for special events. Drapes, coloured LED lighting, and projected images all help to enhance the professionalism of any school event.

### **MEETING SPACES**

Go to 'THE EVENTS BOOK' for tips and tricks on what is required when designing an event space that works. Get the infrastructure right so equipment can be hung and connected.

Install the control systems so equipment can be quickly and easily added for special events.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gljx3-KExFg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziZY8yEs6Vc>



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWzs7\\_miKX4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWzs7_miKX4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLilyWsPQXA&feature=youtu.be>

## **EVENTS**

### **BY PETER SINCLAIR**

- **The Role of The Audio-Visual Butler**
- **The Role of the Event Performance Standards Consultant**

#### **PROLOGUE**

In 1989 an earthquake devastated Newcastle, a city approx. 2 hours drive north of Sydney Australia. Lives were lost, people were injured, and property damaged.

The Newcastle Workers club, in the city centre, was destroyed and has since been rebuilt. A magnificent structure housing entertainment, function and leisure facilities, it was re opened in July 1992.

Auditorium 2 has a stage, with full stage lighting, an electric roll down screen, built in video projector and a concert quality sound system. The raised control area at the back of the hall houses a sound desk with FX rack, house light dimmer controls and a programmable stage lighting desk.

All this expensive, sophisticated equipment was installed and paid for by the club at the time of reconstruction.

In March 1998 one of my clients booked this facility for a presentation to local travel agents. The technical requirements were relatively simple.

- Dim the house and stage lights down
- Show a video
- Dim the house and stage lights up to reveal the presenter at the lectern.

The in house technician told me they had never been able to do that. He said "The sound always buzzes when the lights are left dimmed – just use those switches at the back to turn off the house lights and leave the stage lights either on or off."

In 2010 I was involved in an event at Homebush, an area built for events. Once again when I asked how to dim the house lights at the start of each performance segment I was told "you can turn off certain lights but it is not possible to dim them. Once the 'bright lights' were turned off it was too dim for the guests to see to eat, so extra lights had to be brought in to re light the tables. The lighting was not as effective as it would have been if the architects had arranged for wiring so the level of the permanent house lights could have been adjusted to an appropriate level for each segment of the event. The expense for each event organiser would have been less making the venue a more competitive proposition and the result would have been better.

These situations are just a couple of the examples of many types of problems we have encountered when setting up events in venues throughout the world.

Our **Audio-Visual Butler** service is there to help event organisers achieve their objectives through our high standards of competent, creative staging, no matter what the difficulties.

Our **Performance Standard Consultant** service is there so facilities of an appropriate standard for well staged events are built in to new and refurbished venues.

This booklet attempts to show you how we arrive at those standards and the steps that need to be taken to ensure they are maintained.

(By the way it took us about half an hour to eliminate the buzz in Newcastle to a level where it was possible for us to use the dimmers. If you want to know how, call me.)

**Peter Sinclair – Sydney Australia – Mobile 0418 22 00 16**

Email [events@bigpond.com.au](mailto:events@bigpond.com.au)

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Peter Sinclair has spent most of his time for the last 40 years being at the back of the room or up in the control box as the operator at over 6,000 events in various locations around the world. What started out as a hobby became a career in staging events for a multitude of different kinds of clients. The events varied from private parties in smart London clubs to outdoor rallies in Trafalgar Square.

Many well known multinational companies have used Peter Sinclair's services for their presentations, product launches, sales meetings and press conferences in Europe, the USA and Australia.

Professional and government bodies, community groups and private individuals have had successful trouble free events thanks to Peter's knowledge and experience which he has now turned into a set of laws and procedures that everyone who is organising an event or providing venues for events can benefit from.

In 1982 Peter moved with his family to Sydney and continued staging events and roadshows around Australia and New Zealand. In 2009 a client who used Onstage to provide good clear sound for her events became a Councillor on Bathurst Local Council. A chance question at the end of a telephone conversation 'Can you hear what they are saying at the Council Meetings' was answered in the negative. Since then Onstage has installed new Bosch sound systems specially designed for Council chambers for more than 18 local councils. The installation side of the business now includes curtains, sound and lighting for school halls, nursing homes and other community venues.

The author now lives in Sydney with his wife spending time with 2 children close by and another daughter and grandchildren overseas.

## ***TABLE OF CONTENTS***

**Page**

**6 Who does what**

**7 Introduction**

**9 About Events**

**10 Event Content**

**12 Sample Run Sheet**

**13 Event Production**

**17 Event Staging**

**21 Getting it right on the night**

**22 Rehearsal**

**24 Benefits and Experiences**

**25 Pre Show Check List**

**26 Building Venues that work**

**30 Tests of a good Venue**

**31 What to look for in a crew**

**The role of the Audio-Visual Butler at an event is to make sure that –**

- **The room set up is comfortable for the guests**
- **Sound and lighting are used to create atmosphere**
- **Projected images are clear and seen by all**
- **The staff are briefed, co-ordinated and managed**
- **Technical run-throughs and rehearsals take place**
- **The event runs smoothly from start to finish**

**The role of the Event Performance Standards Consultant is to make sure that those building or refurbishing spaces to be used for events provide the infrastructure, equipment and controls that are appropriate for events such as -**

- **House light controls that can sit on a control table**
- **Stage light controls that can sit on a control table**
- **Hanging points and cabling for additional lighting**
- **Hanging points for banners and posters**
- **Sound cabling kept away from lighting cabling**
- **Technical earths and power circuits to eliminate buzz**
- **No obstructions that interfere with sight lines or cause shadows from spot lights or projectors**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The term 'Staging an event' has its origins in the Theatre. When you go to the theatre or a concert you are actually going to see and hear the performers. However they are relying to a large extent on having a crew backstage controlling the sound, lighting, and mechanical movements to focus attention and create the appropriate moods and emotional response at the right time to give the audience a total experience..

Without this support the performers could still go on stage and perform but the atmosphere would be nothing like what we have come to expect from a modern professional performance.

**The same is true for an event, but unfortunately this type of properly thought out technical support is the exception rather than the rule.**

In the theatre there is a tradition and discipline that dictates who does what. Everyone knows the responsibilities that go with the titles. The stage manager for example is responsible for scene changes, and supervising the stage crew. The director is responsible for the movement and performance of the actors.

When it comes to an event there are no such clear definitions. Every event has one or more organisers and as event organisers do not have to be qualified the level of skill and experience differs greatly. The organisers title changes depending on the type of event and organisation involved. They can be called professional conference organiser, banquet manager, head waiter, producer, chairman, convenor, secretary, client, host or Mum.

Their task is co-ordinating all the elements that happen from the time the guests arrive to the time they leave. Those involved can include presenters, caterers, musicians, actors, entertainers, decorators, riggers, audio-visual, sound, lighting and special effects operators, photographers, video production teams and all their associated equipment. For outdoor events there can also be a need for extra facilities to be brought in like marquees, chairs, tables, stages, electricity and water.

Frightening isn't it. ? Not any longer

To guide organisers through this maze of detail we now provide the services of an

AUDIO-VISUAL BUTLER. You are the master of the event, you know what you want to achieve. Your Audio-Visual Butler is there to be your right hand man and help you achieve it. In the same way you are concerned that every aspect of the event is the way you want it – so too is your Audio-Visual Butler.

A butler in the old tradition is there in the background managing, co-ordinating, suggesting, and cajoling all those employed by the master to perform their tasks to the highest standard.

These are the qualities we provide in our Audio-Visual Butlers with additional skills in the technical area where sound, lighting, and in some cases, projected images play such an important part in enhancing any function if handled effectively.

The rest of this book gives you an insight to the technical details we take into account when assisting to make an event a success. The great thing about using Audio-Visual Butlers is that you don't have to know all these details to have a great event. Your Audio-Visual Butler will be there to look after it anyway.

Audio-Visual Butlers Caring as much about your event as you do

### **Working with your Audio-Visual Butler.**

The relationship starts well before the event ( this timing has ranged in the past from 20 minutes to 6 months) with discussions to determine

- Type of event
- Numbers expected
- Objective
- Venue
- Elements within the event
- Production and technical support required for each element
- Who is supplying what equipment and services
- Budget
- The Run Sheet

The Audio-Visual Butler then checks on the facilities supplied within the chosen venue to determine their suitability for the particular event being held.

In the report back any changes or additions felt appropriate in achieving the objective of the event are proposed and included with detailed costings for further discussion.

Once the proposal and costings have been agreed the Audio-Visual Butler works with you to ensure that the objectives of the event are met and all appropriate arrangements have been made.

On site the Audio-Visual Butler ensures the plans become reality and the event runs smoothly for all concerned.

**To make an event a success we first have to define it.**

## **WHAT IS AN EVENT ?**

For the purpose of this book let's define an event as

**'A group of people gathering together for a specific purpose.**

How many people ? Lets say from 20 - 20,000

What sort of Group ? Corporate,, government, professional, community, social, sporting, public or private

What purpose ? A conference, product launch, fashion show, breakfast, lunch or dinner presentation, press conference, sporting event, celebration, awards night, concert, opening or closing ceremony or just a party for people to have fun.

## **FORMULA FOR SUCCESS**

Whatever the group or the purpose of the event there are certain laws, like the laws of physics that determine if the event will 'work' or be successful or achieve it's objective or give the guests a great time, or be a great experience or whatever phrase you choose to measure the events overall success by.

## **THE COMPONENTS OF AN EVENT**

For convenience sake I have broken down the components of events into 3 main headings

### **CONTENT**

### **PRODUCTION**

### **STAGING**

## **THE CONTENT.**

### **RUN SHEETS**

The various segments of an event is like the sheet music in a concert or the script of a play.

In an event the content should be found in the run sheet. The run sheet should contain what time people are doing what.. From the run sheet those making it happen can produce their own details.

The head waiter can see when food and drink is to be served so he can ensure the area is free from waiters allowing guests to focus on the entertainment or speeches without interruption.

The chef can organise the kitchen so the food is served at it's best and on time.

Those speaking or performing can see 'when they are on' and prepare accordingly

The staging team can see who is doing what, when and deliver the appropriate technical support.

Sounds so obvious and so necessary but I reckon in 30 years of staging events only 10% of clients have handed me a run sheet when I have requested one. The other 90% ask me if I have a pen and some paper.

From now on your Audio-Visual Butler can help you prepare the run sheet, hopefully in good time so everyone can make good use of it.

### **RUN BOOKS**

As the event takes shape all the details of the segments contained in the run sheets can be combined into a run book so those making the event happen can just turn pages. Those details may be the words that are spoken the pre recorded segments that are shown the music to be played, the menu to be served.

## **CONTENT SUITABILITY**

The content at each type of event obviously varies but the rules remain very similar to achieve the objective.

### **Is the content relevant to those attending**

**EXAMPLES** - *Is the music suitable for the type of event and those attending. Do the press have all the facts they need to write a favourable story. Is there a technical emphasis for a technical audience and a benefits emphasis for sales people*

### **Does the choice and mix of content help the event achieve its objective**

Is the main objective to inform or impress.?

**EXAMPLES** - *If the objective is to impress then a well known outside presenter to open the event can add weight.*

*If the objective is to entertain then the entertainment should be selected with the audience in mind..*

*A great act for some events can be a failure at others.*

Even if it's a low key event to inform a regular group, basic presentation standards should be maintained to assist the credibility of the presenters and focus the concentration of the audience.

### **Will the content mix keep people interested, surprised, excited, informed and not bored.**

#### **Is there smooth continuity between segments**

**EXAMPLE** - *Use music or videos between presentations to vary the mood and calm, or excite the guests at relevant points. Use an MC between presenters or a solo musician between large acts while they re set to keep the event flowing smoothly and help the audience re focus their attention for the next segment.*

#### **Is the length of the event suitable to the objective and those attending.**

**EXAMPLE** *If the group you've invited are used to leaving at 5pm in the afternoon don't design the programme to finish at 6pm - Half the audience will leave anyway.*

If you can put over your points in 2 hours then don't spread out the event to a whole day.

## **SPEECH CONTENT.**

At most events somebody speaks. There are a few basic rules which have almost become clichés.

There is the KISS principle - Keep It Simple Stupid. The more complicated the presentation the more chance there is of losing your audience's attention. One way of testing the KISS principle is to read a paragraph and ask yourself 'What does that mean' If the words in your answer are more simple to understand than the words in the paragraph then change the paragraph.

There is also the old adage "Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em - Tell 'em - Then Tell 'em what you've told em. By structuring a speech or presentation in this way the audience knows what to expect, feels involved and are more likely to retain the information because they have heard the main points 3 times.

Once again tailoring the words to the audiences interest and understanding makes them more receptive to the message the presenter is trying to put across.

## DELIVERING THE CONTENTS

History is boring, History is exciting. History is History neither boring or exciting. The way history is presented is either boring or exciting. There are many ways to present any subject matter. Through film, video, stage productions, music, interactive programmes, or with a live presenter using PowerPoint style presentations or video segments to bring the presentation alive.

You most likely won't have history as the subject matter for your event but you do have the choice of using all the presentation methods available today to make each segment of your event exciting for those attending.

Deciding what presentation method to use for each segment comes under the heading of production

Your Audio-Visual Butler can help you make the best decisions for your event.

## EXAMPLE RUN SHEET

TIME	CUE	SOUND / LIGHT / STAGE	SCREEN
1930	Guests Enter	Walk in Music House lights 75% Entree is on the table	Welcome graphic on screen
1945	On cue from organiser Opening Video	Music stops House Lights to 10%	Screen to blank Start Video 1 after titles with girls face on screen and sound of waterfall
1950	As video 1 ends with car climbing to top of hill and screen fades to blank. MC Goes to Left Lectern	Left Lectern Light 75% House Lights to 50% Left Lectern Mic on	MC Title graphic on screen
1958	MC introduces the chairman ending with the words - So it's my great pleasure to call on the Chairman Mr Gregory Johnson to open the proceedings at this our 10th Anniversary dinner. Chairman to Right Lectern-	Walk up music CD 3 track 1 Right Lectern light to 75% Left Lectern Light off Right Lectern Mic on - Left Lect. Mic off	Chairman Title graphic on screen Graphics as per script Last Graphic is logo



	Presentation with speaker support		
2010	Chairman ends. 'So it's great to see you all here, thank you for joining us tonight to help us celebrate - enjoy your meal and the special surprise` we have for you later in the evening'	House light to 75% Lectern off Dinner music starts Clear Entree serve main course	Logo continues
2100	On head waiters cue	Clear Main Course	Logo continues
2105	On Head Waiters Cue - Waiters leave MC to Lectern - Intro special Guest	Left Lectern Light 75% House Lights to 50% Left Lectern Mic on	Logo continues
2107	MC ends - So now will you please welcome The Minister for industry who will say a few words Minister speaks from Right Lectern	Right Lectern light to 75% Left Lectern Light off Right Lectern Mic on - Left Lect. Mic off	Ministers Title slide on screen Return to logo app 3 min into speech
2120	Minister Ends MC Back to Left Lectern	Left Lectern Light 75% Right Lect Light off Left Lectern Mic on Right Lect Mic off	
	After MC thanks minister MC announces desert will be served followed by cabaret Waiters enter with Desert, each decorated with 10	House lights Off Lect Light and Mic off Music CD 1 Track 4 Congratulations	Screen Graphic of Cake with 10 Candles

	sparklers		
	As sparklers die	House light to 75% Dinner music continues	Logo
2155	MC announces comfort break as Cabaret will commence in 5 Mins	Voice over Mic on - Music off	

**PRODUCTION**

**THE CREATIVE TREATMENT**

Whatever the event, it's contents has to be produced in a similar way that a theatrical play or the food at a banquet has to be produced. The creative treatment of the content can be accidental like the way the speech is written or the type of sandwiches that are served. It can also be very deliberate, possibly with a theme as it's basis such as a beach theme, a sports theme, a European theme, an animal theme or even a theme that can transport you and your audience through the stars into a future age where technology has finally come to terms with humans and created the perfect environment for us and our children to live. If the creative treatment is new it's not on a list because it's most likely not even been thought of yet.

**TO INFORM – TO IMPRESS – TO POSITION - TO ENJOY – TO HAVE FUN**

When deciding on the creative treatment, the objective of the event should be kept in mind.

If the main objective of the event is to inform then the creative treatment should be designed so the audience is impressed with the content Please note I said **be impressed with the content**, not the production. I have seen too many product launches and sales meetings where management have spent a fortune on technical production only to have the audience leave saying how great the lasers were or how much they enjoyed the video clip shown before the coffee break when they should have left commenting on how impressed they were with the product or service being presented.

If the main objective is to impress then the time, effort and financial resources should be spread over all the elements within the event. If a terrific opening is followed by an under-produced, under-rehearsed, presentation then the good impression produced by the opener is almost completely wasted.

If the objective is for everyone to have spontaneous fun then a menu of activities should be prepared and 'waiting in the wings' so if the energy level and atmosphere deteriorates then the waiting activities can be introduced as required.

If the position of the organisation, or an individual in the hierarchy has to be emphasised then all the elements have to reinforce that image including –

- Publicity
- Invitations,
- Venue
- Decorations
- Atmosphere
- Elements of activity within the event.

Marshall Macluen once said 'THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE. The event has to appeal to the audience on an emotional as well as a practical level.

### **WHO PROVIDES THE TREATMENT**

**The independent event producer** with no in house facilities. Their contribution is their skill and experience. Their advantage is that they live by their creative talent and reputation. They recommend the treatment they feel is best for your event from the complete range of facilities available in the marketplace.

**Public relation companies and advertising agencies** also fall into a similar category but instead of dealing with an individual talent there is a mix of creative (the jeans) and administrative (the suits) people to work on your event.

**Production company with facilities.** If you want a video made for your event you can go to a video production company. If you want speaker support material produced then a production house specialising in graphics could be your choice. Some production houses also offer an event management service with special facilities geared to events like interactive systems or game shows so the audience is able to participate rather than just sit and watch

**Facilities Houses** can be used where the organiser has the skill, time and experience to make the creative decisions and take responsibility for the production management. Each facility you start talking to will let you know how valuable their particular facility is to your event. Talk to the caterer and you will be told that to impress your guests their extensive and delightful menu and wine list will do the job while someone with a theatrical background may persuade you to put your message over via a short cameo production with live actors or magicians, or impersonators or dancers to enhance the message. Those skilled in technical and stage effects may suggest purpose built sets or drapes, reveals, revolves, smoke, lasers and moving lights.

**In the end it's up to the person who pays the bill to choose the mix and with the aid of the Audio-Visual Butler make sure it works on the day.**

### **THE PRESENTERS AND PERFORMERS**

There are presenters who can hold an audience enthralled for 90 minutes with no audio-visual support and no notes. In my experience I have met very few such people. Most presenters at an event do a far better job when they have a script or notes. The notes can be sheets that sit on a lectern or palm cards or notes projected for all to see on the big screen.

Speaking to a larger audience has different dynamics to a conversation, it becomes a performance.

Unfortunately for a performance to be effective and accurate, it has to be rehearsed. In most cases to be rehearsed it has to be written down so, when improvements are made, it does not rely on the presenter in the excitement of making the presentation to remember those improvements .

### **THE SCRIPT**

For those who tell me 'Ah I don't need to write a script and rehearse, I've done this presentations lots of times before, I can do it off the cuff ' there are various answers depending on the sophistication of the event, the experience of the presenter and the nature of the segment being discussed.

If you are the presenter making the presentation for the first time my advise is to do just that; but do it **before** the event and record it. If you are going to have a few drinks at the event before you speak then have a few drinks before you record it; then listen to it back, have the words transcribed into print and then read it. I bet you'll change it and improve it and even if you don't read it at the event. The presentation or speech you make will be a far better one than if you had not gone through the tedious process before hand.

For a presentation where there is audio-visual support a script helps the technicians prepare cues and 'get back on track' if there is a technical problem. At worst case treat the script as an insurance policy so someone else could present if the original presenter is not able to do so.

### **EVERYTHING HAS TO BE PRODUCED**

Often people tell me 'this is a low key event and doesn't require producing' All events require producing.

Think of producing as looking at all the variables and choosing the right combinations to present the message and create the right image for your event.

### **CASTING**

Whichever treatment or combinations of treatments is chosen there is casting - who is going to speak, sing, play, be the MC be the best man. In all groups there are those who present better than others. The fact that a person presents well does not necessarily mean they know more about their subject. I have seen senior executives present very badly compared to more junior people in the organisation. A senior executive may not have the time to prepare and rehearse that a more junior person can allocate. Some battle on with nobody being able to tell the boss he's not very good at this. An Audio-Visual Butler could suggest that the boss introduces the topic and then hand over to a subordinate to present the details. No loss of face but a much more acceptable event for the audience. It can also work the other way with the boss being

introduced to present this very important topic. The same principle applies to non corporate events.

## **PRODUCTION OF GRAPHICS**

At most corporate events the main bulk of the presentation is delivered from the lectern with some sort of speaker support emphasising the spoken word. The same effect can be created by overheads, slides and PowerPoint style presentations projected onto the big screen.

More important than the method of presentation is the clarity and readability of what's on the screen.

I have seen so many presentations where the visuals are not readable for more than half the audience.

The rules are very hard. If you want to make visuals that contain a lot of information that require a small font size to fit them onto the screen then choose a venue with a very high ceiling that will take a very large screen and use a device with a high light output so you get a big bright clear image.

As a rule of thumb if you can read the words standing two meters away from the computer monitor you are preparing the speaker support on, there is a fair chance that when the words are projected, those at the back of the room will be able to read them.

The ultimate test is to go to the venue before production starts with a visual containing different font sizes, project it onto the biggest screen size that will fit the room so the bottom of the screen is visible above the heads of the people in front of you and see the smallest font size you can read.

You can then brief the production people to make visuals with your specified minimum font size.

To further ensure clarity use a dark background like dark blue or dark red with a light letter or graphic such as white or yellow.

## **FROM PRODUCTION TO STAGING**

So we now have a run sheet showing the content and logistics, the creative treatment has been put in place and speaker support and other pre recorded segments are in production it's time to concentrate on the staging..

## **STAGING**

### **CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT**

The objective of staging is to create the best environment and atmosphere in which to hold the event.

To achieve this objective there are many sub headings to address. We'll start with the Venue.

### **THE VENUE**

The Venue obviously has to be chosen according to the numbers attending and the type of event.

Some features of the venue can't be changed

Room size

Ceiling height

Access , location and parking.

For some events using a Marquee or a Hocker ( the big brother of marquees) is the answer.

The features of a venue that are superb for one type of event may be a great disadvantage for others. Low ceilings are great for creating an intimate atmosphere for a cocktail party, wedding reception or dinner party but high ceilings are required for an event that involves projection so the people at the back of the room can see the bottom of the large screen over the heads of people seated at the front.

**You can always make a high ceiling appear lower, you can never make a low ceiling higher.**

Blackout and views also have their place. We have staged events in venues chosen for their great views and then had to black out the windows with heavy drapes so the video projection and slides are visible.

Forward planning also comes into venue choosing. Roadshows round the country need similar venues so the same type of event can be staged in similar rooms. Suitable venues are often booked up to 12 months in advance.

Once the venue is chosen it then becomes 'THE THEATRE' If only architects and designers realised this, their whole thought process when designing spaces for events would improve.

### **THE AUDITORIUM**

This is the area where the guests are gathered. Are they standing or seated ?

If they are seated is it theatre or classroom or banquet style ? How is the area to be made attractive and reinforce the theme and the message of the event ?

The worst examples of not having thought this through comes from events where guests are standing while speeches or presentations are being made. It's OK for 5 or ten minutes but if people are asked to stand and listen for longer than this they shuffle and try to find somewhere to sit and start talking among themselves and both the presenter and the guests start to feel uncomfortable.

The temperature of the auditorium is also important. Trying to create a warm friendly atmosphere in a place that's freezing cold just does not work. If the room is warm and stuffy when people are being asked to concentrate on facts and figures, particularly just after lunch, helps to put them to sleep.

The size of the space where the event is to be held is also important in creating the right atmosphere.

If the numbers expected are not known in advance then partitions and plants can be used to change the size according to how the space fills up. Atmosphere at events can be created or destroyed by having too much or too little space for those attending. Check the floor and wall surfaces. It's much easier for guests to hear and understand speech in a carpeted room than one with a hard floor.

### **THE STAGE.**

In many venues the stage is placed in different parts of the auditorium for different events. On Monday in section 1 the stage is for a single presenter with slides and video and placed next to the screen in the centre of the shorter wall opposite to where the guests enter. On Tuesday in section 2 the stage is placed in one corner for the quartet and another stage is placed in another corner for the after dinner speech.

On Friday night the whole room is opened up for a big dinner dance with a band (one stage) cabaret (2 stages) dance floor with an exhibition dance to start things off (3 stages) and top table for speeches (4 stages).

When choosing a venue it's up to the organiser or producer to decide where the best positions are to focus the attention of the audience. In a well designed multi-purpose venue the technical facilities like sound and lighting allow for the attention to be focused in different areas at different times.

Other considerations include where food service is from or if there is the possibility of noise coming from other areas like an adjacent function room, outside or from the kitchen /service area.

### **CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT**

In theatre the set is used to help create the scene. At events settings and props can also be used in the same way. Logos projected onto screens, posters, banners, balloons, backdrops, framed pictures, table decorations, costumes, live human statues, lasers, lights, sound, animals, vehicles and anything else that the imagination and the budget will allow. Whatever settings and props are used The main consideration is 'Are they enhancing the message and atmosphere of the event, are they relevant to those attending.

As the setting and theme become part of the venue for the event, check that the venue can accommodate the items to be used. Facilities like hanging points and walls that can have things attached to them are a great advantage. Set up time is reduced and designers can place things exactly where they want them.

### **LIGHTING**

I feel very strongly that lighting at an event is not there just to illuminate the area. It's there to create the appropriate atmosphere and direct peoples attention to the various points of activity as the event progresses.

The extent to which the in house system in the venue allows us to do this differs enormously.

The best venues have all the lighting controlled by a single system with a control board that can be placed on the operators table. The faders on the board control the intensity of the house lights and stage lights. The house lights are split into small sections so

the area where the audience is situated for that particular event can be designated as 'HOUSE LIGHTS' The area of activity or special interest can be designated as 'STAGE LIGHTS' The lights used to light 'THE STAGE' can be either the existing fittings such as down lights or track lights or theatre lights or a combination. The beauty of this type of system is that 'SCENES' can be established The top table or buffet or speakers platform can be highlighted at appropriate times and if a video has to be shown all the lights can be brought down with one master fader.

From that standard of control the lighting gets worse down to the venues with fluorescent lights on switches placed in different section of the room.

Our Audio-Visual Butlers look at the activities within the event determining the level of control and atmosphere required. They then look at the lights and control available at the venue and decide how much equipment has to be brought in on a temporary basis to create the effects we needed for each segment. In the past this has varied from having to re angle and focus a couple of the in house spot lights to re lighting the room with brought in house lights and dimmers as well as a separate stage lighting rig.

## **SOUND**

**At many events if the guests can't hear and understand what is being said, they may as well not have bothered to attend.** If the sound is clear it grabs the audiences attention and allows them to concentrate on the contents rather than having to strain to hear or understand. If the sound is not clear the audience gives up after a while and they start to shuffle and talk among themselves. This shuffling and talking starts in the areas furthest from the points of sound and builds till the people nearer to the points of sound also find it difficult to concentrate so they also start shuffling and talking till the whole presentation is most unpleasant for both the presenter and the audience.

There are different types of microphones designed for different purposes. A microphone like a Shure SM 58 is designed for singers who hold the microphone right up to their mouths. A condenser mic is ideal for a lectern as it will pick up sound from a distance without loss of frequency response giving a rounder more natural quality to the presenter's voice.

Many presenters ask for a radio lapel microphone and then make their presentation within the vicinity to the lectern. The sound quality from a good condenser mic on the lectern is often better than the clarity of a lapel radio mic. This is because the sound projects forward from the mouth, not down towards the chest. where the lapel mic sits. For a presenter to grab and hold the attention of the audience when speaking the delivery has to be confident and contain enough energy to get through. However good the sound system if the presenter mumbles and hesitates the audience will be lost

## **MUSIC MAESTRO PLEASE**

Music can be used to tremendous effect to create different moods throughout an event. Music can create excitement, produce a solemn mood, induce applause at the end of segments or during awards. Music can create a welcoming atmosphere as guests enter and help them to leave on a high or a low as the event demands. Music can wake



people up and rejuvenate them ready for the next item on the programme. Music is a wonderful tool at an event and as with most tools requires skill and experience to get the best out of it.

Your Audio-Visual Butler will help you choose the right music and recommend the type of sound system required to reproduce the desired results. The ceiling speaker system found in most venues is usually only adequate for speech.

### **PROJECTION - (AUDIO VISUAL - MULTIMEDIA - POWERPOINT - VIDEO )**

Projected images are being used more and more to enhance all types of events.

The Audio-Visual Butler can assist by ensuring the projectors and computers used at any particular event are compatible and advise on which backgrounds, colour schemes and font sizes are going to be most impressive when presented at the event.

Often the presenter can enter the basic information but has no time to think about backgrounds, builds, transitions, colours and animated sequences. The Audio-Visual Butler can arrange for these enhancements to be put in during the lead up to the event or even onsite.

Prior to set up it's necessary to know who is changing the images during the presentation.

Sometimes the presenter will want to do it from the lectern, other times an operator is required to change images leaving the presenter free to concentrate on the words and the delivery of the presentation.

Backup in the form of a second computer being changed along with the main one, so it can be switched in if the first one fails, can also be set up for important events.

More traditional mediums such as video, slides and overheads still have their place as do white boards and flip charts. More important than the medium used is the need to prepare graphics so that all members of the audience can see the images clearly and read all the words. This in part is dependent on the screen size which in turn is limited by the ceiling height of the chosen venue.

It's amazing how often this basic rule is overlooked in the excitement of using the latest technology.

#### **GETTING IT RIGHT ON THE NIGHT**

**If you want to decrease the chances of all the time, effort and care you've put into your home being spoilt by fire, you take the advice of a fire prevention officer.**

**If you want to decrease the chances of all the time, effort and care you've put into your event being spoilt by bad staging, you take the advice of your Audio-Visual Butler.**

## **Some of the principles the advise is based on, is laid out below.**

Before setting up at the venue it's most helpful if all the key people have a run sheet or run book as described under 'Contents' on Page 10. It's important that everyone including the presenters, and crew have the same version of scripts and notes prior to the technical run through.

### **LAY OUT**

When the AV equipment is laid out, enough room should be left on the control table for the run book and an adequate work light placed so the operator can read the notes and operate in a comfortable environment.

### **PREPARATION**

Some producers prefer to, or are forced to because of lack of preparation time, keep most of the information on the show to themselves or in their own run book. The operators are given a headset and told when to perform various functions like put up the presenters light or start the video or bring down the house lights as the voice in the headset commands. If the link to the operators was cut nobody would have any idea what to do.

In my view anyone who has anything to do with making the event happen should have a run sheet or run book before rehearsals so that during rehearsals this is the document used to mark updates and changes. The sound operator should know who is using what microphone. Which sound comes through which loudspeakers and a note of what pre recorded sound is to be played at what point. The note should also include how the sound starts and ends.

Speaker support operators should not only have a note of when to change images but what image should be on the screen once the change is made. Video operators should also make a note in the run book how each segment starts and ends.

All pre recorded material should be marked the same way on the run sheet as they are on the label of the tape or CD. If a tape is cued to a certain start point when handed to the operator it's far safer to rewind the tape to the head, mark a '000' point and then run forward again to the start point noting the approximate number on the counter that the tape starts. In a busy rehearsal the start point the tape was cued to originally can be lost and the quickest way for the operator to find it again may be to go the head of the tape and back to the noted start point, especially if there are lots of tapes to be played in the show.

Once all the appropriate notes are made then Technical Run Throughs and Rehearsals OF THE RUN SHEET OR RUN BOOK can take place.

## **REHEARSAL - REHEARSAL - REHEARSAL**

### **EVENT LAW STATES -**

**BEFORE AN EVENT TAKES PLACE THE RUN SHEET/RUN BOOK SHOULD BE REHEARSED CUE TO CUE WITH ALL TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS BEING PERFORMED AS THEY WOULD BE DURING THE EVENT - THIS PROCESS IS KNOWN AS THE TECHNICAL RUN THROUGH PENALTIES FOR DISOBEYING THIS LAW BY STARTING AN EVENT WITHOUT FIRST HAVING PERFECTED A TECHNICAL RUN THROUGH RANGE FROM MILD EMBARRASSMENT TO TOTAL DISASTER.**

There are various stages of preparation and rehearsal, each with a specific purpose as laid out below.

**CONTENT REHEARSAL** - When each segment arrives on site it's ideal if the content of that segment has already been prepared and rehearsed. Presenters with visual support should already have checked they are happy with their support. I have seen too many events where the time allocated for either a full rehearsal or Technical Run Through has been taken up with one or more presenters changing either the content or order of their speaker support material.

#### **RUN SHEET - TECHNICAL FINALISATION**

Prior to the Technical Run Through the operations side of the run sheet should be completed with all sound, lighting, audio-visual and stage management cues marked. If this can be done prior to the event going on site so much the better, if not time has to be allocated prior to the technical run through to complete the task. If there are technical cues during one or more segment then the script or notes containing those cues should be incorporated. The run sheet now becomes THE RUN BOOK

#### **TECHNICAL RUN THROUGH**

This Means that the RUN SHEET/RUN BOOK is rehearsed from Cue to Cue starting from the time the doors are opened to let the audience in to the time the event ends and the guests depart.

Presenters should walk on, rehearse their opening and any segments that require technical operation such as video, data, sound, lighting or physical changes ending with the end of their presentation or segment. If the actual presenter is not present then a stand in can be used for the Technical Run Through but this is not preferred as the technical run through is often the only time the technical team and presenter interact before they go on in front of the audience. The technical run through is often the last chance for the technical people to check the logistics of performing their changes smoothly and in the time required.

There is another reason for a Technical Run Through. The build up for each event is different no matter how similar it is from the one before. There are potential problems in all technical areas and with walk on, reveals or anything else that happens on stage.

The microphone or data control lead can be loose, a certain socket or circuit can be overloaded, there can be a dry joint or loose connection in a piece of equipment that has just been moved even to a slightly different position, a certain combination of lights and sound can cause buzz or overloading. There can be misunderstandings between the presenters and technical staff which can effect the smooth running of the event. I know it shouldn't happen but in a fast build up it often does. **The technical run through** is the course net that should catch most of these faults and **The Full Rehearsal** is the fine net that is likely to stop all of them. from becoming part of the event in front of the guests.

### **FULL REHEARSAL.**

For many important events the Technical Run Through is not enough.

Managers, producers or organisers of an event that has to be right should insist on time being allocated for a full rehearsal. This means that every word, every piece of music, every action, each sound, lighting and AV cue to be performed in the event is fully rehearsed. In theatrical terms this would be known as a Dress Rehearsal.

**An amateur may rehearse till he or she gets it right a professional will rehearse till he or she never gets it wrong.**

### **SUMMARY**

To sum up on staging. Good, creative staging can't make an event successful it can only enhance good content and production. But bad staging can ruin an event however much thought and effort has gone into the content and production.

### **THE BEFEFITS OF USING AN AUDIO-VISUAL BUTLER**

## **EXAMPLES AND EXPERIENCES**

### **• The speakers in Melbourne**

In one of the best hotel in Melbourne we set up an event where the guests were invited for a cocktail party, a video presentation and a trade show.

After set up I asked for the video to be run and walked round the room to see and hear the quality from various positions in the room.

At the back and the middle it was great. but in the front few rows the sound quality dropped off to the point where the words were indistinct even though the volume was still loud enough.

The speakers were hung from the roof where they were normally positioned in the room and this proved to be the problem. The front of the speakers were over the third row so the high frequency sounds were not being received by those behind the speakers. The in house sound people told me that nobody else complained and did not have a method of fixing the problem. As the VIPs were sitting up front the attitude and solution was unacceptable. I solved the problem by having the foldback speakers normally used for a

band to hear themselves placed under the screen facing forward so the front rows could hear clearly.

## **u The slide jam in London**

Based on the principle that whatever can go wrong may go wrong during an event, backup procedures need to be put in place during planning and set up to combat the problems as they arise.

A presenter I staged a show for in London was using slides spread across 3 screens to illustrate his talk.

During the rehearsal period the night before he turned up with his boxes of slides and a script with a star at each point when slides should be changed. His reasoning was that all the operator had to do was push the button at the star and all would be well. I spent the evening marking on the script the slide number and description at each change. During the show a slide jammed. Because of the work the evening before I was able to unjam the slide and put the show back in cinque before even the presenter noticed what had happened.

## **The box at the cocktail party**

**It was a very low key affair, Just a cocktail party, the chief executive from the USA was there to meet the local staff and clients. All we were asked to provide was a microphone for the speeches. The music was to be provided by a guitarist ` who would not need any amplification. The area for the guests to gather was small for the 100 or so invited. When it came to speech time I lifted the loudspeakers onto their stands (they would have looked out of place high up as the guests arrived but nobody would have heard the speeches if we had left them on the floor). What was now required was**

**a stage for the CEO to stand on to make his presentation but nobody had ordered one so I made one out of the road cases used to bring in the sound system. As soon as he stood on 'the stage' this low key affair became an event that impressed the guests and made the management look good.**

#### **AUDIO VISUAL-BUTLER'S PRE SHOW CHECK LIST**

##### **SOUND**

All channels and outputs clearly marked  
Lectern mics ok  
Hand mics ok  
Radio mics ok in all positions  
New batteries for radio mics  
No phasing between mics used together  
Music sources both channels  
All video sound working on **both** channels  
All FOH speakers working  
Foldback and monitor speakers working  
No buzz with all lights dimmed to half  
All communication head sets working

##### **LIGHTS**

All channels marked  
All lights focused in correct position  
Lectern reading light ok  
No lights on projection screen  
Spare bulbs and fuses ready

##### **AUDIOVISUAL**

Video & data on screen clearly  
Colour on video & data ok  
Graphic cues marked on script  
PowerPoint Presentation checked

##### **SETTING**

Drapes and set tidy  
Props set

##### **FRONT OF HOUSE**

Guest area ready  
Catering ready  
Foh staff ready  
Room temperature ok  
Fire exits clear, unlocked and marked

### **PRE SET BEFORE WALK IN**

Computer programmes set to run  
Video & PowerPoints cued to start  
Walk in Logo on screen  
Crew in position  
Final communication headset check  
Walk in music cued  
House and stage lights set for walk in  
Phones diverted or off  
Pagers to vibrate  
Open the doors

## **THE ROLE OF THE EVENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS CONSULTANT FOR EVENT SPACES**

The role is to advise those designing, building, and renovating spaces to be used for events.

The aim is to end up with a space where it's simple to change the atmosphere and alter the focus of the guests as the event progresses.

The areas of concern are –

- The house lighting
- The house light patching and controls
- The spot lighting
- The spot light patching and controls
- The sound system
- The sound system patching and controls
- Cable runs, connectors and in room access points for each of the above
- Control room/bio box position design and layout
- Hanging and fixing points for sound, lighting, projection and decorations
- Positioning of AV power sockets with technical earths
- Balance between 'In House' equipment and connection facilities for 'brought in' equipment
- All doors to the area are lockable from both front and back of house

Events organisers and their clients are becoming more and more aware of the advantages of using sound, lighting, projected images, theming and decor to make an event work, to make an event special.

It is of course possible to create the desired atmosphere in any venue. The aim of future event space owners and operators will be to attract event organisers because in their venue it will be simpler and therefore less costly to achieve those desired results

### **DESIGNING EVENT SPACES THAT WORK**

When talking to those responsible for building and renovating venues the owners tell me that it's up to the architects, their designers, electrical and engineering consultants to put in the appropriate facilities. The architects say that it's up to the owners to brief them on what they require. From the results I have experienced it's obvious that nobody on the team puts enough emphasis on the technical facilities required once the venue is up and running.

### **TYPES OF VENUES**

Hotel Ballrooms  
Corporate boardrooms  
Meeting Rooms  
Communal Halls  
Function centres  
Convention Centres

### **TYPES OF EVENTS THAT VENUES WITH GOOD FACILITIES WILL ATTRACT**

**CONFERENCES** with front or rear projection screen setups using anything from overhead or data projectors to multi-media, multi-projector extravaganzas.

**FASHION SHOWS** with catwalks and stages using high quality sound and imaginative lighting

**WEDDINGS** with the ability to change the mood of the room according each segment of the party

**EXHIBITIONS** where each display requires a power point and spot lighting and some displays require water and drainage.

**PARTIES** with a band and/or disco and some form of cabaret entertainment.

**PRODUCT LAUNCHES** involving vehicles, lasers, big concert sound and heavy lighting rigs.



**SOME OF THE QUESTIONS OUR PERFORMANCE STANDARD CONSULTANTS  
WILL ASK**

**ACCESS**

Can equipment get in easily ?

Can a vehicle get in easily ?

**THE FLOOR**

Is it flat and more suitable for events with meals and dancing ?

Is it raked and more suitable for lectures and presentations ?

Are there pillars or other site line obstacles built in ?

Is it carpeted so noise from scraping is kept to a minimum ?

Does the carpet pattern make setting up chairs easy ?

Is there a permanent stage ?

Are there portable platforms to build stages and cat walks ?

Is there a portable dance floor ?

**THE CEILING**

Is it high enough for the audience to see the bottom of the screen ?

Is it the same clearance height across the whole room to make lighting and projection easy ?

Does it have chandeliers or other obstacles hanging down that may interfere with lighting & projection ?

Are there any mirrored sections that allow the audience to see behind a projection or dressing screen?

Does it have hanging points for heavy loads across the whole room so hanging lights is easy ?

Are there patch points for lights and projectors at various points throughout ?

Is it easy to run extra cables from one point to another ?

**THE WALLS**

How are banners, poster or other decorations attached or hung ?

Are the partitions between rooms soundproof ?

When you turn the lights down do the walls fade into the background because of color and light positions?

Are there any mirrored sections that could reflect lights back to the audience ?

When you close the partitions can you leave a gap for a rear projection screen ?

Are the doors big enough for equipment and vehicles ?

Are there any built in projection screens ?

Can screens be masked for multi and single screen shows ?

Can the room be blacked out completely ?

**THE SOUND**

Will it buzz when lights are dimmed because sound and lighting cables are run parallel and no technical earths have been installed ?

Are there good quality ceiling speakers for general speech ?  
Can ceiling speakers be switched to stop feedback ?  
Are there enough microphone sockets around the walls ?  
Can an event operator control the sound from the control table ?  
Can the control table be placed in any position in the room ?

**The ideal is for the venue to have a basic sound system with ceiling speakers that can be switched in sectors so the area where the presenter is standing can be lowered or switched off to reduce feedback. It should be possible to plug an auxiliary mixer in at various points in the room so the operator can place the mixer in the best position for the particular event being held. Extra cabling for stereo amps and speakers to be placed in appropriate positions and patchable microphone sockets would also be an advantage.**

**Various easily identifiable power sockets around the room on the same circuit with a separate technical earth would help to eliminate earth hum as would running sound and lighting cables well away from one another.**

## **THE LIGHTING**

Can the presenter be lit without light hitting the screen ?  
Can the audience be lit evenly with no light on the screen ?  
Can lights be turned out easily behind the rear projection screen ?  
Can lights be hung anywhere to light anything ?  
Can all the lights be faded with one master fader ?  
Is there any florescent lighting or non dimmable energy saving WORK LIGHTS?  
With WORK LIGHTS are DIMMABLE EVENT LIGHTS LED bright enough to write ?  
Are there 2" pipes in the ceiling to hang lights from ?  
Are there sockets by those pipes going back to a central patch bay ?  
Are there floor sockets going to the patch bay (Lectern, footlights)?  
Will the hanging points support a concert lighting rig ?  
Is there a balcony or projection box for follow spots ?  
Are there 3 phase 30 amp & 100 amp outlets for extra lighting ?  
Is the emergency lighting fluorescent, does it white out the screen ?  
Have the lighting cables been run well away from the sound cables ?  
Can an event operator control the lights from the control table ?  
Can the control table be placed anywhere ?

**The ideal lighting system for an event space allows for dimmable Tougstan Hallogen, Incandescent or LED house lighting to be controlled in sections so that areas over top tables, stages, buffets and rear projection areas can easily be controlled separately. Some low energy lighting will also create this effect but must be chosen carefully so the colour temperature is conducive to an event and will not flicker when dimmed.**

**A lighting grid made up from 2" pipe with sockets that go back to a central patch bay allow easy set up of any extra lights and to highlight areas as the event progresses. These can be concealed in cleverly designed ceilings. Drop bars can also be used that push up into the ceiling or unscrew when not being used.**

**To comply with safety regulations and conserve electricity concealed fluorescent lighting could also be installed with switches at the doors. This could be used as work lights for cleaning and set up as well as emergency lighting.**

**An operator should be able to place a lighting control board on the control table with faders to control the intensity of the lights. Faders give far better, simpler more instant control for events than buttons requiring light levels and fade times to be programmed before the event starts.**

**Integrated systems using boards where 'Scenes' incorporating house and spot lights, can be programmed onto selected faders are the easiest and most flexible to use. The 'Scene Control Faders' can also be duplicated and installed as permanent panels on the walls.**

### **THE VIDEO AND DATA**

Are there fast internet connections for video conferencing and streaming?

Are there hanging points, cables and power in the roof for hanging a video/data projectors?

Are there patch points for data and video ?

### **THE CONTROL ROOM**

Is the opening of the control room wide enough for follow spots and high power data projectors?

And low enough to project from without shadows from ceiling fittings and ?

Is there obstruction from chandeliers ?

Can one person control sound, projection and lighting easily ?

Is there enough room to store and maintain the AV equipment ?

### **OTHER NICE TOUCHES THAT ARE APPRECIATED**

The Air conditioning can be controlled from inside the room.

There are STD direct dial phones available for organisers,clients and operators

Phone sockets are positioned so phones can go against any wall

There are wired internet connections available for computer hook ups.

All power points are marked with their circuit breaker number.

The lectern light is not fluorescent and does not shine on the screen.

There is water and drainage for lasers & exhibitions stands.

### **SOME TESTS**

## A SMALL CONFERENCE

A small conference is being held in the section without the control room.

There is a rear projection screen, PowerPoint and video for 50 guests.

The presenter is at the lectern.

The house lights are up over the audience but not behind the rear projection screen.

He is speaking, with PowerPoint images projected on the screen.

He can be heard through the ceiling speakers, the operator behind the screen can hear him clearly.

He comes to a point in his speech when he wants to show a new 30 second TV commercial.

With one hand the operator fades down the lights, taking the already dim houselights and the lectern spotlight together.

With the other he starts the video and fades from PowerPoint to video image. He uses the sound mixer to adjust the sound level if required.

During the video there is a change of speaker to the other lectern so he presets the lectern light to come up on the other side and brings up the mike on the other side also.

At the end of the video he fades the lights back up with one hand and fades from video to the PC on the 2<sup>nd</sup> lectern

A new presenter starts speaking from the other lectern and he adjusts the sound.

He then sits for 30 minutes checking the images are correct till he changes the lights and data control back to the other lectern again.

## A FASHION SHOW

The ballroom is set with a backdrop, behind the backdrop is the changing area, the stage is set in front of the backdrop with the catwalk on a T coming from it.

Lights are hung above the stage and catwalk so the guests sitting near to the catwalk do not get the lights shining in their eyes.

The rig consists of many special lights for colour and movement effects on the stage and catwalk between scenes. During the scenes the light is white and colour balanced for video recording.

There are fashion posters around the wall, each one spot lit.

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE CREW**

The standards of crew members differ greatly. By using the services of an Audio-Visual Butler you are certain of the quality of care you can expect. Below is a guide to what we expect from a senior engineer and a technical director working on an event. In smaller events the Audio-Visual Butler would also take on the role of the technical director.

### QUALIFICATIONS OF SENIOR ENGINEER

Minimum Age 20

Minimum experience in industry 3 years

Intelligent, articulate with a sense of the importance of the occasion.

A desire to provide excellent service and ensure the event is a success.

A sense of responsibility towards the equipment during set up, operation and removal.

Dressing appropriately for get in, rehearsal and show,

### SOUND

Set up sound system using various mixers, amps and speakers.

Knowing the difference between mike and line inputs

Knowledge of phantom powering for condenser microphones

Relationship between balanced and unbalanced connections

Wiring standards for balanced to unbalanced.

Use of graphics

Speaker positioning to avoid feedback

Speaker positioning so the sound comes from where it is required (ie from the screen for an AV or Video)

Causes and elimination of hum

Use of isolating transformers to eliminate hum

Connecting to house systems.

### DATA AND VIDEO

Setting up various data and video projectors

Changing projectors from front to rear to ceiling mounted.

Knowing what computers can be used with what projectors and how to connect them

Use of multiple monitors and Video Distribution Amps

Understanding the difference between PAL, NTSC, SECAM,

“ ” VHS, Super VHS, 3/4" Low & High band Umatics and Betacam SP

Knowledge of PC based video players capable of instant full screen at start of video

Recognition of earth bars and how to eliminate them

Ability to take the initiative to mark up scripts with correct in and out points for video

Keeping a graphics list so he knows when video or lighting changes come up

### LIGHTING

Dealing with venue lighting systems, removing and replacing bulbs, fuses, chandeliers etc so that the area over the audience is 'house lights'. The area behind a rear projection screen is dark and the presenter is lit without that light spilling onto the screen.

Understanding power distribution and phase balancing

Running lighting cables so as not to cause buzz in the sound system

Creative set up and operation for atmosphere and effects.

### SETTINGS

Setting up so that if a screen is rear projection the audience can't see behind it.

If a front projection fast fold at least a bottom drape.

Lectern set up with a reading light

Ability to set up a room to gain maximum effect for the event taking place.

Ability to look at a room and make necessary adjustments prior to an event that make the room safe, and aesthetically pleasing ( Gaffer leads down, make sure tables are covered, the drapes are hanging correctly)

### QUALIFICATIONS OF AN AUDIO-VISUAL BUTLER

Minimum Age 25

Minimum experience in industry 5 years

All of the qualifications of a senior engineer as well as -

### DETERMINING A BRIEF

The ability to communicate with an end user client or producer and extract all the information required to prepare a staging specification and quotation.

### SPECIFICATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

The ability to prepare a specification with drawings and quotation involving all technical aspects of the event.

### ON SITE DIRECTION

The ability to head up the staging team to on site and take responsibility for all technical aspects on site whether supplied by the venue or brought in specially for the event.

**Peter Sinclair has spent more than 30 years of his working life setting up and operating sound, lighting and image projection systems in venues around the world.**

From this experience Peter is able to work with those responsible for designing, renovating and building spaces where meetings, events, celebrations and performance are likely to take place.

The end result should be the provision of the required infrastructure so sound, lighting and projection equipment can easily be installed, connected and operated. This applies equally whether the equipment is to be installed on a permanent basis or brought in as required for particular events.

More details of what is required are laid out in the event book under the 'Performance Standards' section.