

Competence

Submitted by Alan Tomlinson on March 14, 2014 - 11:05am.

Changing technology is a mixed blessing. When digital audio came out, it sounded truly repulsive(see **Bop Til You Drop**). Now there are genuinely excellent digital recordings and reproduction systems. One of the primary reasons that digital recording improved(as opposed to digital reproduction), is that a few excellent, highly-skilled recording engineers(e.g. George Massenburg) said 'this sounds like crap, how can I make it better?'. The reason that these engineers were able to change digital recording, is because they new how great recordings sounded and they new how great recordings sounded because they had worked in environments where it was possible to record bands together and therefore they were able to hear how those bands sounded in a favorable acoustic environment.

Many of these crucial aspects of fine engineering are gone. There are few good sounding recording rooms left which has led to the audio industry producing much less top-end equipment. More importantly though, there are few(er) people working in recording who actually know what a band sounds like in a good room and crucially, how to capture the sound of a band in a good room. Music lives through the connection of musicians playing together in the same place at the same time. That's not to say that it's impossible to do it without that, just that it's harder.

I have found very few recordings in the last 20 years that sounded really good that were made by anyone who hadn't come up in recording studios when there were a good many of them still around. Where will the quality recording engineers of the future come from when they have no idea how to make things sound good?