



# BYPASS THE 'FEAR FACTOR'

Emma Bigg talks us through her history in the audiovisual industry and how this has led to her setting up her own audiovisual installation design consultancy, Octavius RE.

On 1st February 1999, I joined SSE Audio Group as a Hire Sales Assistant - I never imagined I would end up working at SSE for a total of 16 years over two stints and progress to level of Company Director. But I did. I started working in the Hire Business but left to pursue a long time wish to be a Production Manager. I then re-joined in 2006 to helm the new London operation born out of the acquisition of Tarsin Entertainments. Pro audio was my field and I felt very confident in handling the design and support side of audio installations. However, we now had to embrace effects lighting and video display systems. Grasping these new disciplines and exploring the technology was a great adventure and really inspired my imagination. This is how I developed my passion for designing elegant, versatile and, most importantly, well thought out audiovisual installations. And that is how, after ten years of developing the installations business for SSE in London, I came to the point where I handed my notice in 18 months ago.

The arrival of my son three years ago and soon to start school; an itching to work for myself that I was finding harder to ignore and a frustration born out of years of seeing customers left with mediocre or poorly installed systems all contributed to the creation of Octavius RE - my audiovisual installation design consultancy.

My mission is to bring audiovisual design as a service to the whole world of audiovisual installations. Certainly on large, high-budget projects, consultants are regularly brought in to produce specifications for tender, but that concept has not filtered through to all echelons of the market, with many venues relying heavily on their Installer to provide good advice or the 'send the same information out to three companies and see who comes in with best price' approach. Both approaches can be deeply flawed

depending on who and how good your installer is.

Over the years at SSE, I won a lot of business on the back of being very successful at re-engineering existing solutions so they operated as required for a venue. At that point, most of the money had been spent and the installation had handed over, so our works were limited by what little budget was available and hugely disruptive to trade. My constant bugbear was that the extra cost and disruption could all be avoided with better advice at the design stage and an understanding of the commercial value that an audiovisual system has to a business.

Good design is not prohibitively expensive for smaller projects with tighter budgets. Many clients forget about the intangible cost to a business of a poorly designed audiovisual system, such as diverting non-technical staff from their core role; disruption to business; damage to the venue concept because the audiovisual does not dovetail with the overall vision and so on. The crazy thing is the clients on all levels of projects are used to buying in design services from Architects, Structural Engineers, Interior Designers, M&E Consultants, IT Consultants and so on, so why not audiovisual, too? Surely having a design that has been developed with you and for you with no external bias or interest in selling you a specific product is worth having. Sending that specification out to three companies and going for the one with best price is a process that will get the client the right system and all the proposals should be comparable. You also bypass the 'fear factor' which is when an installer really wants the business so is afraid to push the client on certain items that might be more expensive but, in the long term, will give the venue a better system or, in fact, assist in creating new revenue streams through audiovisual for the venue. This is where mediocrity sets

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**10**  
PRINCIPLES  
for  
**GOOD**  
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1. GOOD DESIGN IS INNOVATIVE.
2. GOOD DESIGN MAKES A PRODUCT USEFUL.
3. GOOD DESIGN IS AESTHETIC.
4. GOOD DESIGN MAKES A PRODUCT UNDERSTANDABLE.
5. GOOD DESIGN IS UNOBTRUSIVE.
6. GOOD DESIGN IS HONEST.
7. GOOD DESIGN IS LONG-LASTING.
8. GOOD DESIGN IS THOROUGH DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL.
9. GOOD DESIGN IS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY.
10. GOOD DESIGN IS LITTLE DESIGN AS POSSIBLE.

in and you get a system that fits the budget which is not the same as the system needed for the business. There may well be times where the client cannot stretch to that more expensive item, but you could discuss wiring for the more advanced option so when the system needs to be upgraded, it's simple and cost effective to do so.

It is our job as audiovisual designers and installers to give our clients the benefit of our knowledge and experience to enable them to make the best decisions and not to just keep rolling out the same okay, but not great systems for fear of rocking the boat.

*The opinions expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and not necessarily of mondo\*dr magazine.*