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Education is key

Meyer Sound's **Merlijn van Veen** and **Bob McCarthy** explain the importance of a good education in pro audio

Merlijn van Veen started his own education programme, has served as the principal teacher for sound reinforcement at the Royal Conservatoire in the Netherlands and has had numerous papers published. In 2018, he joined Meyer Sound as a senior technical support and education specialist.

Bob McCarthy has been involved in the design and analysis of sound systems for over 30 years. A renowned specialist in sound system design and optimisation, he has shared his experiences through seminars and multiple books. He currently works for Meyer Sound as the director of system optimisation.



Merlijn van Veen

You can manufacture the best-sounding loudspeaker in the world but, if it's positioned behind a videowall, you still have a problem. So, there is the obligation of ensuring a good understanding of how to deploy sound systems and I feel comfortable saying that Meyer Sound has covered this in great length for as long as I can remember. Not just how to use their products, but also how to do so in a fashion where we all get to enjoy the same artistic content or programme material. It's about delivering the message in a way that sounds the same to the majority of the audience; preferably all of them.

I've been in this industry for 15 years and this is my first position within a large manufacturer. I've always had an outstanding relationship with Meyer Sound and, in June 2018, we finally got to the point that I joined the company, which for me is a wonderful opportunity to continue teaching, something that is very dear to me, but also to have an opportunity to practise what I teach myself again and be on the forefront of new and exciting technology.

Something we're committing to is conveying ease of use. We're not trying to send a man to the moon; this is actually something you can learn. It's about striking a balance between equipping participants with the necessary skillset to successfully deploy sound systems without making it overly complex and abstract, because sound systems have evolved from stacking a bunch of speakers on the left and right to much higher levels of complexity.

Trade shows and organisations like AVIXA are also very committed to education. That being said, there is only so much you can cover in a one- or two-hour window, so you have to be really selective with what you've got to communicate. In such a small window, you can barely scratch the surface.



Image courtesy of Biliانا Panic



Bob McCarthy

The old guard grew up in a world of analogue and they have never lost that knowledge. They then have to gain a knowledge of the world of digital audio and information technology because we've arrived in the world of fully networked audio. Modern skillsets require knowledge in all of those areas, because as much as analogue seems quaint and outdated, it's not going away. Analogue is always going to be part of the chain, so that also means there's quite a diverse set of skills that are required for the young people coming into the industry too.



When I started in the industry, it really was the 'Wild West'. Manufacturers were not ready for what audiences and promoters and bands were ready to do, concert-wise. However, it was the age of pioneering and a tremendous amount of innovation was accomplished by engineers who built things out of their own garages. The age of garage-level work is long gone – we've evolved – so now you really have to have some serious engineering skills in multiple disciplines.

There is also much more simplicity at the same time. Whereas in the past it would take all of these different parts and pieces to form a signal chain, there are now consoles or DSP plug-in speakers that replace what used to be eight or nine different pieces in the chain.

From an industry-wide point of view, the biggest development in the last five years has been networked audio. We sort of nibbled at it in the past, but now it has become the standard piece of the transmission chain, which means there's no large multicores and we're barely even getting to multistreams in digital. It's just all in the network, whether it's Dante, AVB or Milan. It's a very different thing because the troubleshooting and design techniques for this are completely alien to the world that us old folk grew up in. So that's a real adaptation and we all continue to learn.