

Fairfield Arts & Convention Center

Sound Pressure Level Policy

Although this statement of policy accompanies all contracts with the Fairfield Arts & Convention Center, it has, in the past, failed to reach the touring staff prior to their arrival at the venue. Accordingly, the Center makes every effort with certain acts to verbally communicate this policy directly to the appropriate tour personnel as far in advance as possible. It is offered here in that spirit.

Tour Managers need be particularly aware of the Center's Sound Pressure Level (SPL) Policy. The policy is unique in both measurement and enforcement. This document is an attempt to avoid unexpected technical complications that might affect the normal operation of your performance.

It has been well established that when the SPL (regardless of initial quality) exceeds a certain magnitude within the Center, the resulting acoustical distortion invariably causes numerous patron complaints. Consequently, in order to maintain our reputation in the community as a place of fine acoustics, and to assure an enjoyable experience for all patrons, the Center has found it necessary to establish a method of SPL regulation.

In order to avoid the controversial application of noise standards, and in the absence of any standard of measuring musical SPL levels, the Center has opted to: a) eliminate low-frequency content as a factor in the measurement, and b), monitor levels in realtime to assure contemporaneous compliance. Since we sample a relatively small segment within the range of audio frequencies, the resulting decibel (dB) figure cited in our contract is often misconstrued when compared to more common broadband SPL levels.

To reiterate, the limit is 85 dB SPL measured in any of the seven 1/3-octave bandwidths between, and including, 1,000 to 4,000 Hz, monitored on a 1/3-octave realtime analyzer, slow integration, flat response, 3 dB/step. Levels are sampled approx. 60 ft. (halfway at floor level) from plaster line. While 85 dB may seem extreme at first glance, be aware that broadband levels have ranged between 95-102 dB SPL, depending on spectral (frequency) content, without exceeding our particular limits.

Allowances will normally be made for short-term crescendos and occasional peaks. However, toleration of such overages will be directly related to the degree of dynamic variation over the course of the event, as well as the degree of responsiveness exhibited by the artist and/or technicians when requested to comply. The artist's staff will be notified and given the opportunity to comply before the initial process of documentation commences.

Financial incentive to comply is provided in the following manner: With the first violation, an assessment of two percent (2%) of the gross ticket sales is forfeited. Each subsequent occurrence thereafter results in the assessment of an additional one percent (1%) of the gross ticket sales. If warranted, violations can be gathered and documented at the rate of approximately one per minute.

By far, the most problematic situation has proven to be high stage monitor levels. It is not uncommon for the initial stage level to be acoustically coupled into the hall at levels close to the above limit, leaving little or no room for the main sound system to operate effectively. In those cases when fidelity for the audience was considered paramount, reducing the stage monitor level has been the most effective way of obtaining that goal.

When approached by the artist in a cooperative manner, ours has proven to be a realistic policy in terms of avoiding patron complaints without sacrificing perceived energy levels. With the many positive experiences we anticipate on having, we have decided to validate the policy to such a degree that exceptions cannot be considered.

Hopefully, this document has clearly defined the Center's goal of maintaining a pleasant entertainment environment. For further information please contact the Executive Director.