



Brent Dannen

As executive director, audio, for VER, Brent Dannen is helping the company expand its already broad portfolio. He talks to *LSA* about his roots in recording and what makes his customers happy.

Lighting&Sound America: How did you get started in the industry?

Brent Dannen: I played in rock bands when I was a kid, and, in the late '80s, I got an assistant job in a recording studio in Dallas called Planet Dallas. I got to mix local bands, and fell in love with mixing sound. Being a musician, understanding the importance of great sound, just something about mixing a band through a PA, the crowd, the energy—there's something about that I really love. It started as a great way to make money while I was playing in bands, but I ended up leaning more in that direction—and being in a band is kind of a long shot!

LSA: How did you end up at VER?

BD: I worked for a local sound company called Dallas Backup for a couple of years, and mixed various bands as they were coming up. One of them was Garth Brooks. I was fortunate to work for him all through the '90s. Then I worked with other bands, like Jane's Addiction, Faith Hill, Stained, The Stone Roses, Luis Miguel, and Puddle of Mudd. In 2005, I decided to get off the road, wanting to spend time with my family; that's when I started doing mobile recording stuff around Los Angeles. I took a job at Center Staging, managing the audio department; and then I was studio manager for about nine years. Ralph Mastrangelo had started the tour sound division for VER, so that's what got me interested. Ralph and I go way back, and being part of building a great sound company sounded like a good opportunity.

LSA: How would you explain the rapid growth of VER's audio department?

BD: VER has had an audio department for quite a while, a pretty good foundation. But I think the recent rapid growth is probably three things: First, the vision to build a great

sound company rather than just a department. That's what sold me on this, too, because I believe in that vision.

Second, the support of our CEO, Steve Hankin. We've got the resources and latitude to do what's best for our clients. And, lastly, everybody we've hired has a passion for doing sound. We go to work every day excited about what we do and committed to being the best sound company.

LSA: What do customers look for in a sound company?

BD: When they get a crew from us, they get great guys who are very knowledgeable. With our level of expertise, we can rival anybody. They also get great equipment that's well-maintained and packaged properly. We give a lot of training and put a lot of resources into our people. Customers see that we actually care. It's not just about an invoice at the end of the day. We've secured quite a few tours recently—Green Day, Twenty One Pilots, Justin Bieber, One Republic, Journey—and we're becoming a key player in the broadcast market as well, doing work for ESPN, Fox Sports, and others. It's January, so we're supposed to be slow, but we're not! Amid many other shows, we just did the Rose Parade. We provided the PA, broadcast, RF, and intercom systems. Down the street, at the Tournament of Roses house, we had another system set up and tied to the main system by integrating a combination of fiber converters and the city's fiber infrastructure to send signal back and forth.

LSA: How would you sum up your career thus far?

BD: We're still relatively young and we're competing against the biggest sound companies in the world, so I think that says something about where we are. As far as myself, I had a very successful mixing career and now I'm super-fortunate to get the opportunity to build and manage an amazing company. I get to be a sound guy and businessman all at the same time. 📶