

Project Studio Acoustics

Solutions for better sounding rooms

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Housekeeping

- Please turn off cell phones
- · We have lots to cover!
- Please keep questions on track

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Introduction

- We WILL talk about the acoustics of project studios
- We will NOT talk about concert hall or church acoustics
- Shortened version of AES T3 and T5 Tutorials
- 4:1 compression !!



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Project Studio Statistics

- 350,000 project studios worldwide
- 93% of A titles go through project studio at some phase of production
- In homes, in studios, in postproduction facilities
- Translation to the outside world at issue!

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2 Types of rooms

- Sound Production
 - Acoustics of room contribute to the character of the recorded sound
- Sound Reproduction
 - Acoustics of room provide a neutral environment to audition pre-recorded sound
 - Let's talk about this



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Introduction

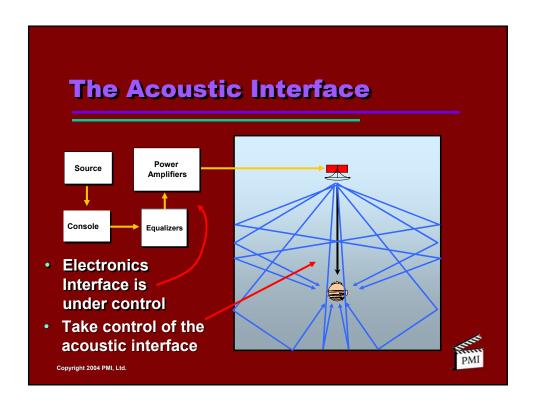
- Why talk about acoustics?
- Acoustics are audible!
- Contribute to over 50% of quality
- Acoustics are fixable



What's Acoustics?

- It's about the speaker/room/listener interface
- It's what separates "Major" studios from "Project" studios
- It's today's key issue!





Warning!

Room acoustics will mess you up!

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Acoustical Issues

- 1. Room reflections
- 2. Room echoes
- 3. Reverberation time
- 5. Standing waves
- 6. Rattles
- 7. Background noise
- 8. Sound Isolation





Acoustic

The Design Process

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The Design Process

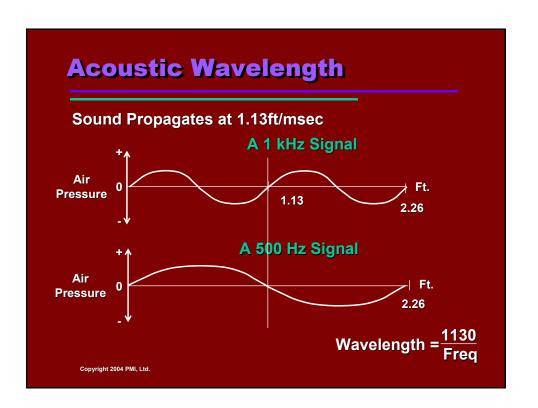
- 1. Dimension the room
- 2. Sound isolation
- 3. Noise control
- 4. Vibration control
- 5. Model decay time
- 6. Determine absorption area
- 7. Determine diffusion area
- 8. Determine treatment locations
- 9. Treat echoes
- 10. Place listener
- 11. Place sound system
- 12. Tune it all



... But First a Bit of Theory

- Sound is
 - Vibrating air
 - Changing pressure
 - Perceived by our ear-brain
 - Frequency of pressure changes determines pitch







Room Dimensioning

Standing Waves

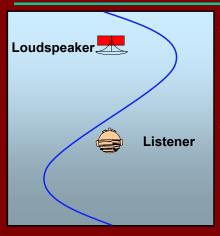
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Room Dimensioning

- How much room do you have?
 - I cant help you!
- Standing waves
 - I can help!

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Standing Waves a.k.a. Room Modes



- Standing waves happen when room dimension is equal to sound wavelength
- Also at 0.5, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, etc. times wavelength

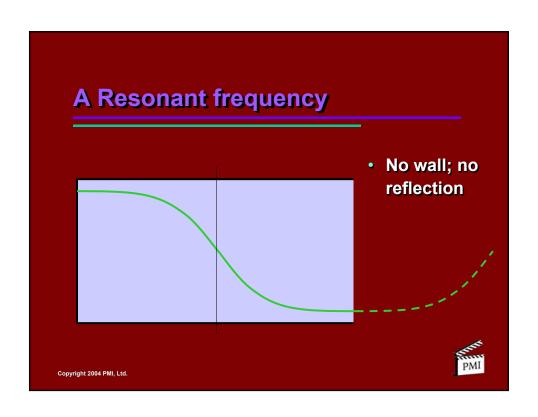


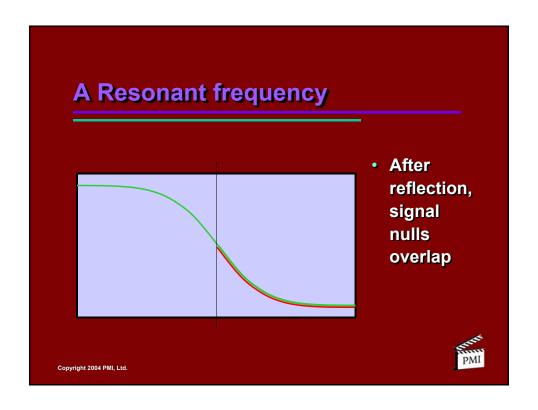
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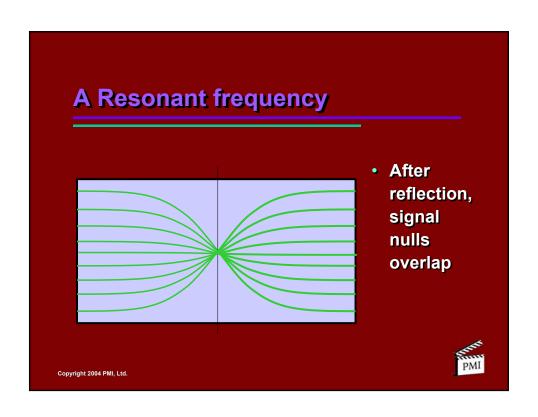
Standing Waves

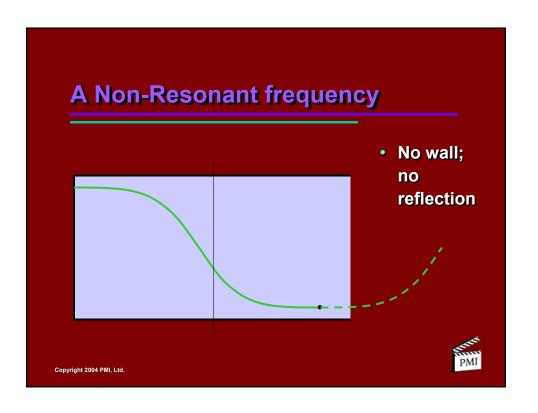
- Standing waves cause
 - Resonances
 - Uneven frequency response
 - Poor bass impact
 - Different bass at each seat
 - Common problems are in the 30 Hz to
 150 Hz range

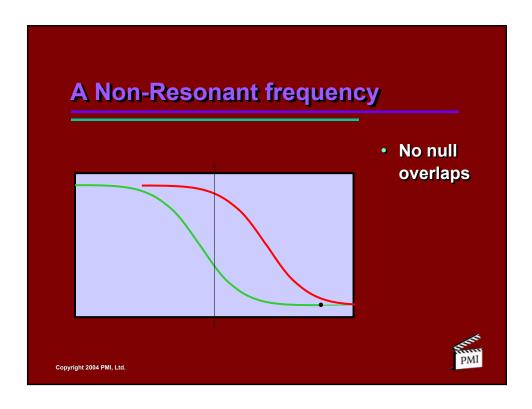












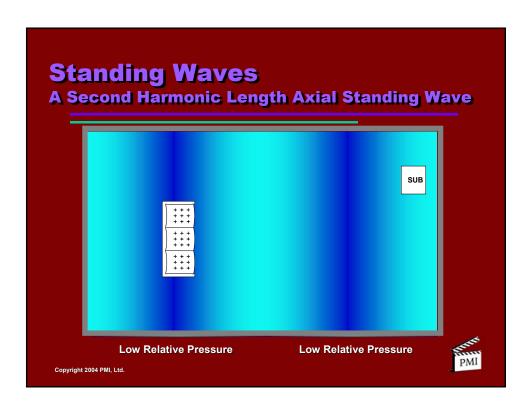
Standing Waves

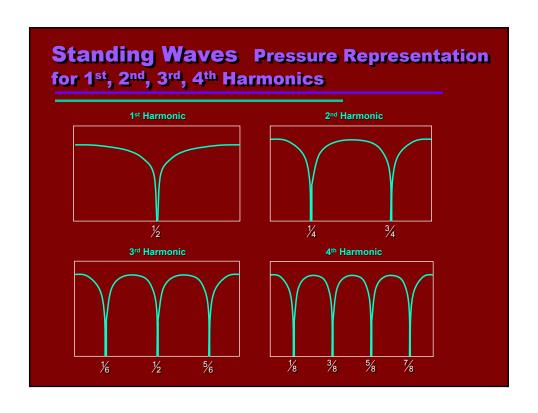
- Standing waves are a product of the room dimensions
 - All rooms will have some standing waves
 - Resonance overlaps are the result of the ratio of the room dimensions
- Intensity of room modes is determined by the wall density and stiffness

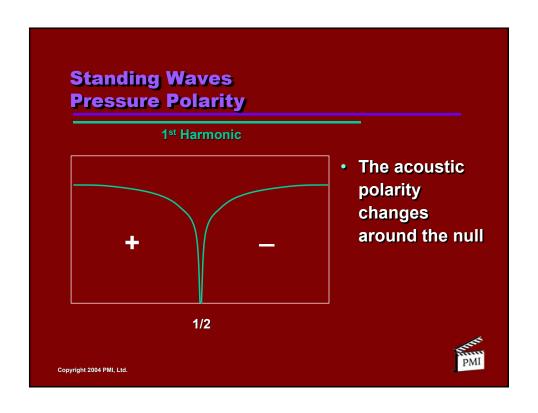
Standing Waves (continued)

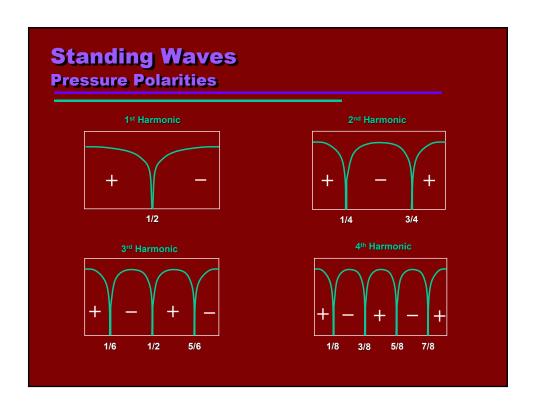
- Standing wave modes are
 - Axial The most important ones
 - · Between two opposite walls
 - Tangential Not important
 - · Between two pairs of walls
 - Oblique Not important
 - Between all room surfaces

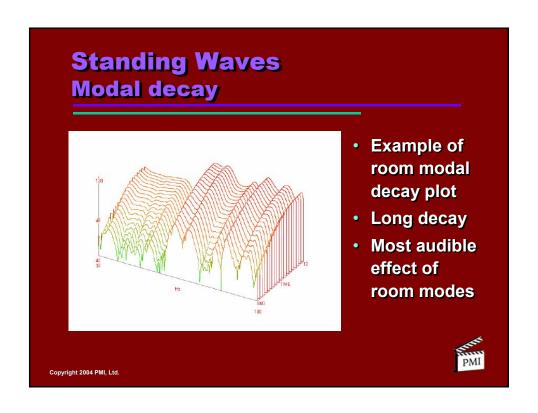












Ways to Deal With Standing Waves (Room Modes Can Never Be Eliminated)

- Change one or more dimensions
 - Minimizes resonance pile-ups
 - Aim for even modal distribution (>5% difference)
- Move subwoofer location
 - Drive mode out-of-phase to reduce relative amplitude
- Use bass absorption or absorptive walls
- Move seating location
 - Moves the listener out of peaks and dips
- Equalize

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Standing Waves Resonance Frequencies

Equation:

F = n1130/2D (in ft)

F = n345/2D (in m)

Where F is frequency n is the harmonic D is the distance between walls



Solutions to Standing Waves Room Dimensions

- Determine room dimensions
- Determine modes (F=n1130/2d)
- Find modal overlaps
- Locate dips for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th
 harmonics

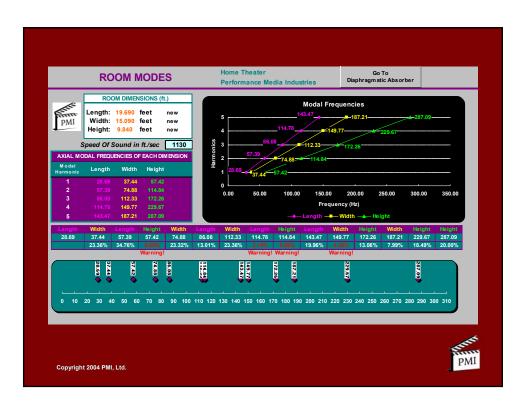
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Solutions to Standing Waves Room Dimensions (continued)

- Calculation programs
 - RPG Room Optimizer
 - CARA
 - THX Room Mode Calc
 - Stereophile Guide to Home Theatre
 - PMI modeling program

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Solutions to Standing Waves Room Dimensions

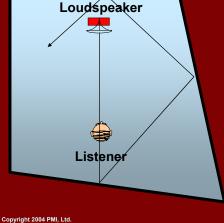
- For room dimensions that are "useable" this guideline is handy
- 1.1w/h ≤ I/h ≤ 4.5 w/h 4 and w < 3h and I < 3h
- Where I = length, w = width, and h = height
- I, w, and h which are within ±5% of integer values should be avoided

Source: Robert Walker, BBC, "EBU Technical Bulletin" 3276-E





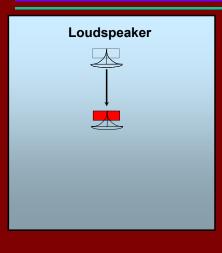
Solutions to Standing Waves Room Shapes • Complicates Acoustic



- Complicates Acoustic modeling and computations
- Doesn't get rid of standing waves or reflections
- Not recommended



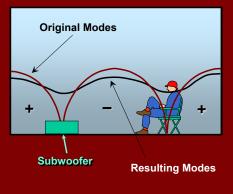
Solutions to Standing Waves Subwoofer and Speaker Placement



 Driving room standing waves in cancellation areas can improve response



Solutions to Standing Waves Placement — 1 Subwoofer

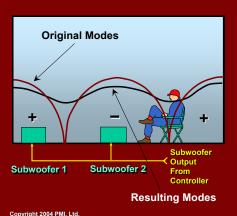


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- How to improve a 2nd order standing wave
 - The subwoofer drives the + and areas equally, resulting in reduction of resonance

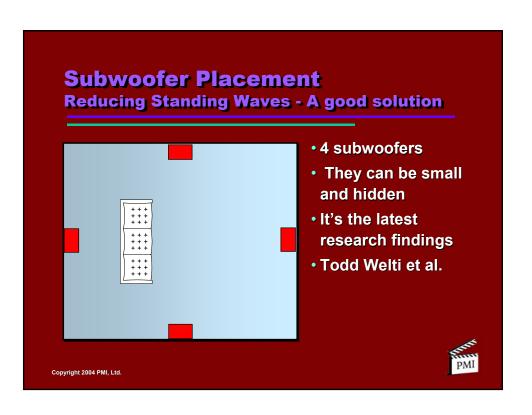


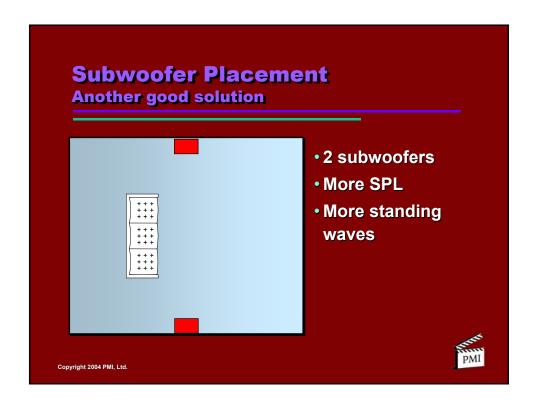
Solutions to Standing Waves Placement — 2 Subwoofers



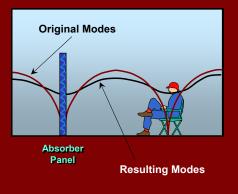
- Improving a 2nd order standing wave
 - Connect the 2 subwoofers together as "in-phase"
 - The 2 subwoofers drive the + and - areas equally, resulting in reduction of resonance
 - Experiment a lot







Solutions to Standing Waves "Fuzz" Absorption at Standing Wave

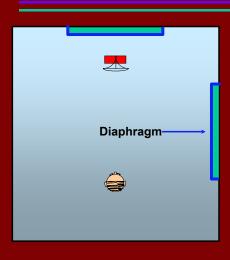


- Place absorber panel at null (high velocity, low pressure area)
- PV = nRT!



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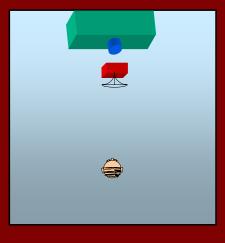
Solutions to Standing Waves Diaphragmatic Absorption



- Absorber units are resonating material tuned to problem frequencies
- Absorber box is filled with "fuzz"
- Works up to 150Hz
- Design of bass absorber is complex — Use an acoustical consultant



Solutions to Standing Waves Helmholtz Absorption



- Helmholtz units are tuned to problem frequency
- Absorber box is filled with fuzz
- Works down to 80Hz
- Design of Helmholtz absorber is extremely complex



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Solutions to Standing Waves The SpringTrap



- Combination
 Pistonic resonator
 and Helmholtz
 absorber
- F₀ determined by
 Mass Spring Air
- Reliable and predictable



Solutions to Standing Waves The SpringTrap



- Combination
 Pistonic resonator
 and Helmholtz
 absorber
- F₀ determined by
 Mass Spring Air



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Solutions to Standing Waves The SpringTrap



- Combination
 Pistonic resonator
 and Helmholtz
 absorber
- F₀ determined by
 Mass Spring Air

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Solutions to Standing Waves The SpringTrap



- Front panel suspended on springs
- Port on bottom of cabinet



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Solutions to Standing Waves The SpringTrap



 Mineral wool inside cavity to widen resonance



Solutions to Standing Waves The SpringTrap



- Second chamber resonating port on bottom of cabinet
- Port extends up to middle of cabinet
- Optimized by PAM (Whise / Huon Labs)



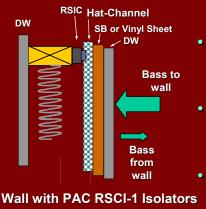
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Solutions to Standing Waves The SpringTrap

- Two fundamental equations
- Ported resonant enclosure:
 - $F = (c/2pi)(A/L'V)^{1/2}$
- Spring loaded panel resonance:
 - $F = (1/2pi)(k/m)^{1/2}$
- Paper presented at AES 114th Convention, Amsterdam, March 2003
- Patent Pending

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Solutions to Standing Waves Resilient Walls

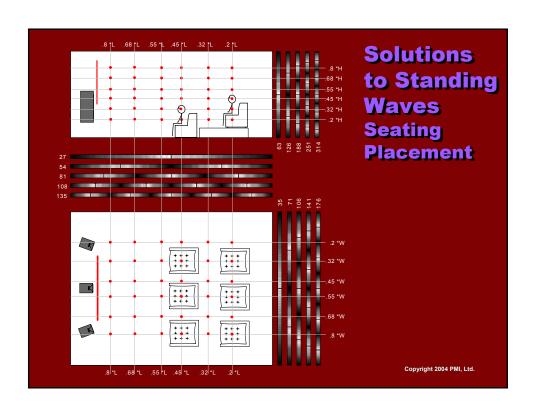


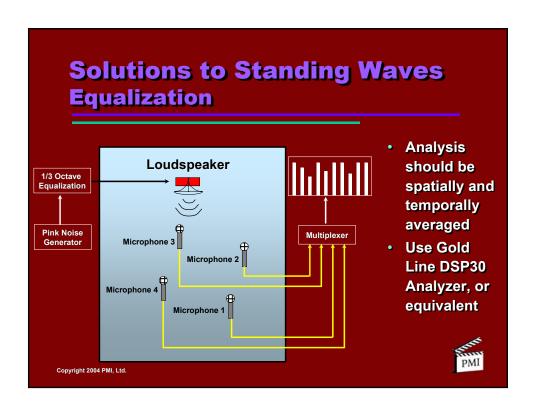
- Resilient walls don't reflect bass well
- Sound energy is absorbed by the PAC RSIC rubber isolator
- Add Soundboard or Loaded Vinyl to spread the resonance frequency
- You get isolation too!

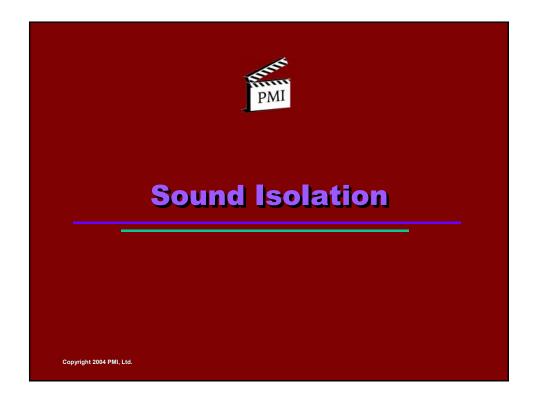


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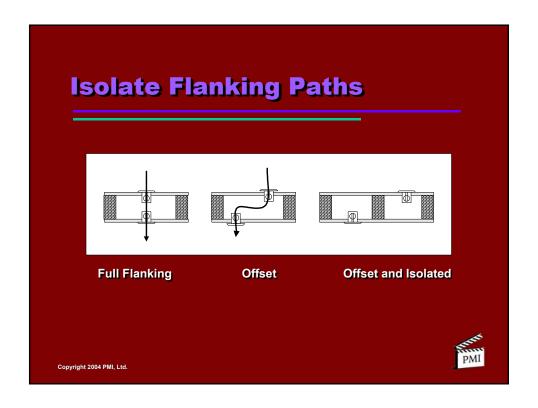


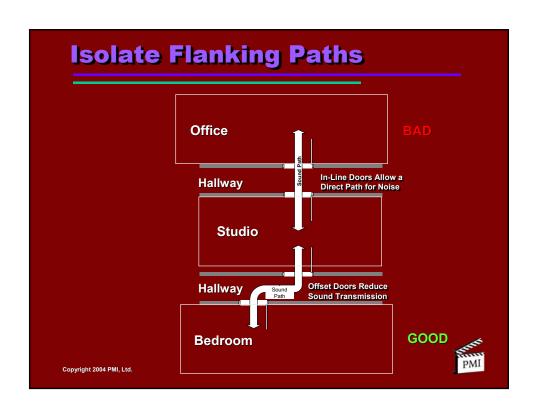


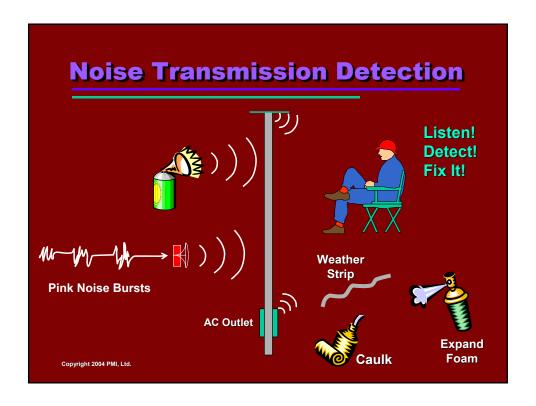
Sound Isolation – 2 processes

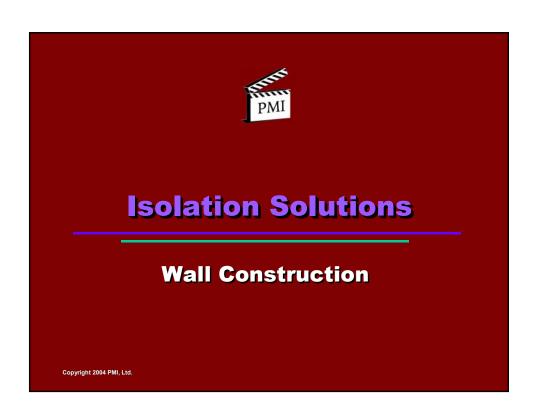
- Sound leakage
 - Isolate doors, windows, and plumbing
 - Isolate, seal and caulk all leakage paths
- Mechanical Transmission
 - Special wall structures
 - Floating floor
 - Floating ceiling

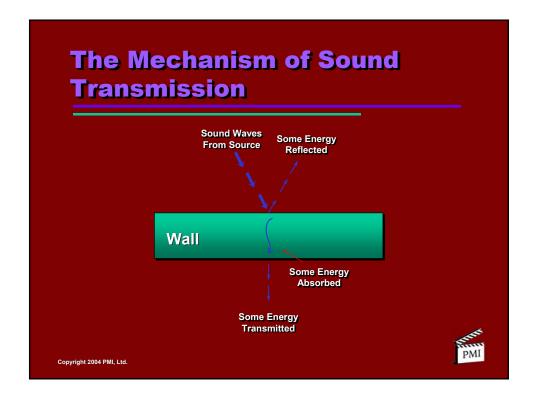


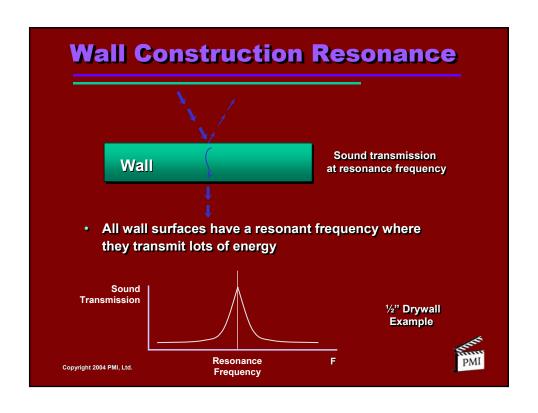


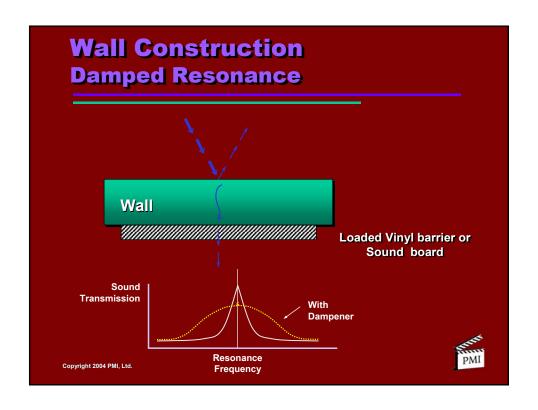


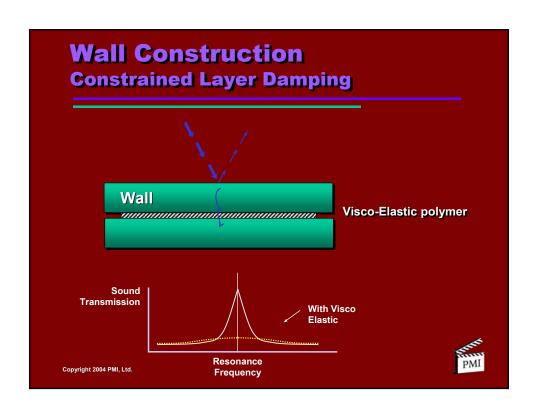


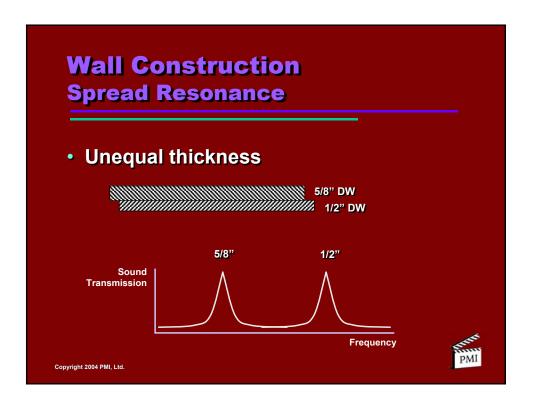








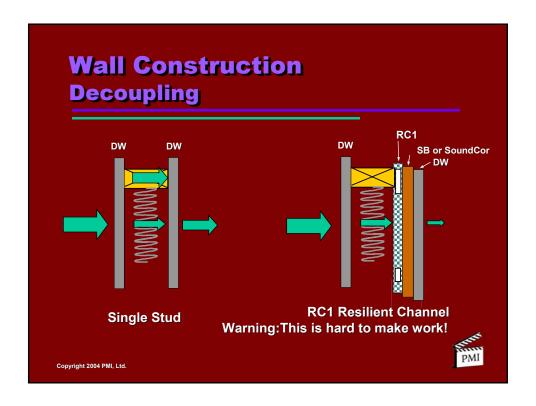


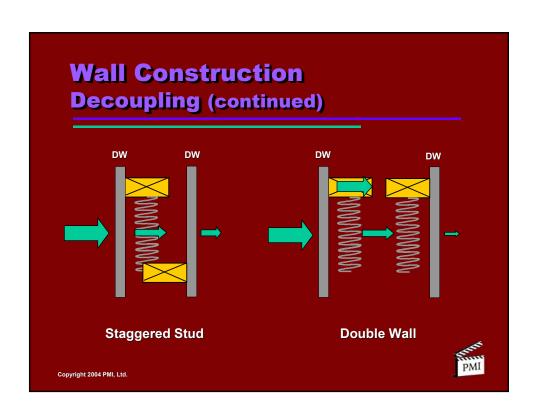


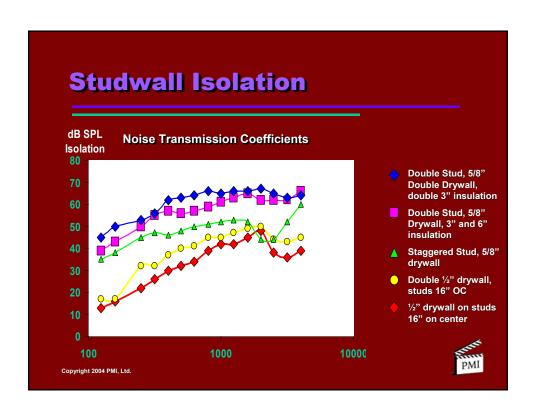
Isolation Strategies

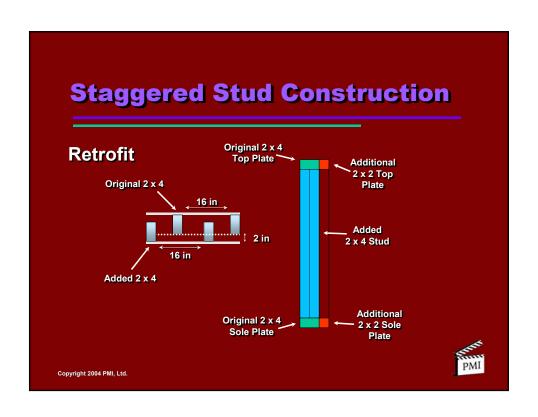
- More Mass
- Damp resonance
- Decouple
- Larger airgap

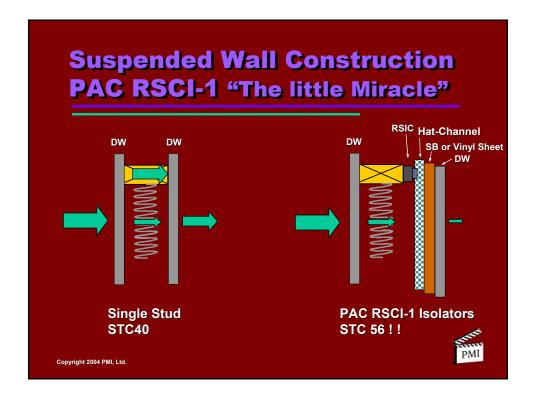


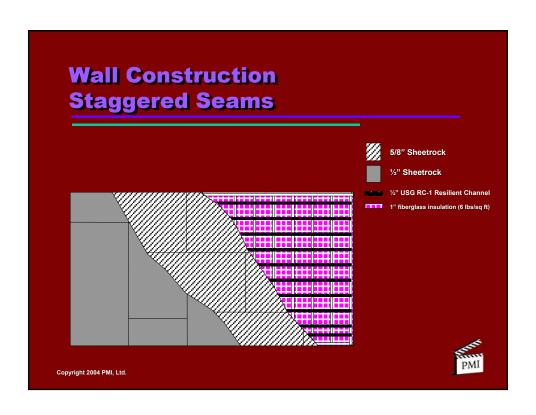


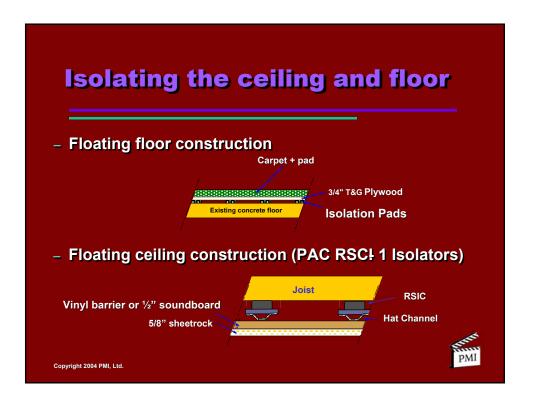














Background Noise

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Background Noise

- Interferes with loudness perception
- Masks low level signals and detail
- Transient noise is distracting

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Sources of Background Noise

- Local sources
 - HVAC
 - Plumbing
 - Fans
 - Pumps/Compressors
 - Washer/Dryers
 - Garage door openers
 - Projectors

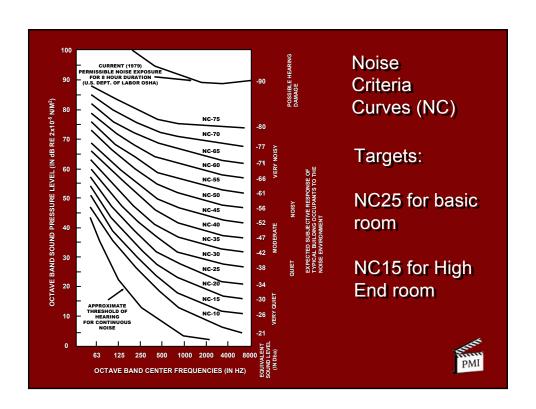
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Sources of Background Noise (continued)

- External sources
 - Traffic
 - Airplanes
 - Wind
 - Neighbors





Measuring Background Noise

- Use spectrum analyzer
- Use a low noise microphone
- Take a time and space average
- Use NC weighting
- Plug your ears, wait, unplug and listen
 - Use Earplugs, or fingers

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Solutions to Background Noise

- Large air ducts for lower air velocity
- Longer ducts with several turns
- Plenum silencers
- Lined ductwork
- "Whistle Free" air grilles
- Isolate motors on suspension or move
- Completely seal windows, doors, etc.



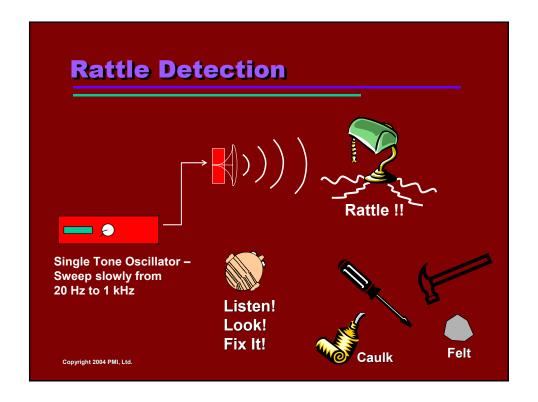
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Background Noise Summary

- Background noise degrades dynamic range, detail clarity, and intelligibility
- Noise can be detected with test instruments or earplugs and ears
- Treatments include seals, better walls, slower air, quieter air handlers, etc.

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Rattles (continued)

- Method: use slow varying frequency sweep
- Check
 - Furniture Walls and Doors
 - Glass SurfacesFixtures
 - Track LightsHVAC Ducts and Vents
 - Hung PicturesVentilation System

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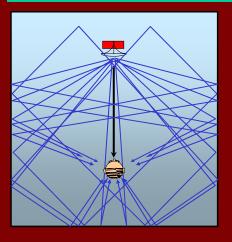
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Decay Time

Aka Reverberation

Reverberation



- Reverberation is the result of multiple reflections
- Decay time and spectrum have to be just right

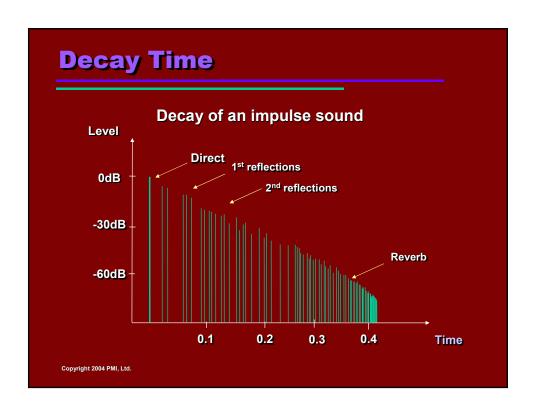


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Reverberation

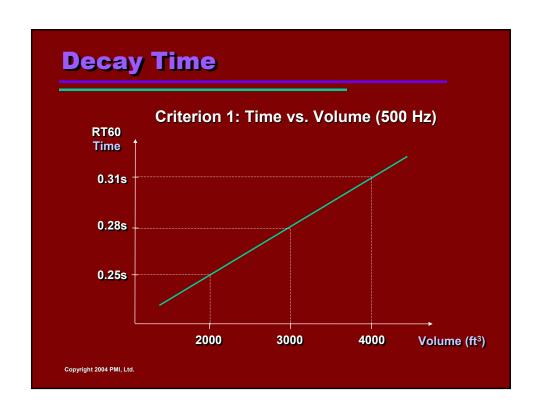
- When the sound has bounced around the room several times
- No net direction or time cues remain
- Small room reflections die out before complete reverberation is achieved
- We call it decay time

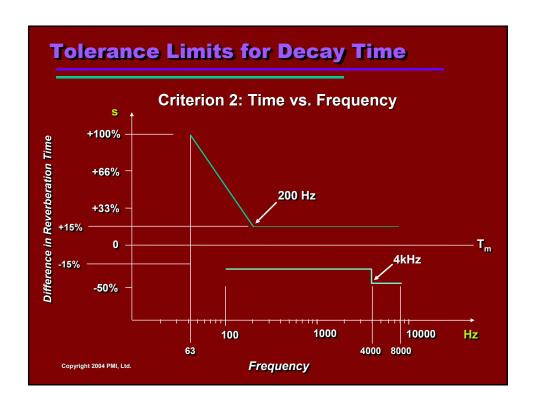




Decay Guidelines

- Decay time should be .2 to .4 seconds
- Research shows that most people like the same range of decay time
- $T_m = 0.3 (V/3532)^{1/3} \pm 15\%$ where V=room volume in ft³
- $T_m = 0.3 (V/100)^{1/3} \pm 15\%$ where V = room volume in m³
- Handy rule of thumb for project studios, look for ~25% absorptive wall area





Decay Time Getting it right

- Use the right amount of "frictional" absorption for the mids and highs
- Use the right amount of perforated panel bass absorption
- Calculate the amount with the Sabine, Eyring or Arau- Puchades equations
 - Know the absorption coefficient of materials
 - Be prepared to do lots of math

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Decay Time Getting it right

The Sabine equation: Good but old

$$RT60 = \frac{0.049V}{S_{total}a}$$

V is volume

S is absorption surface area a is absorption coefficient

The Eyring equation: Better and more recent

RT60 =
$$\frac{0.049V}{-S \ln(1-A)}$$

V is volume

S is total room surface area

A is area-weighted averaged absorption coefficient



Decay Time Getting it right

The Arau- Puchades equation: Best and latest

$$\mathsf{RT60} = \left[\frac{0.161 \mathsf{V}}{-\mathsf{S} \, \ln(1 - \overline{\alpha}_{\mathsf{x}})} \right]^{\mathsf{x/s}} \, \, \left[\frac{0.161 \mathsf{V}}{-\mathsf{S} \, \ln(1 - \overline{\alpha}_{\mathsf{y}})} \right]^{\mathsf{y/s}} \, \, \, \left[\frac{0.161 \mathsf{V}}{-\mathsf{S} \, \ln(1 - \overline{\alpha}_{\mathsf{z}})} \right]^{\mathsf{z/s}}$$

V is volume

S is total room surface area

 $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ is area-weighted averaged absorption coefficient for each wall

x is area of Left +Right walls

y is area of Front + Rear walls

z is area of Floor + Ceiling



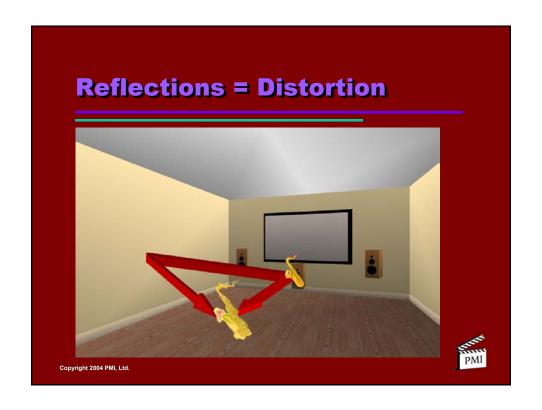
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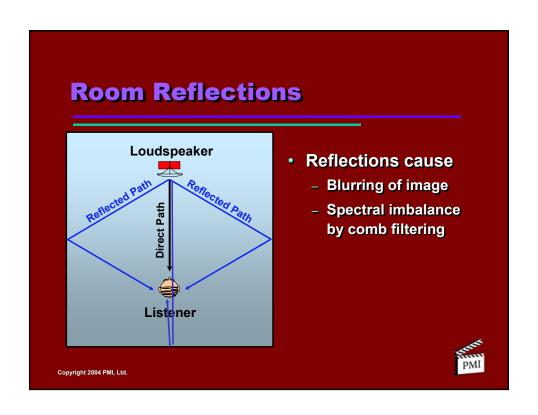
Decay Time Getting it right

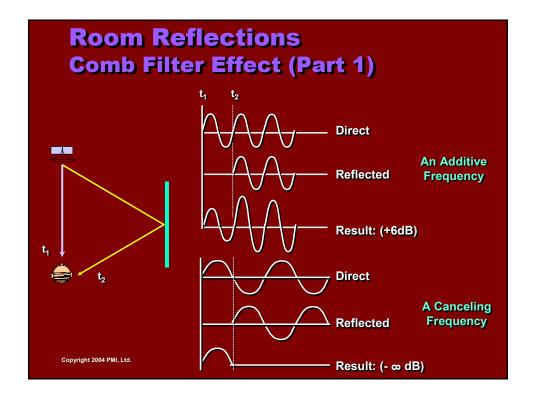
- Spread absorption materials around the room surfaces
- Also use diffusion to smooth out decay
- Diffusion enhances absorption effectiveness

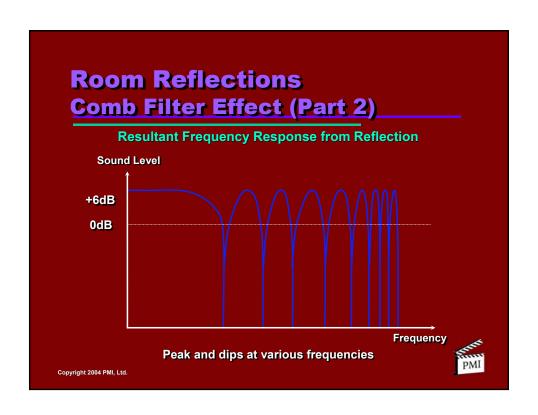


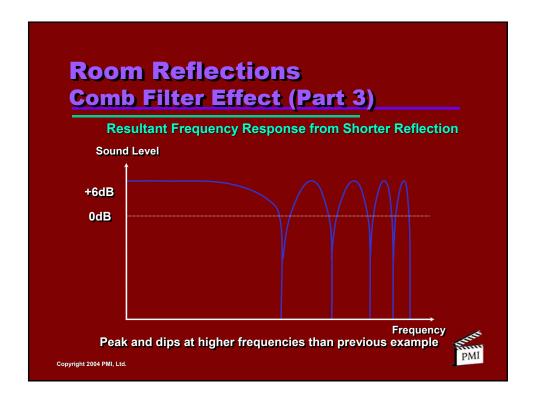




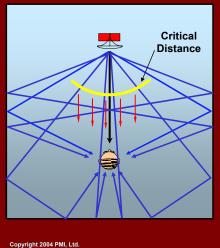








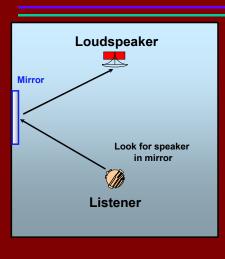
Room Reflections Did you Know?!



- At main seat you listen to more reflected sound than direct!
- "Critical Distance" is where direct sound and reflected sound energy are equalabout 4 feet in untreated rooms
- Need to move Critical Distance closer to listener



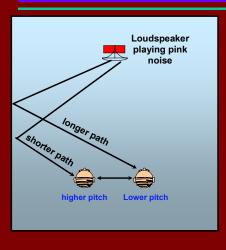
Room Reflections Detection Methods



- Mirror
 - Move a mirror up and down side wall and find location where speaker is visible
 - This could be an offending reflection point



Room Reflections Detection Methods (continued)

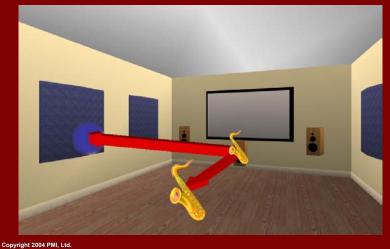


- Changing comb filters
 - Play pink noise from speaker
 - Move head location left-to-right
 - Listen for changing comb filters, or "phasiness"



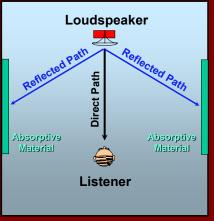
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Solutions to Room Reflections Absorption



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Solutions to Room Reflections Absorption



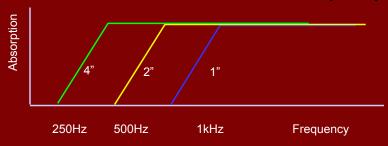
- Absorptive materials
 - Fiberglass
 - Dense foam
 - Draperies
 - Stuffed chairs
- "Scrub" off acoustic energy through friction
- Treat the ceiling too!



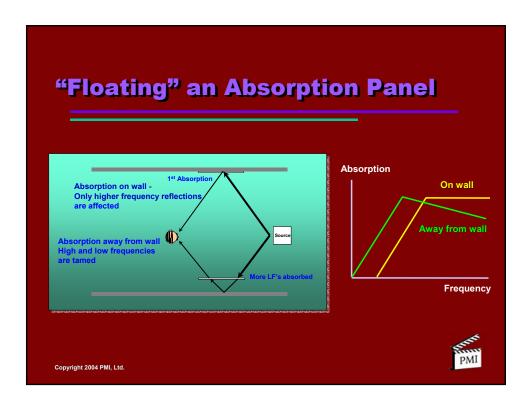
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Acoustical Treatments Absorption Thickness

- 1" Panels work down to 1kHz
- 2" Panels work down to 500Hz (better)
- 4" Panels work down to 250Hz (best)







Acoustical Treatments Notes on Absorption

- Don't "over absorb"
 - Dead rooms sound odd
 - Target sound reflection decay time:
 0.3s
 - 25% coverage of wall surface

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Acoustical Treatments Notes on Draperies

- Draperies are uneven acoustical absorbers
- Performance affected by fabric weight, pleat number, distance from boundary
- At least 3" air gap
- Velour mass 32 ounces per lineal yard
- 100% fullness

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Low Frequency Reflections

Placing Speakers

Boundary EffectsLoudspeaker/ Room Interactions

- Reflection issues at low frequencies are called "boundary effects"
- Peaks and dips in bass/mid frequencies depend on speaker location
- Low frequencies are hard to absorb

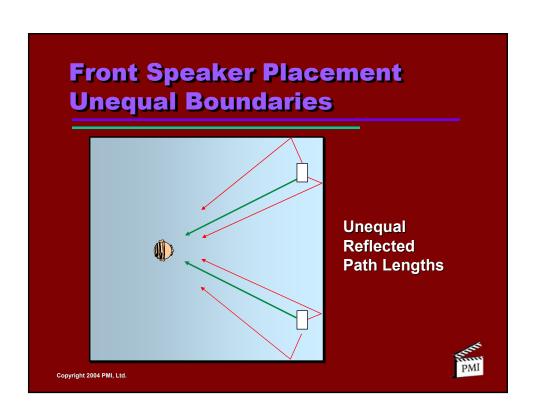
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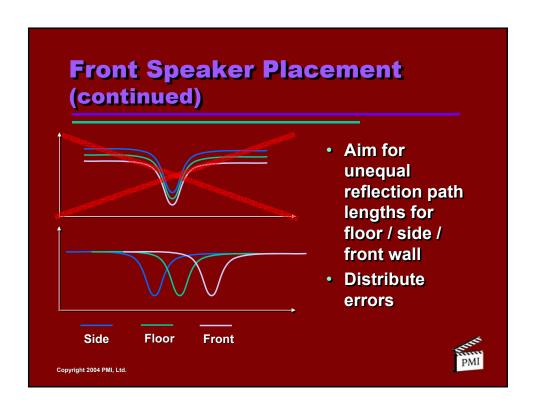
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Low Frequency Reflections Strategies

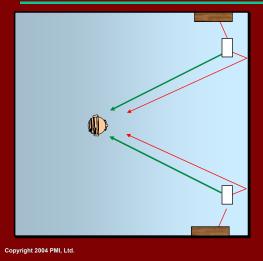
- First reduce peak/dip errors through proper placement
- "Resistive" Absorbers too thick
- Use Helmholtz and Diaphragm methods
- Equalize







Solutions to LF Reflections Bass Absorption



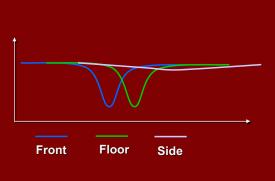
- Use Perforated wood surface on box
- Tuning equation:

$$\boldsymbol{f}_0 = 200 \sqrt{\frac{p}{(d)(t)}}$$

 f_0 is frequency p is perforation percentage t is hole length d is air space depth

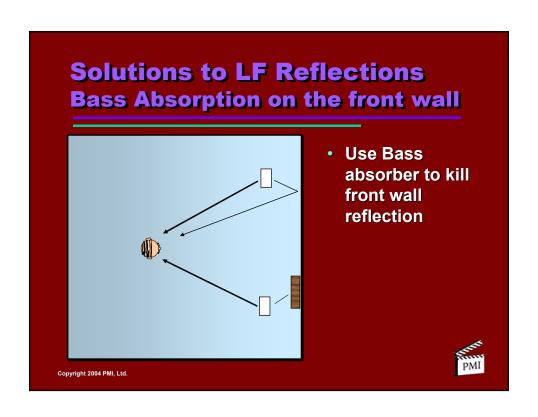


Solutions to LF Reflections Bass Absorption



- With Bass absorber, Side wall response is smoother
- The remaining error can be equalized
- Can also use Bass absorbers on front wall







Boundary Effects

- Evaluation
 - Computer predictions
 - CARA
 - · RPG Room optimizer
 - Use circulating pink noise and listen for timbral variations
 - Use pink noise and RTA to measure spectral variations

- Correction
 - Avoid multiple equal boundary distances
 - Change speaker position
 - Match boundary conditions for the front speakers
 - Flush mount speakers
 - Use low frequency absorption
 - Equalize



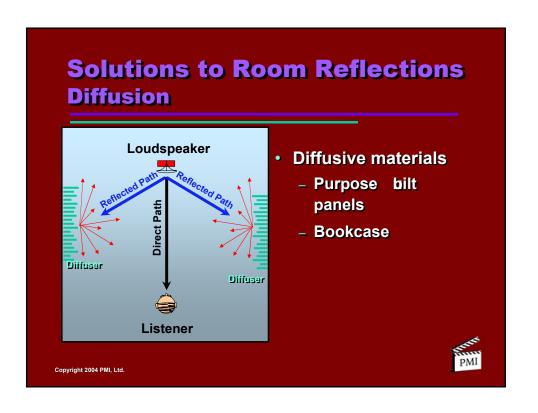
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Reflection Control

Diffusion





Acoustical Treatments Diffusion

- Need enough diffusion surface to "smooth out" the soundfield
- Balance diffusion and absorption
- Keep some liveness to the room

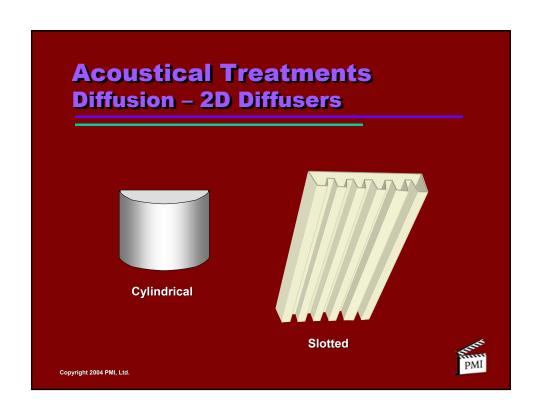
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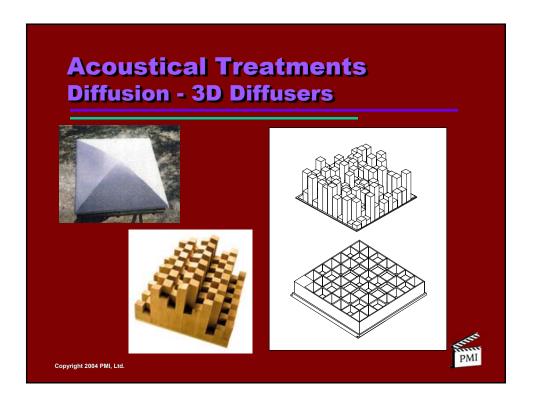
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Acoustical Treatments Diffusion types

- 2D diffusion redistributes incident sound to a plane
 - Use along front portion if side walls to diffuse front speakers
- 3D diffusion redistributes sound to a hemisphere
 - Use it towards the rear of room for surround speakers

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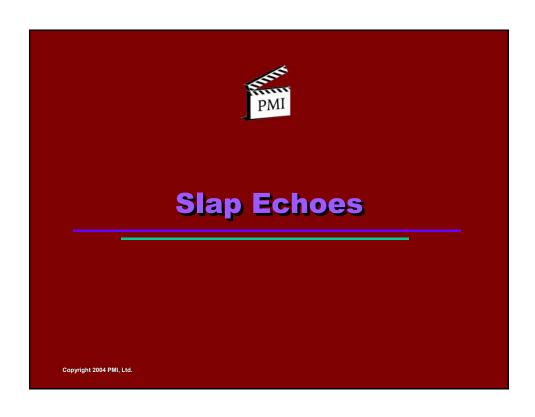




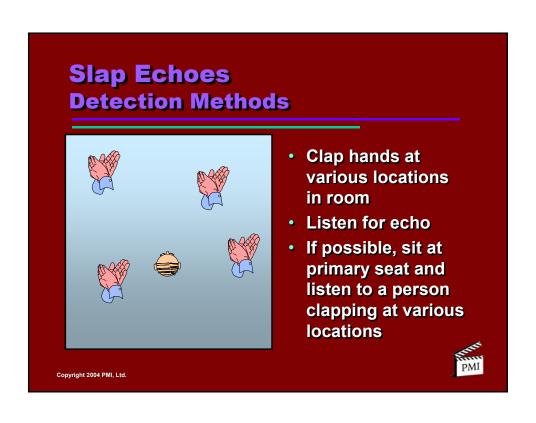
Acoustic Treatment Manufacturers

- StudioPanel
- RPG
- Acoustics First
- Kinetics Noise Control
- Auralex
- And many others!

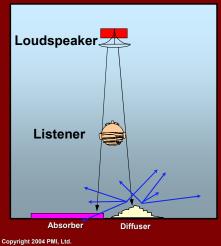




Slap Echoes Loudspeaker Listener • Echoes are • Repeated reflections between two parallel surfaces • Slap echoes cause • Bright, "zingy" sound • Interference with acoustic character of sound • Timbral changes



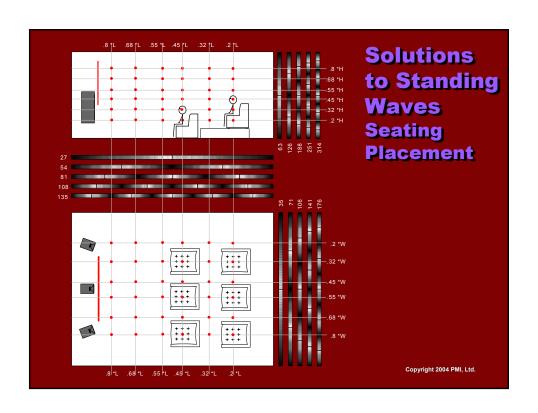
Solutions to Echoes Materials

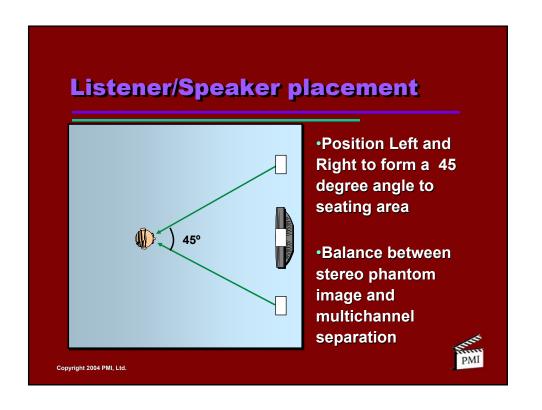


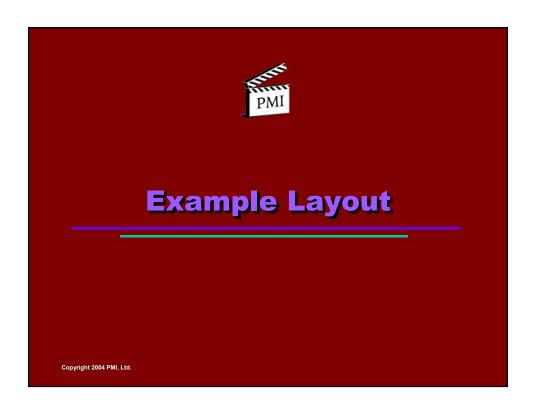
- Absorptive
 - Fiberglass panels
 - Foam panels
 - Drapes
- Diffusive
 - Diffuser panels
 - Bookcases
 - Furniture

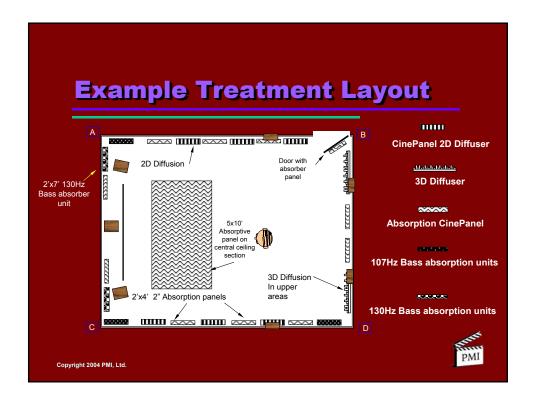


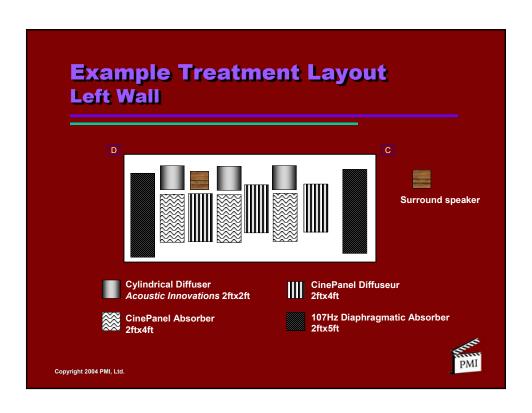


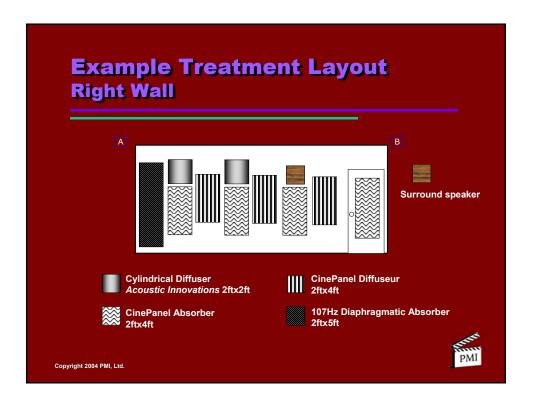


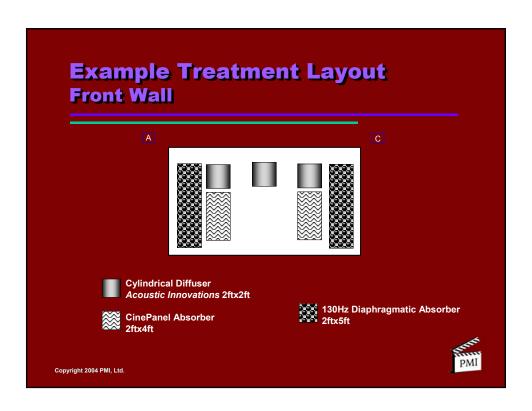


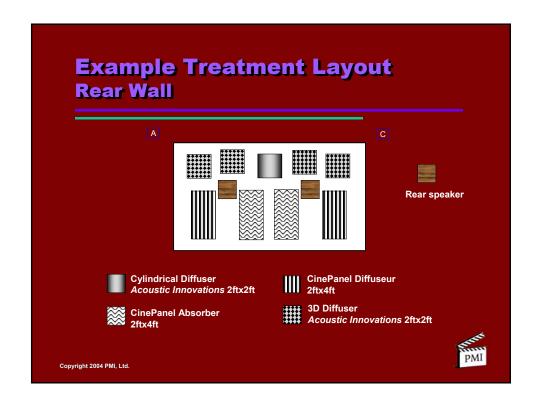


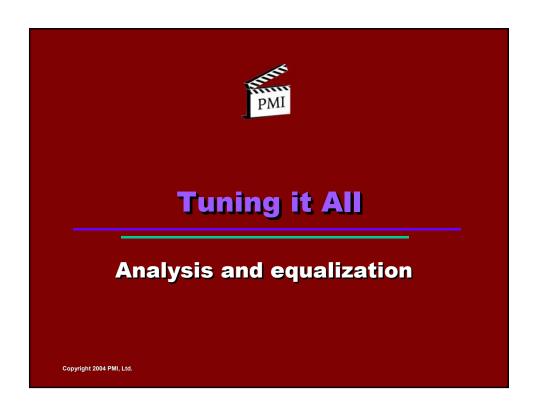


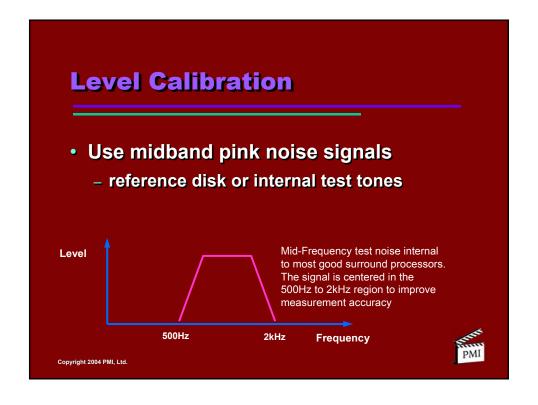


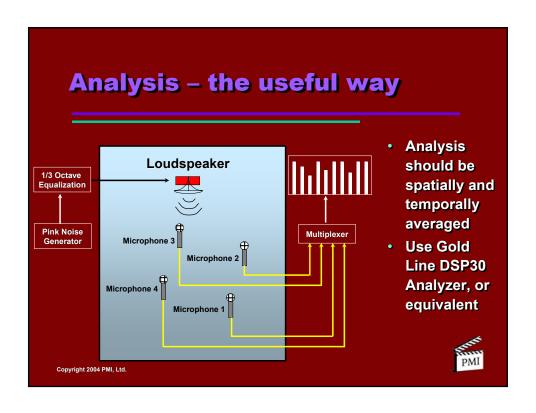


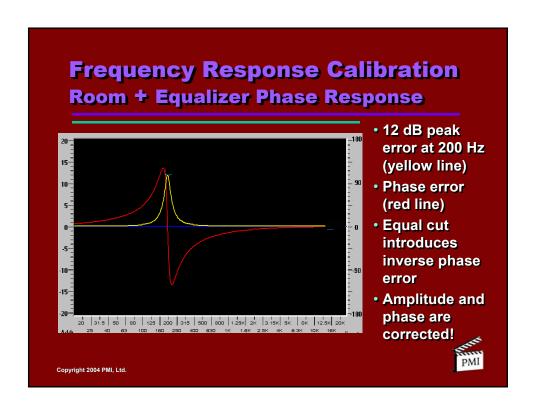








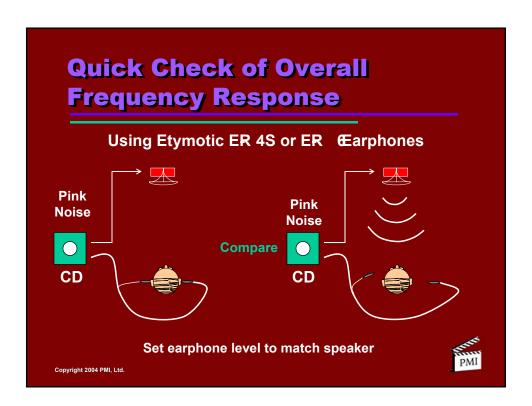




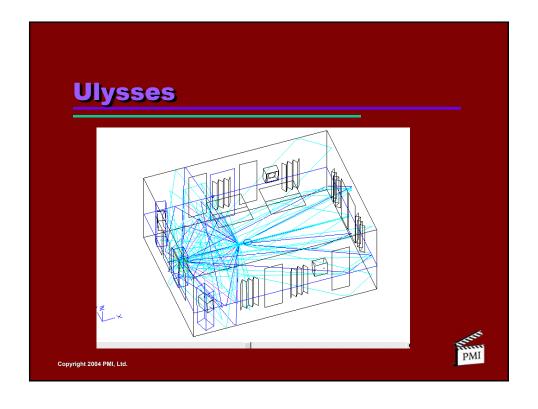
Equalization Requirements

- Pink noise source
 - 20 Hz–20 kHz, switchable to each channel before the crossover (5.1 Audio Toolkit)
- Real time analyzer
 - 20 second time averaging
 - The ability to average 4 or more readings from mic multiplexing
 - 1/12 octave resolution in low frequencies











Gold Line DSP30

- RTA
- 1/3, 1/6, 1/12th Octave
- Averaging
- NC
- RT60
- Integrated solution



TEF 2000

- RTA
- TEF
- MLSSA
- Log sweeps
- Phase measurements
- Many more

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Good Reading Materials

- Acoustics and Psychoacoustics, Howard, David M., Angus, James, Focal Press, 1996, ISBN 0 240 51482 9
- Audio Engineering Handbook, Benson, K. Blair ed. McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988
- <u>Building a Recording Studio</u>, Cooper, Jeff, Synergy Group, Inc., Los Angeles. To order call 1-800-468-4322
- The Master Handbook of Acoustics, Everest, F. Alton, TAB Books, Division of McGraw-Hill Inc., Blue Ridge Summit, PA. To order call 1-800-468-4322
- Project Studios, P. Newell, Focal Press, ISBN 0 240 51573 0
- <u>Room Acoustics</u>, Kuttruff, Heinrich, Applied Science Publishers 1973/1991



Summary

- Room acoustics affect any audio system
- Look out for reflections, echoes, boundaries, reverberation, standing waves, rattles, noise, and sound isolation
- With basic science and care you too can tame room acoustics.
- · Thanks for listening,

Anthony Grimani



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