

WESTCHESTER

ARTS & CULTURE

This Legendary Acoustic Designer Brought Breathtaking Sound to Life at the Bedford Playhouse

John Storyk, known for designing studios for legends like Jimi Hendrix and Jay-Z, brought his expertise to this community theater.

BY JONATHAN ORTIZ, 8/16/2019

The Bedford Playhouse

Whether the work week is getting you down or you just need a brief break from reality, movies are an ideal escape. They pull you into a world unhindered by the troubles of our own, into a story that can be exciting, mind-opening, or life-changing all together. But without the proper sound, the experience can easily fall flat.

For most, sound quality isn't the first thing you think of when it comes to movies. But, imagine being sucked into a story, pulled to the edge of your seat, only to have the dialogue cut out at key moments, or suspenseful music practically inaudible. You would notice, right?

Now, imagine a cinematic experience on the complete opposite side of the spectrum — an experience so full and absorbing that you could hear everything the creators intended, even sounds coming from behind and above you. That's

the experience legendary acoustic designer John Storyk wanted to create at the Bedford Playhouse.



John Storyk

“The magic of movies is the audio. The audio is what makes the difference,” says Storyk. “Audio is everything.”

Storyk, to put it lightly, is a legend in the music recording industry. With more than 4,000 audio and video studio builds and consultations under his belt,

including Jimi Hendrix's Electric Ladyland and Jay-Z's Roc the Mic, Storyk's experience is testament to his expertise in sound design. So, when he was brought in during the Playhouse's \$6 million restoration to design the theater acoustics, expectations were high.

The final product undoubtedly exceeds those expectations. The Playhouse's three theatres, including the 167-seat Main Theater, the 40-seat "The Clive," and a flex-use theater and event space called "The Worby," are all Dolby Atmos certified — a covetable standard that assures the sound system can play Atmos-formatted audio tracks to their full capability.



To get technical, Dolby Atmos creates captivating audio in a three-dimensional space, allowing the listener to hear specific sounds from any direction the soundtrack creator intended, utilizing a movie theater's front, back, side, and overhead speakers to recreate a realistic environment. These days, most

blockbuster movie releases, like *Toy Story 4* and *Frozen 2*, utilize Dolby Atmos audio.

“If you want to be a Dolby-certified Atmos theater, you have to meet equipment specifications, and you have to meet acoustic specifications, quietness specifications,” explains Storyk. “You want that rating.”

Storyk’s knowledge of acoustics was an integral part of attaining Atmos certification. Sound-absorbing panels create a “dead’ environment in the theater, and expertly placed speakers, controlled by a “brain,” fill the room with astonishingly clear, rich, and detailed sound. “The magic is in the [speaker] placement, in the geometry of them and in the tuning,” explains Storyk.”



The acoustics are designed so that sound won’t even escape the theater it originates from; walking through the Playhouse you would never know anything was playing unless you walked into one of the screening rooms. It’s one of those

things you have to experience firsthand to believe, but it takes just one visit to understand the theater's acoustic capabilities brought to life by Storyk.

"This is basically an executive screening room. I'm not really sure if the community and even Westchester fully yet appreciates what is sitting here," says Storyk. "You could go to the best screening rooms in Hollywood, and it's not going to look or sound any better. This is as good as it gets."