

Soundproofing (I hate that word) a Room – How to do it WRONG...!

“...Why not..., everyone resists doing it right...!”

My name is Bill Wilkinson Jr., and I have been doing soundproofing (I hate that word) for 25-yrs. Our company has been doing soundproofing (I hate that word) for 35-yrs. and we are passionate about sound control!

That makes me really old and some would say more than a bit cranky! As the years go by I admit to getting crankier; some of it is caused by people’s preconceived notions and the misinformation that is ‘out there’ surrounding acoustics. Combine those problems with miss-attention to detail, shoddy workmanship and people not doing their homework – and I can get downright grumpy.

I just love it when a ‘rocket scientist’ gets me on the phone, and because they truly are intelligent they start to give me the line;

“...but my contractor said that...”

“...I read on line about this magic drywall...”

“...wouldn’t you say, all of this isn’t really necessary?...”

“...could we try?...”

No Damn it!

I will admit to having no idea about how to fling tons of steel into space with people on board and bring them back alive..., when it comes time for me to need that – I’ll shut up, step back and listen!

When it comes time that you need soundproofing (I hate that word) find a company with a good reputation and some history – then shut up, step back and listen...!

There’s that grumpy edge!

So I thought – instead of going on about best soundproofing (I hate that word) practices – which it seems at times, nobody wants to listen to. I would tell you how to do it WRONG! Why not... everyone resists doing it right!

Here goes.

- TOTALLY IGNORE SOUNDPROOFING (I hate that word) – IT WILL WORK OUT JUST FINE...!
Sometimes sticking my head in the sand is really the best thing. Why stress so many darn details. Things usually work out – don't they? As long as it looks good – then the '*significant other*' will be fine with it, right?
- DON'T WORRY ABOUT GETTING AIR-IN AND AIR-OUT OF THE ROOM...!
Heck, in between movies or takes we can just open the door and swoosh it back and forth for a minute.
Planning an incoming silencer for the ducting and an outgoing silencer or hood, is just too much trouble and it's going to slow down getting on with things!
- ASK A FRIEND OR IN-LAW ABOUT SOUNDPROOFING (I hate that word)
Your brother-in-law drywalled a basement once – a long time ago..., but is more than willing to share his take on soundproofing (I hate that word).
- WHILE BUILDING THE NEW WALLS AND CEILING – HARD CONNECT EVERYTHING...!
Got to make things solid, right? Hard connect the walls to the floor and the joist above. In fact the more fasteners the better, right! I don't need it to be perfect..., it just needs to be really well fastened,...right?
- DON'T LEARN WHAT A "GOLDEN ROOM RATIO" IS...!
Just build it as big as you can. Heck, round might be good, right!
- DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE DOOR...!
Hey, it'll be ok...! My '*significant other*' was thinking about double French doors. With all the walls and ceiling worked on, it should be ok, right?
No Bunky..., it won't. If this is a studio for live music, install double solid-core doors and professional seals and wipes (not some big box store product). If this is a home theater, install at minimum a solid-core door and again good seals and wipes.
You'll know when you've found the right door – because you'll need two guys to lift it...!
- BUY REALLY EXPENSIVE ELECTRONICS – DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE ACOUSTICS...!
The really shiny speakers and amplifiers and (stupid) exotic-metal cables should make up for the acoustic stuff, right?
Uhhh... no Bunky...! Even IF they are really good speakers, if you play them in a bad room = bad sound – PERIOD...!
Physics (as a science) doesn't care if you believe in it. SORRY...!

- ASK A DRYWALL CONTRACTOR...! HECK, BETTER STILL – ASK 2 OR 3.

You should be really screwed up by the time you get to any good information, and then, will tend not to believe anything from anyone...!

OK, I'm going to apologize up front here. I know this opinion is going to piss-off some people – I personally know quite a few contractors and 'drywall guys' that have actually taken the time to educate themselves on REAL soundproofing (I hate that word) construction methods & building practices. To you, my hat is off...! Thank you. But you are few and far between in our experience.

Acoustic myths and “...*don't make me learn new stuff...*” attitudes abound in the construction trades.

Most contractors generally actually WANT to do a good job, but I have seen a well-meaning drywall guys intentionally “shorting-out” (screwing up) the installation of resilient channel with screws in the wrong place – before the drywall was installed on the resilient channel. “...*the stuff (resilient channel) is too “springy” he said...*” OR, we've actually seen resilient channel installed upside-down many, many times...!

Don't get me started on tales about resilient channel and contractors...

Arrrggh...!

I had a genuinely confused (older, supposedly more experienced) contractor baffled because he could not understand how;

- after he had used 'soundproofing' (I hate that word) insulation batting, in-between the wall joists
- then put up the 'thick' drywall (is there another kind)
- then added 3/4-inch wood strapping on the face of the 1st layer of drywall to build it out
- then added another layer of drywall onto the strapping — (which created an empty 3/4-inch cavity between the layers of drywall).

He asked...

“...*Why is it (sound transmission) worse AFTER the 2nd layer of drywall was added...?*” “...*How could this be...?*”

My answer, “...*don't bother to learn about the “Triple Leaf Effect” that would be a waste of time...!*”

In his defense, acoustics gets a little bit gray, fuzzy and non-intuitive here.

- INSTALL ELECTRICAL PLUGS, BOXES AND SWITCHES AS YOU WOULD NORMALLY

“...*Geeez..., what's the big deal? So what I cut holes in the drywall for the duplex box...*”

Errr, this is the sound barrier you just so pains-takenly made perfect. “...*they're so small compared to the overall area...*” “...*Putty-Pad...? What the heck is a Putty-Pad...*”

- LISTEN TO THE “ONE TRICK PONY” COMPANY OR CONSULTANT

What the heck do I mean by this? Let’s say you talk to a company that sells Mass Loaded Vinyl (MLV).

You ask..., “...*what will be the right material for my floor application, you know – to help stop the transmission of footsteps and stuff through my floor to the suite below...?*”

The one trick pony company replies..., “...*Why this here Mass Loaded Vinyl is definitely the way to go...*”

You ask..., “...*well what about my ceiling – to block out the noise from the suite above me, what material should I use there...?*”

The one trick pony company replies..., “...*No Problemo...! this here Mass Loaded Vinyl is definitely the way to go...*”

Hmmm, I’m thinking no. One product will not do or solve everything. A reality check is needed if someone suggests that to you.

Don’t get me wrong – MLV is an important tool in our toolbox for certain applications but there are other products that have far surpassed it for acoustic (blocking) performance in walls and ceilings.

A quick note; MLV is MLV is MLV – Period...! Don’t let anyone blow smoke up your skirt about their “Heat rendering molecules” or that “NASA blah, blah makes their MLV special for them”.

BS. MLV is a vinyl substrate (PVC or EVA) that has been mixed together with a high-mass mineral like Barium that makes the vinyl very dense, thin and limp. No secret. No special formula.

Having said that, watch for under-weight MLV. How is it that a company can sell 1 lb. / sq. ft. MLV for quite a bit less than the rest of the market? Is it actually 0.8 lb. / sq. ft. MLV? Who checks? When 20% less product is being delivered – it’s easy to understand the price difference.

I could go on, but the above are some of my favorite pet peeve acoustic issues that I hear weekly if not daily. So remember, if you end up with a room that; does not function acoustically, leaks sound like a sieve, or your residential or commercial neighbors can hear every word you say through your common partition wall.

Then shame on you – you have not done your homework or have not spent money in the correct place to begin with. I’ll get off my (grumpy) soapbox now, thanks for reading.

Bill Wilkinson Jr.

(The grey haired guy putting in the acoustic isolation clips in out “Soundproofing a Room” YouTube video)

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P.S. Did I mention? I hate the word Soundproofing!