It Must Be Spring

Athough it was a very cool May, I knew that it was spring. I could tell because of all the resumes that flooded in - from everywhere.

It made me happy to see so many people who were interested in audio engineering. Great enthusiasm was exuded from the cover letters. As I looked through the resumes, it made me sad.

Generally at Sear Sound, we try to employ assistants who have at least a few years of experience at some other professional studio. This has worked out well for us through the years. On occasion, we have hired people directly out of school. Although not disasterous, we find that it takes between a year and a year and a half before we can put these employees to productive work in a control room.

Why is this? After four years' college level training, why should it take so long to get these people up to speed?

After going through hundreds of resumes, I came to a simple conclusion - their training is quite inappropriate for what is needed in the recording studio on a practical, day to day basis.

"Dear sir: I would like to apply for an entry level position or engineering position with your company" Wastebasket! After four years of college, someone has been seriously led astray. Not to know the vast difference between 'entry level' and 'engineer' shows a total lack of understanding of what they are supposed to be trained for. This is like running a seamanship school in which you are taught to be a captain before you know navigation, what a first mate does, or second mate or chief engineer or oiler or wiper. Start at the top!, I always say.

Reading on, the resume often lists the course work that has been taken. "History of the Beatles" has about as much use to us as an advanced course in knitting. Although there are many courses in computer operation and DAWs, there are almost no music theory courses, nor are there any applied music courses. Unless you will spend your career operating a sound system at a sports arena, a rather thorough knowledge of music is rather important. The ability to read music and perform at some level of competence should be an entry requirement and the school should provide the means to improve these skills.

"I am technically competent. I can repair cables". Wastebasket! I hate to refer to ancient history, but when I was starting out, the entry level position in a studio was through the shop. We called ourselves engineers and generally, we were. It was understood that we could read a schematic and trouble shoot a piece of equipment let alone design something that was needed in the studio (before Sam Ash). When I ask potential employees simple electronic questions, I find that most don't have the faintest concept of basic high school physics.

"I'm a very good engineer but I'm not technical". Wastebasket! It's like saying, "I'm a very good surgeon but I don't know basic anatomy".

"I am familiar with the following equipment" wherein a list of equipment follows, most of which I would be ashamed to admit I had ever owned had I made the mistake of purchasing it. Ear training is an essential part of an engineer's training. If you are going to train engineers on bad sounding equipment, how will they ever know what good sound actually is?

Other than keeping warm bodies in tuition paying seats, I see very little reason for employing graduates from these schools unless they have some of the basic training that is needed in the studio. No wonder that it takes us so much time to get these employees up to speed before they are of some economic use in a professional recording studio. Perhaps our schools should look at the European tonemeister type of training where intensive musical and engineering training are required.

SPARS might be of some help. We could set up an advisory committee of funtioning studio owners to help with a list of basic courses that should be taught as well as basic entrance requirements into the training program. Most studio owners have an idea of what is needed for an entry level position. Perhaps in this way, the feeder system into professional studio life could better prepare the students.