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Creating "The Paradise Effect"

By Nanci LaGrenne

As I'm typing this article upstairs, I can hear my husband downstairs watching *The Searchers* on the television for the 100th time. The more I try to block out the sound, the louder it gets, then the sound of my own clicking away at the keyboard seems to bounce from the walls to the floor and up my spine. I can hear the echo of ice cubes rattling in his glass. What's happening? Who do I turn to?

How about a woman who has worked for the Department of Defense, who is a mechanical engineer with a PhD in Signal Processing (don't ask) and who founded her own company called Sound Sense, an acoustical engineering and design firm. Meet Bonnie S. Schnitta, an East Hampton resident whose company's trademark is "The Paradise Effect," which translates as an "acoustically soothing environment."

Schnitta has recently won a technology award for a new patent on a device called the "dB focus tube," which allows an engineer to "determine the source of an acoustic problem." (Which, I'm told, is not my husband!) Her mission is about "creating the perfect acoustic space," and to target "everything from plumbing sounds to mechanical noise to unwanted sounds through a wall."

Sound and its origin is a science, and as Schnitta



Bonnie Schnitta

explains, "it has to be mathematically defined, or it won't work eliminating it." Schnitta and her engineers work with architects at the beginning of a project in houses on the East End and in New York City, and "we fix noise problems from existing architectural designs that aren't working."

At the company's website, www.soundsense.com, the list of residential and commercial clients Sound Sense has helped is staggering, reducing noise in spaces such as home theaters, auditoriums, places of worship, schools, gymnasiums, and restaurants

such as Cittanova, Rowdy Hall and Nick & Toni's.

One particular noise problem was vexing residents at Windmill Village II, an affordable housing complex for the elderly in East Hampton, in the common gathering hall there. At events, music is often played, and some residents complained they couldn't hear the music while others couldn't hear what the person next to them was saying because of the music. (Is it my imagination that as we get older, we are more sensitive to noise?)

The diagnosis after a Sound Sense call was that the "echo effect" was the culprit in the common hall. After fixing the problem, the residents were able to hear one another talk and enjoy the music. (I know a few bars Sound Sense could visit).

There are several products that can be applied to a space that remedy noise problems: Retractable Acoustic Door Sweeps, Acoustic Curtains or Shutters (which help eliminate outside traffic noises), Acoustic Lumber and Barriers, Acoustic Ceiling Tiles, and the list goes on. (Many of Sound Sense's products are carried at Riverhead Build Supply).

For more information, Schnitta can be reached at 1-877-NoiseOut or e-mail her at bonnie@soundsense.com.

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