

On Competence

A personal renaissance in understanding, acceptance, and realization of competence through writing and community engagement.

BY · **JOHN
HANES**

SUBJECT · **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT · AUDIO ENGINEERING ·
CAREER REFLECTION**

Recently I've had a bit of a personal renaissance in my understanding, acceptance, and realization of competence. A big part of this has been a part of writing these blog articles as well as participating in and answering many questions on the GearSpace forums.

It has been a deep dive into my own understanding of what I do as an audio engineer and as a mixer. The questions that come up on the audio forums require me to really think about what I was mostly unconsciously doing and putting answers into words has helped me to really flesh out my own understanding of my own journey.

One big thing that I have learned about myself is that even as I have some anxiety, some imposter syndrome, in a thirty year

career, after winning 16 Grammy Awards, that I have also discovered that I am extremely competent in my field and that every, or any failure, any mix that doesn't go well, any mistake I might make is not a sign that I am not qualified, capable, and to some degree an expert.

A lot of this has had to do with the positive feedback from my advice, musings, and dare I say teachings on the GearSpace forums.

I'm analyzing my workflow, my internal processes, and my philosophy of the job and putting it out there and, for some people, those thoughts are giving them meaningful insight into their own work and improving their own processes and workflows.

One example was in the discussion on what the "secret sauce" that professional mixers have that they are holding back.

In preparing my responses I really had to think about it, but because there is not a "secret sauce" the discussion made me realize that it comes down to detail, competence, and experience.

On Detail

The discussion starts with my comment that we might feel like audio custodians during the mixing process, cleaning up after other people who recorded, premixed, made decisions earlier in the process.

My throwaway line sparked one participant, credit to newguy1, to an epiphany on his own work.

*"But 'custodian' mentality is what's doing it for modern DAW production. The current batch of productions have come as close as ever, and it really does come down to looking at each and every track for '****' to clean up. The more you clean, the more '****' in other tracks becomes apparent. Every tiny thing that doesn't sound exactly right, take the time to get it right in relation to everything else, over and over. Until after several cycles there's little left to clean up. . . and voila. . . your track sounds next level polished."*

— NEWGUY1, GEARSPEACE FORUMS
