



What is...

A Mix Engineer



A mix engineer (AKA a mixer) is a sound engineer that specialises in the mixing process. With their unique skill set, they have the transformative power to shape a song's final sound. While they possess many of the skills required to be a good sound engineer, they focus the use of those skills on the mix and can truly transform a recording with these abilities, beyond that of those without the expertise. In many cases, a great mixer can turn a demo into something very special.

Unlike sound engineers or producers that are required to engineer and then edit sound, a mix engineer takes edited multitracks and focuses on the mix. Their job is to communicate the story of the song through the use of balancing decisions, signal processing, and placement of sounds. They often collaborate closely with producers and artists to understand and achieve the desired result.

Mixers need to have a solid understanding of signal flow, gain structure, and signal processing. They also need to have strong instincts around what sounds “good,” and other taste-based opinions. In addition to these skills, excellent communication is crucial for a mix engineer. They must have the ability to communicate and understand the goals of the artist or label, and then translate this through the use of their mixing skills.

Mix engineers will typically work out of a specific studio that they know very well, as workflow is a critical part of the process. Most mix engineers will have their own mix setup that may be at a commercial facility, or complementary to their regular place of work. These days, with the quality of plugins and such tools as headphone calibration and DSP-enabled portable monitoring, some mixers can even deliver great results while offsite, working on mobile rigs.

Most mix engineers will have worked as assistants and sound engineers before specialising in mixing. This role often serves as a specialised career path within the broader field of sound engineering. To derive a sole income from mixing is trickier in Australia, as most producers also offer mixing services, and will be the first choice for the artists they are producing.

Therefore, it's more common for mixers to also take on production and engineering jobs from time to time.

The role of a mixer is often underestimated by artists, as the DIY approach and accessibility to equipment has led to “mixing as you go” and hours of endless tweaking with less cost than hiring a professional. However, a great mixer is able to increase the likelihood of an audience connecting with a song, having significantly more impact than just mastering an OK mix. In conclusion, the mix engineer's role is not just technical but also artistic, serving as a crucial element in the song's final presentation to the audience.

