

I began my internship in August of 2023 with Pete Szkolka, who worked as both the owner of a local recording studio and as a live musician in Columbia. The main focus of my internship was on learning the basics of recording and mixing, getting familiar with microphones and techniques used with microphones, and most importantly observing how Pete interacts with his clients.

For the first month, I spent all of my time being introduced to microphones, amps, and plugins for Pro Tools. I learned the difference between dynamic and condenser microphones, as well as when to use each of them. Polar patterns of microphones were one of the most important aspects to consider when choosing what microphone to use for a specific project. For example, when recording multiple instruments in one room, it is crucial to isolate the sound of each instrument to its own microphone. The best way to do this is by choosing a microphone with a polar pattern that rejects sound from one side, also known as a cardioid microphone.

After establishing a base knowledge of microphones and recording, I began observing Pete as he worked. He brought in clients to record, overdub, and mix tracks of all genres. I would pay attention to how he interacted with clients; his main goal was making sure the clients were comfortable. Whenever Pete mixed a song, I would note what he was doing, what effects he would put on the tracks, and why he did so. This experience continued until November, when we began discussing a project for me to work on more extensively.

In early December, I brought a group of seven peers into the studio to play a few jazz songs that would be fully recorded and mixed by me. The session was organized to give me hands-on experience in the studio and to create a portfolio for college. The day

before the session, Pete and I spent some time in the studio making templates on Pro Tools for the recording session. He taught me his system of color coordination, which assigned specific colors to each instrument to help organize the template. We set up microphones, headphone sends, and the general layout for the session. After getting everything ready, we ran through what would happen the following day.

When recording day had come, we were off to the races. We had scheduled the drummer to arrive an hour before the rest of the group to check levels for each of the drums. Unfortunately, the excitement had gotten the best of some members, who showed up early. The early arrival of some members increased the stress on Pete and I slightly, but not enough to crush the excitement in the air. Once all members had arrived and all microphones were tested and adjusted for volume, we were ready to record. One of the most important parts of client handling in the studio is comfort, especially with musicians that are new to the studio experience. As this was a first for all of the clients, it was up to me to make them as comfortable as possible.

After recording multiple takes of two songs, I thanked the members for coming into the studio and sent them home. Then, over the next few weeks, I spent hours in the studio with Pete learning how to mix songs on Pro Tools. This process included using autotuning features like Melodyne, eliminating bleed by utilizing dynamic devices and trimming tools, panning tracks in different directions to create depth in the mix, and automating dynamics in the mix to help specific instruments stand out when needed. The process included listening to the mixes on different audio devices to see what needs to be tweaked. After I was satisfied with my work on the two songs, I sent them to the group for their feedback. They were all thankful for the experience, as was I.

The rest of my internship was spent broadening my knowledge of various things related to audio. I sat in on more recording sessions, watching Pete work and interact with clients. I also had the opportunity to help Pete set up for live events at Mizzou and got to tour the recording studio and equipment room in the Sinquefeld Music Center.

One of the biggest things I was looking for with this internship was reassurance. I wasn't sure if I'd really enjoy this line of work so I was looking to see if I was making the right choice before throwing away tens of thousands of dollars for a degree I don't like. Luckily, I've learned so much about the studio process and what goes into recording music. This internship has given me so much reassurance that I really am doing what I love.

(Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get a picture with Pete because I got super busy with a bunch of other school stuff and couldn't fit in a studio session in time.)