

Mixing Your In-Ears - Good Practices

A good in-ear mix will dictate the quality of your performance. Hearing yourself and the other instruments in the band with clarity has a drastic impact on your ability to perform well. A good mix is more than just hearing yourself, it's hearing the entire band giving you context to how you fit in the mix. If you can't hear everyone else then how do you know how you are blending in with everyone else? Without a good in-ear mix you lack awareness not only of yourself and what you are doing, but also your awareness of how you fit in with the bigger picture of the sound and music we are making as a team. Here are some steps we've outlined in order to help you mix your in-ear like a pro.

1.) MASTER VOLUME

With our units, we have found that a good rule of thumb is for you to start with your Master Volume level at around 65-75%.

2.) ZERO-OUT

Turn down all the channels to zero and pan all channels to the center. This will give you a starting point that wipes the slate clean and takes out any guess work.

3.) START WITH THE BASICS - YOU & THE ROOM

In our experience there's two channels to start with when mixing your in-ears: 1.) Your Channel and the Room Mic. As you are playing, turn up your own channel to a comfortable level for your ears so that you can hear yourself loudly and clearly. You may find that your channel is up at about 65-75% of the way. Whatever is loud enough for you to hear your instrument well.

Next, tackle the room mic. If you struggle with keeping both headphones in your ears during worship, then it's probably because you're not mixing enough of the room mic in to your ears. While continuing to play your instrument or sing in to your microphone, Slowly turn the room mic knob up to a level that is comfortable and gives space to your mix. You should feel as though you are no longer inside of a cardboard box but instead inside the room itself. This knob should usually be turned up to 40-50% if not more. Personally, I have my room mic up almost all the way to 90% every week because it gives me the closest sound to the final mix in the room.

4.) THE CLICK, PEOPLE. THE CLICK.

The next channel you will want to turn up is the click. You should have the click up loud enough that you can clearly hear it in the mix through every instrument and even at the loudest point in the song. It's going to sound annoying at first but it's something you just have to get used to. After you get the click up, add some of the loop channel (if loops are being used for the week), enough that it gives you context to what's happening in the song, but not so loud that it overpowers everything else. 20-30% of the way ought to do it.

5.) INSTRUMENTS INSTRUMENTS INSTRUMENTS

Now comes the fun: mixing everyone else. Here's the best order in which to mix in the remaining instruments around you:

- 1.) **Drums/Kick** - The new drum cage does not have near the same amount of bleed as it used to so you're going to need some drums in your mix for the sake of clarity. Yes you have the click in your ears to keep time but we are all also following the drummer so it's really important to have some of the drums in your mix. Mix this up to where it's sitting back in the pocket enough where it's clear, but not so loud that it's overpowering everything else. Depending on the mix and who's drumming you may only need this up about 25% or 50% - some drummers play louder than others so take that into account as your mixing week to week.
- 2.) **Bass** - The bass is tricky because it's EQ range is so low that it often is under-appreciated in your mix. The bass is the glue holding the band together and holds the keys to the musical integrity of the band. It's a foundational instrument and links the melodic and percussive instruments together: you need to have some of it in your mix. Again, mix it up similarly to the drums where it provides you with context but it's not overpowering your mix.
- 3.) **Acoustic Guitar** - Acoustic Guitar or Keys could come next, but for the sake of this exercise we'll go with acoustic. Acoustic bridges the gap between the rhythm section (drums/bass) and the flavor section (keys and electric guitar). Acoustic Guitar often drives the song and helps lead the way to where we're going. It also is a foundational instrument for vocalists. If you're looking for the right note to sing for your harmony, chances are you're going to hear that note in the chord the acoustic guitar is playing. Mix this up a little louder than the Bass where it has absolute clarity in your ears but again, is still beneath your vocals.
- 4.) **Keys** - The keyboard is the workhorse of the music. This instrument fills the most space in the mix and it helps bridge the gap between the low end and the high end. The Keys and Electric guitar offer the more "fun" elements to the mix but if not mixed well, they can really muddy up your mix. Add in the keys to a level that is comfortable for you to hear but isn't overpowering the mix and muddying it up. This is a bit subjective so this may be an instrument you have to return to and adjust throughout rehearsal until you get the level you want that suits you the best. Keys add a lot of flavor to the mix as well as mood. If you want to match the mood of the song, keep the keys in the mix.
- 5.) **Electric Guitars** - This instrument really enhances the music, adding the spice to a bland dish. This instrument gets a lot of attention in the main house mix and makes the sound of the band sonically epic. It sits on top of a lot of the other instruments in the mix and really gives the songs its mood, just as much as the keys. A good practice is to mix this up to a comparable level as the keys. We'll get to adding more clarity to these instruments with our next tool - Panning.
- 6.) **Vocals** - This is tricky for everyone, whether you are a vocalist or just an instrumentalist. Since the lead vocalist changes in almost every song, turning one vocalist up and mixing the others around it doesn't really work well. It's often best to keep all the vocalists up at a similar level and then add clarity to that mix by panning them. However, if you have the ability to adjust volumes in between songs based on who's singing lead, that works, too. If you're an instrumentalist, vocals may not sit as

high in the mix than if you are a vocalist. If you're an instrumentalist, vocals should be underneath your own instrument and the click, but be loud enough that they are sitting on top of everything else. If you're a vocalist, vocals will sit up higher than the instruments in your mix.

PANNING - THE ONLY WAY TO GO

If you want clarity in your mix, you MUST pan your channels. Panning channels provides you with context to where everything is, what everything is doing and is the one thing that is going to open up your mix to be as good as it can be. Mixing in-ears is not only about how loud instruments are in your mix but also where they sit in your mix from left to right.

Channels that should **stay centered** in your mix:

- 1.) Your Voice/Instrument
- 2.) The Room Mic
- 3.) Drums/Kick
- 4.) Bass

Channels that are **optional** for Panning (do this based on your own comfort):

- 1.) Click
- 2.) Loop

Channels that you should almost **always pan** (Unless you are that instrument/channel):

- 1.) Acoustic Guitar(s)
- 2.) Electric Guitar(s)
- 3.) Keys
- 4.) Vocals

Instrumentalists: Panning Vocals

Take a look at the stage layout from left to right. Who's standing where. A good rule of thumb is to pan the vocalists the way they are standing on the stage. For example, if from YOUR Left to Right is Jennie, Dan, Meredith, Hudson, then you'll want to pan Jennie about 55-65% of the way to the left, Dan about 20-30% to the left, Meredith 20-30% to the right, and Hudson about 55-65% to the right. See Below:

LEFT	JENNIE	DAN	CENTER	MEREDITH	HUDSON	RIGHT

Vocalists: Panning Vocals - see next page....

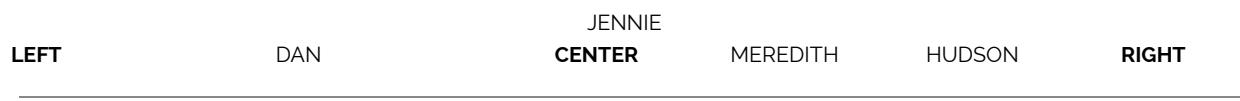
Vocalists: Panning Vocals

Similar to instrumentalists, use the stage layout as your template for panning vocalists. If you are on the far end, it's okay to switch it up and put someone who's standing to your left in to your right ear and vice versa. The idea is to provide clarity between the parts. Using the same example as above:

Scenario 1, let's say I'm Dan in this scenario panning vocals:



Scenario 2, let's say I'm Jennie in this scenario panning vocals:



Scenario 3, let's say I'm Meredith in this scenario panning vocals:



Everyone: Panning Instruments

A good rule of thumb with panning instruments is to isolate Electric Guitars to one side by itself and keys and acoustic guitar on one side together. This is mostly due to the fact that keys and electric guitar when panned to one side can really muddy up a mix. This slightly changes when there are two electric guitars.

Here's a good example of panning instruments when there are **two electric guitars**:



Here's a good example of panning instruments when there is **only one electric guitar**:



For instrumentalists, panning adjustments change depending on your instrument since your instrument should be centered, you might mix all the other instruments from left to right on your own preferred spectrum. Regardless, you will want to take time panning your instruments to achieve the most clarity possible in your mix.