> The path looks different for each one of us as we reach unique milestones, yet at some point, we encounter similar questions along the way. For that reason, I want to share this with you and answer one of the most common questions I get from creatives, "How do I find the right mix engineer?".

DEFINE YOUR NEEDS

Since different mixing styles varied from engineer to engineer, the most important and initial step to take is finding out what kind of sound you envision for your music. Next, pick your strongest demos, finish your reference mixes, and write down creative direction notes and current expectations for the sound you envision.

Next, consider how much money are you able to invest per song, what is your deadline, and what deliverables you need to archive alternative versions of the song like an A Capella, Instrumental, Show Version (without lead vocals), or Clean Version (without swear words). Mix engineers work with different mix rates and include certain deliverables depending on their capacity and policies.

As you list your needs, remember that not every engineer is a good fit for you. In the same way, you found your tribe back in school, you'll likely find the right engineer after connecting with a few people. Ideally you are looking for someone that can communicate with clarity, understand your needs, values your opinion, and can meet your deadlines.

RESEARCH

Finding an engineer who likes your music and has a similar taste to yours adds a differentiating factor that will undeniably help you craft the best record in the mixing stage - great minds think alike and challenge each other.

Finding this person is going to take some work. Here are a few tools for you to start your search:

1. Go to SoundBetter.com and search for engineers using the genre and artist filtering tools. You'll likely find an engineer who has worked extensively in your music style and/or with your favorite artist.
2. Go to Engineears.com and search by name, location, and verified engineering credits.
3. If you're part of a network of musicians, music producers, or artists, ask peers for recommendations of engineers they've enjoyed working with in the past. Referrals are great ways to connect with other people and service providers. Unfortunately, recommendations don't guarantee a match in values and workflow between your team and the engineer.

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OUTREACH

Reach out directly to 3-4 engineers with the information you've collected as it will help you have productive conversations with each one of them to decide who to hire. I wouldn't recommend reaching out to more than 3-4 engineers at a time as it can quickly create decision fatigue while you review and compare each of their profiles.

Share with each one of them:
- How many songs do you want to mix?
- What services do you need (vocal production, editing, mixing in stereo or ATMOS, deliverables)?
- A clear deadline for the project.
- Your budget per song.
- Finished demos for the engineer(s) to listen to.
- Creative direction notes.
- Reference songs that might've inspired your songwriting process.

COMMUNICATION

Pay close attention to each engineer's response, how quickly they replied to your messages is a clear indicator of their availability and communication values. Additionally, how eager they are to start a dialogue to explore your needs can tell how much creative bandwidth they have and how receptive they'll be to your artistic vision.

The number of services they've included will directly relate to their rates for independent artists, which in 2024 can easily vary from $250 to $2500 per mix on average. Try not to let this be the defining factor as more is not better when it comes to mixing packages, instead, focus on personality, portfolio, values, communication style, receptiveness, and tools at their disposal to serve your project (for example, high-definition converters, speakers, an acoustically treated room, and software like Pro Tools are essential to craft a mix that translates in the car, on headphones, on a TV and your favorite Bluetooth speaker, at a clothing store, a festival, a venue, or a club).

PREPARE ASSETS

After carrying through each conversation and collecting information to make an educated decision don't hesitate to hire the person you resonate with most. Ask the engineer for their File Delivery Instructions so you can create mixing assets that meet the engineer's needs (for example, RAW (no processing), DRY (all processing except for dealys and reverbs), and WET (all processing) multitracks/stems and approved reference mix).

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Offer to make a deposit to lock in a start date for mixing and promote a sustainable workflow for the both of you. Include that the final payment can be made as soon as you approve the mix.

Trust is built by communicating clearly while delivering on the agreed-upon terms.

SoundBetter protects the rights of the artist and the engineer every step of the way. Ask if there is a scope of work agreement that needs to be signed, this can add further protection for you and the engineer from unfortunate outcomes that would otherwise be hard to resolve if not expressed in writing beforehand. For big budgets I would highly recommend that you have an agreement in writing for the services you need rendered.

Now that all of the conversations regarding the scope of work, services, and terms are agreed upon, double-check that all mixing assets are labeled correctly. Listen to them one last time to make sure there are no issues, glitches, or mishaps with missing files before sending all assets. This speaks highly of your attention to detail, your professionalism as a creator, and your eagerness to ensure a frictionless workflow for everyone on the team.

MIX 1 + REVISIONS

You can expect the first mix pass back in 2-15 business days from most mixers. In-demand mixers working with major labels often take 15-30 days due to slower communication between larger teams.

Since you hired the engineer that best fits your style and needs, you should have by now a mix to listen to that closely represents your vision, the reference mix (demo), your creative direction notes, and the reference songs that inspired your songwriting. If not, then you either did not communicate effectively your needs, or the engineer misrepresented your input, either isn't an ideal scenario.

Some artists chose not to engage further and ask for a refund, I would encourage you to abstain from doing this so early in the process. Instead, use your communication skills to re-iterate your vision and what you are looking to get out of the mix with the engineer's help. Patience is important when things aren't going exactly the way you'd like.

Also, keep in mind deposits are often no-refundable as the engineer has already used that budget to work during multiple hours/days on Mix 1.

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Fortunately you hired the engineer who was most receptive, had the best communication skills (something you analyzed during the discovery stage before making the deposit), and had your best interest in mind. Now is the perfect time to be honest, encouraging, and lead the conversation with a friendly tone that can keep the moral high as you point out the things that need to be revised in Mix 1 (to be in line with your artistic vision).

A motivated and cared-for mixer will go above and beyond to deliver a mix the artist is proud to release.

MIX APPROVAL

By now you've likely gone through 1-5 revisions and your mix notes are fully worked out, it's time to approve the mix, receive deliverables (agreed upon), and send the stereo mix off to mastering. You can repeat the same research process detailed above to find mastering engineers to work with in your genre.

Before closing the project and releasing the final payment make sure you are fully satisfied with the mix. Mixers charge additional fees when mixes are sent off to mastering and new changes need to be made after the fact. Remember that a good mastering engineer shouldn't change the mix, only improve it. Great mastering preserves the integrity and creative decisions made in the mixing stage while building on it.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Stay in touch with your mixer throughout the mastering process. Mixers appreciate hearing the masters before they are released and if you'd like, they can also give creative and technical feedback during mastering to provide support as you navigate the mastering stage.

Lastly, while you prepare the release for the song feel free to share promo assets with your mixer. Some mixers like to promote the projects they work on via social media. This can mean having new people listening to your music on socials.

Thank you for downloading this guide and reading it! if you have more questions about this process or any other music industry questions feel free to visit bynacor.com and contact me directly to explore them together.

Here is to a fruitful creative mixing journey with likeminded people,
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