

MIXING YOUR MONITORS

TIPS, TRICKS & BEST PRACTICES



WHAT SHOULD I HEAR?

Making a personal monitor mix is very different from mixing a record. For a good monitor mix, you only need to hear what you *need to hear*. This may sound obvious, but many people approach their mix thinking they need to hear more than they actually do. You need to hear *less than you think*.

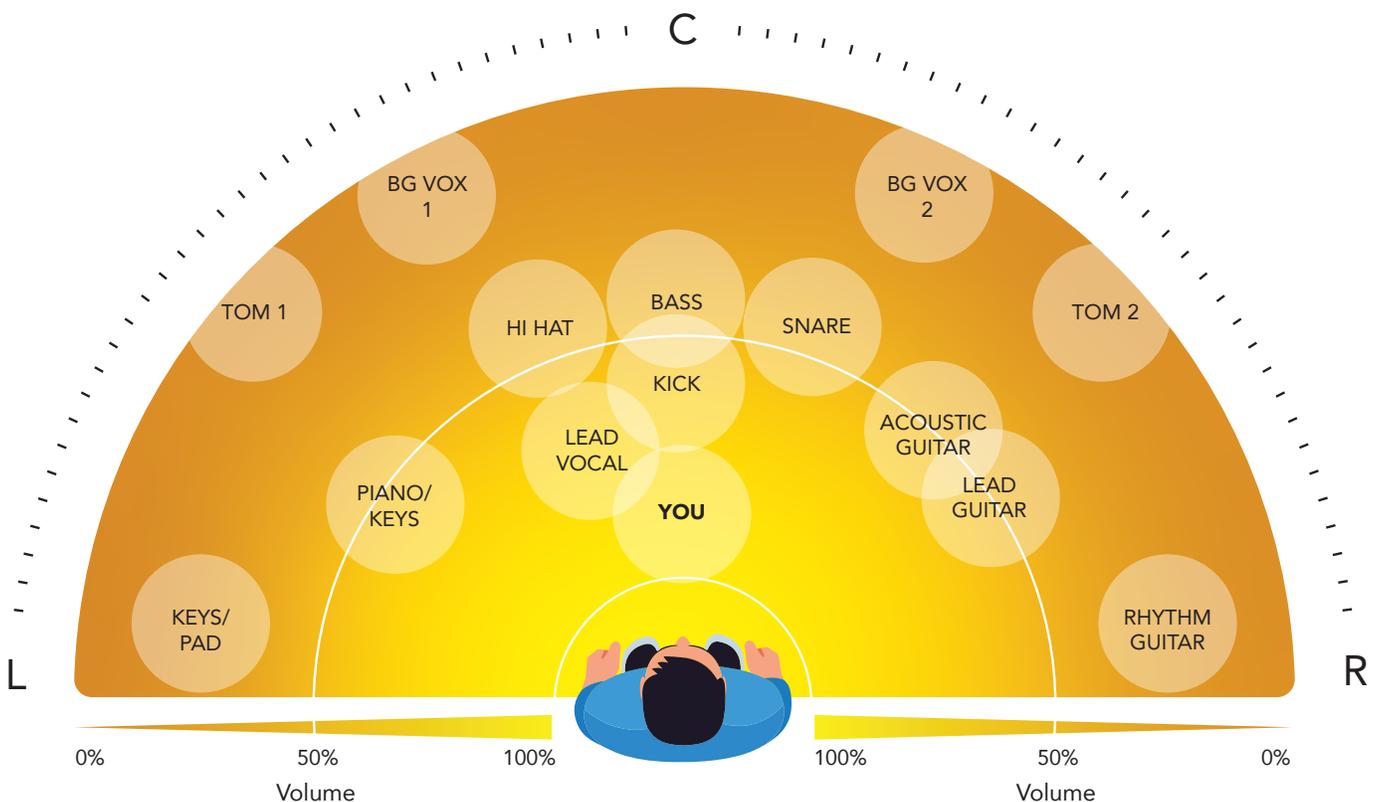
There are four things that you **ABSOLUTELY** need in your mix.

- You
- A Timing Reference
- A Pitch Reference
- A Leader or Musical Director

Everything that is not on the above list should be either turned down considerably low and panned to the left or right. Or turned completely off.

There are exceptions, of course, like times where multiple people are sharing one mix—or if you are using a system like *Livemix* from *Digital Audio Labs* that allows one person to remote mix another person. Below is a good starting point, for a shared mix:

- Kick and Bass in the center
- Lead vocal slightly off center
- Keys panned pretty hard to one side (use the stage location as a guide)
- Guitars panned hard to the opposite side as the keys
- Harmony vocals panned just left and right of center
- High-hats slightly right of center
- Snare slightly left of center
- Toms somewhere to the left and right with fairly low volume



IF YOU ARE THE LEADER

We often hear a leader or musical director say, “I am the leader so I need to hear everything.” This is valid, but we would suggest you to carefully consider cutting some things out. Simply put: it is distracting to hear everything (especially if a mistake is made). For instance, if a bass player hits a wrong note, you don’t need to have them in your monitor mix to know—you’ll know. There is also little you can do about it outside of rehearsals.

Trust your team. Have good rehearsals. Approach your mix so *you* have the minimum needed to perform well.

AMBIENCE OR REVERB

You may have seen a performer take one monitor out so they can hear the stage or audience. We strongly advise you not to be that person! It is incredibly harmful to your hearing health. If you find that you feel boxed-in or are missing some ambience, have your sound team place two microphones far-left and far-right of the stage facing the audience. Add this mic feed panning hard-left and hard-right in your mix. This lets you hear reverb from the stage and the audience off stage.

Many vocalists prefer ambience to help them stay on pitch, so if you find you need some *help* in this regard, add some reverb to your mix OR use the ambient mic technique shown below (but not both).

Tips For A Smooth Rehearsal

- ◆ Make sure everyone has the songs early enough to practice
- ◆ Give sound-techs time for sound check and troubleshooting
- ◆ Limit noodling/jamming between songs and during soundcheck
- ◆ Start off with a song everyone knows. If you start with a new song, musicians may playing timidly while everyone is mixing their monitors and sound-techs are setting gain levels
 - ◆ Rehearse with “show intensity” and “show volume”
 - ◆ Be okay with mistakes!



PERSONAL MIX FOR **DRUMS**

- YOU: Kick (center)
- YOU: Snare (off center)
- YOU: Hats (off center opposite side)
- PITCH: Bass or Lead Instrument
- TIMING: Click (off center)
- LEADER

Drummers need to hear the low end and their monitors need to be able to handle transients (aka loud thwacks). The low-end accounts for around 80% of most music today, which means drummers need lots of headroom. Headroom is how loud your monitors can be before they start to distort. Look for monitors with high headroom and a contour with elevated bass.

SCAN TO SEE
RECOMMENDED
MONITORS



PERSONAL MIX FOR **BASS**

- YOU: Bass (center)
- PITCH: Guitar or Keys (panned to side)
- TIMING: Click (off center) or Kick & Snare
- LEADER

Like drummers, bass players need to hear the low end. Since the low end is an energy hog, that means a bass players monitor needs plenty of headroom. Look for monitors with high headroom and a contour with elevated bass and elevated upper-mid range so you can hear articulation.

SCAN TO SEE
RECOMMENDED
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PERSONAL MIX FOR **GUITAR**

- YOU
- PITCH: Lead Instrument or Bass (off center)
- TIMING: Click (off center) or Kick & Snare
- LEADER

A dynamic feel with a contour will inspire guitar players to perform their best. Headroom is important, especially if you groove along with the kick and bass, so look for something with a bigger woofer or multiple low end drivers.

SCAN TO SEE
RECOMMENDED
MONITORS



PERSONAL MIX FOR **KEYS**

- YOU
- PITCH: Lead Instrument or Guitar (off center)
- TIMING: Click (off center) or Kick & Snare
- LEADER

Keyboard players need balance and accuracy with enough detail to hear layers and richness. We recommend monitors that are relatively flat so that the whole sound spectrum is reproduced evenly. If you make patches, look for detail and clarity so you can hear nuances.

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PERSONAL MIX FOR **LEADERS**

- YOU
- PITCH: Keys or Guitar (off center)
- TIMING: Click (off center) or Kick & Snare

Worship leaders often sing and play an instrument so a monitor that is clear with nice dynamic range is essential. You need to be able to hear the whole team so you need a monitor that is versatile. We generally recommend a gently contoured monitor, or something flat with a punchy low end.

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PERSONAL MIX FOR **VOCALS**

- YOU
- PITCH: Lead Vocal or Harmony (off center)
- TIMING: Kick & Snare
- LEADER

Singers need a model that will let their vocals jump out of the mix. Generally, we recommend a monitor that is slightly contoured, or at least not too neutral. A contour or shape will help give you a bit of a boost in the vocal range so that you can hear your voice clearly on top of the music.

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