

Sound Engineer interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for sound engineer roles usually mix technical questions about gear and workflow with scenario questions about handling a live show when something goes wrong. Expect the interviewer to probe how you work with artists and producers under time pressure, and possibly to ask you to talk through a demo reel or walk through a desk setup.

- **Technical:** Questions on signal flow, gain staging, and working across DAWs and mixing consoles.
- **Scenario:** Live troubleshooting questions that test judgement when equipment fails mid-show.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about giving feedback to or receiving direction from artists and producers.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about liaising with venues and clients who may have limited technical knowledge.
- **Safety:** Questions on checking equipment and workspaces before a session or show.

Interviews often open with a run-through of your experience and portfolio or demo reel, move into technical and scenario questions, and close with a discussion of availability given the irregular hours tied to sessions and shows.

1. Walk me through your signal flow when setting up a front-of-house desk for a live band.

Why they ask

Tests whether you understand the technical basics of live sound setup, not just software use.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a step-by-step process walk-through, from source to output.

Example answer

"I start at the stage, checking each mic and DI, then trace the cable runs back to the stage box and confirm the patch matches my input list. On the desk I set gain first, watching for clipping on the loudest parts of the soundcheck, then bring up faders one channel at a time so I can hear how each source sits before adding EQ or compression. Once the mix is balanced in the room I check the monitor sends with each performer before moving to a rough overall mix for the house."

2. You're mixing front-of-house and the lead vocal mic drops out mid-song. What do you do?

Why they ask

Checks how you handle equipment failure live, when there's no time to stop and troubleshoot properly.

How to structure your answer

Answer by describing the immediate decision, then the follow-up action, showing judgement under pressure.

Example answer

"First I check the obvious things fast: is the channel muted, has a cable come loose, is the battery in a wireless pack dead. If I can't fix it in a few seconds I bring up a backup mic if one's rigged, or signal the performer to move to a spare. Sorting the actual cause, whether it's a cable or a pack, waits until after the song or the set, so the show keeps moving."

3. Tell me about a time you had to give a producer or artist feedback on something they didn't want to hear.

Why they ask

Live and studio work both involve managing creative relationships, and this tests how you handle friction without damaging the working relationship.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"During a session the artist wanted the vocal pushed much louder than the mix could support without masking the rest of the arrangement. I explained that at that level it would clash with the guitar and lose separation, and offered to solo the vocal against a reference track so they could hear the difference themselves. They agreed to pull it back slightly and we found a level that satisfied them without losing the rest of the mix."

4. When would you choose to work in Ableton Live over Pro Tools for a session, or the other way around?

Why they ask

Confirms genuine hands-on familiarity with both tools rather than listing them without depth.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a comparison, covering the practical differences and when each makes sense.

Example answer

"Pro Tools is my default for multi-track recording and dialogue editing because of how it handles session recall and detailed editing. Ableton Live comes in when the work is more loop-based or when I need to trigger clips live, such as backing tracks or samples during a performance. If a project is purely studio-based with live instruments, I lean Pro Tools; if it involves performance elements or electronic production, Ableton fits better."

5. How do you handle turning up to a venue with a PA system you've never used before, on the day of a show?

Why they ask

Live work regularly involves unfamiliar gear at short notice, and this tests adaptability and client-facing composure.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a practical process, then note how you communicate with venue staff.

Example answer

"I get there early enough to do a proper line check and figure out the desk's routing before the band arrives. I ask venue staff about any known quirks, like a channel that's noisy or a monitor wedge that's underpowered, rather than assuming everything works as labelled. If something's clearly unreliable I flag it early so we've got time to work around it instead of discovering it mid-set."

6. What do you check before starting a session or show to make sure the equipment and workspace are safe to use?

Why they ask

Reflects the WHS responsibilities that come with running electrical equipment and cabling in front of an audience or in a studio.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a checklist-style process description.

Example answer

"I look for obvious hazards first: cables run where people could trip, leads that look worn or damaged, and gear that hasn't been tagged if that's required at the venue. I make sure stage cabling is taped

down or run out of walkways, and I keep an eye on load on power boards so nothing's overloaded once the full rig is on. If anything looks unsafe I flag it and sort it before doors open rather than during the show."