



“ I like to hear great music coming through the speakers and know that I helped create it...That, to me, is the job well done. ”

Next time you put on your headphones, notice if the vocal and instrument sounds emerge from the right or left earphone—or both. If you’ve ever wondered who is responsible for that, then meet Josiah Gluck. “I’ve always been fascinated by media and technology,” he explained, “I just knew I wanted to do something with that.” He got his first taste of the business working for his college radio station, and since then has worked his way up the ladder to become a highly respected audio engineer who has earned three Grammy nominations. In addition to capturing great performances in recording studios, Josiah is also the associate music engineer for *Saturday Night Live*. Josiah took a quick break during *SNL* rehearsals to fill us in on all he does for his behind-the-scenes but very important job.

# Josiah Gluck

## Audio Engineer

### What is the role of an audio engineer?

Early on someone told me that my role is one-third technician, one-third musician, and one-third politician. I have to figure out how to lay things out, like where people will sit in the studio and which kinds of microphones to use. It’s like the Iron Chef—I have to make things work with what I have, and that’s a fun challenge.

The most important thing is helping the artist realize his or her vision. I try to keep people in their comfort zone. I tell my assistant engineers to pay attention: when artists look up, they don’t want to see your back to them. I tell people to stop walking around in the control room because it can break the mood. That’s very important because the artist is the one under the microscope, not you.

### How do you handle recording problems?

I’d say that the hardest thing to learn is when to leave something alone. To me, mixing [sound] is a very subtractive process. If someone can’t hear something in a mix, instead of pushing it up, I’ll go listen to see what could possibly be in the way—something else may be too loud and covering it up. I always first try to make room for everything because before you know it every sound is pushed up to the max choking each other with nowhere to go.

### How is working at *SNL* different from working in a studio?

The main difference is that you don’t have a lot of [sound] isolation, so a lot of sounds are going to bleed into other microphones. Plus, if you see something on TV, your ears expect to hear it. I have to be sure that if the director is filming someone playing a cowbell, you’d better hear that cowbell. And when you’re live on the air, you have only one shot to get it right. Fortunately, we have rehearsals, so by the time we’re on the air, we’ve had the chance to listen and practice [technical] moves.

### What do you like most about your job?

I like the different kinds of music I get to work with. I like to hear any great music coming through the speakers and know that I helped create it. And I like it when people tell me that I make them sound great. That, to me, is the job well done.

### Is there anything you don’t like?

Sometimes in the studio, the hours can be pretty long. When I was starting out, 18-hour days were typical. With *SNL*, we’re off the air at 1 A.M., but I’d be lying if I said it’s not stressful. Saturdays are rewarding but long days.

### What do you think makes a good audio engineer?

You really need to be on the ball and think outside the box. I can’t fix a mixing board, but I think I bring a lot of common sense. The people who get ahead in this business are the ones who pay attention. You definitely get out of it what you put into it.

—VERONICA DOMINGUEZ-GARCIA



Want to check out other musical careers? Go to [www.mymusicalive.com/coolcareers](http://www.mymusicalive.com/coolcareers)