

BACKLINE TECHNICIAN

The role of the Back Line Technician is mainly to look after and set up the instruments for musicians, normally drums/percussion, guitars and keyboards and who generally work for the artist or the artist management company, often on a self employed basis.

The role may be carried of by one or more technicians (such as Drum/Percussion Tech, Guitar Tech or Keyboard Tech) any of which may look after more than one type of instrument for example a technician who looks after all back line equipment for all the band members. Generally speaking, the more equipment or more specialised the equipment or the bigger the band (in terms of status) the more technicians to look after all the back line equipment.

The job of maintaining equipment and keeping the whole system running during a tour is now very specialised and most backline techs are out of necessity very good musicians.

The tech. must over see the unloading of equipment at each show and then set up the equipment ensuring the equipment is working perfectly and repairing any faults if required. Setup includes cleaning equipment, erecting speakers, amps and stands, desks, laptops and keyboards, drums, anything that is used during the gig, changing strings and drum heads, tuning instruments then plugging in and testing the equipment and "line checking" prior to sound check, ensuring spares such as batteries, drum heads, sticks, strings, fuses, leads, PVC and Gaffa tape are available.

A guitar or keyboard techs role is to design, build and maintain the stage equipment for the artist, this includes amps and speakers, guitars and keyboards as well as MIDI/computer set ups.

As an artist goes on stage the tech will help the artist with his guitar and during the show the tech will be on stage or "in the wings" keeping a very close eye on his musician/s ready to solve problems, change a drum or guitar and restring and tune guitars in seconds! A guitar tech will have a "work station" set up side of stage with all the tools required to remove and change strings or carry out repairs and an electronic tuner to retune the instrument.

After a show the tech will breakdown all the equipment, pack it into it's respective flight case and over see it being loaded back into the truck.

During the rehearsal process, a tech will design and build the system including making leads, programming sounds, saving patches and songs, sorting all flight-case repairs, fixing, manufacture and general problem solving, stocking up with spares and running all things related to band gear.

The technicians with an orchestra will set up the stage to the orchestras required lay out, this will include chairs, music stands, sheet music and possibly risers and rostra as well as percussion and keyboards. They will assist the musicians with instruments such as harps and bases.

Core Skills

To be able to set up, maintain and repair relevant musical equipment and instruments, including the tuning and the ability to play the instrument.

A detailed understanding of MIDI and computer music software and systems, and the ability to design and program systems.

An ability to do general 'first aid' on MIDI, audio signal paths and devices that they run through e.g. mixing consoles, FX units, DIs etc.

(Basic maintenance skills, but if not a service engineer must not go too deep (may invalidate equipment warranty)).

Basic Numeracy and Literacy

Ability to perform simple calculations

Keeping of simple financial records.

Ability to understand and interpret written material incl. diagrams, plans, schedules and risk assessments.

Must be able to get on with people easily and have good communication skills.

Qualifications

HND in Music Technology

BTEC in Music Technology

Underpinning Knowledge

An understanding of Health and Safety practice

A more advanced understand of health and safety practice for work with electrical equipment.

Experience working as a sound engineer / programmer desirable.