Canadian Audiologist

The Official Publication of the Canadian Academy of Audiology

Music and Hearing Loss: What Works for Me

Published April 22nd, 2014

Kyle McVea

I am a 17-year old musician and started wearing hearing aids last year. One day, I was in a recording studio and just for fun, I asked them to increase the high frequencies of my song to make up for my hearing loss. I couldn't believe the clarity! That's when I knew that hearing aids could make a difference for me.

When I started singing at age 13, I did well in competitions such as Saint John Idol (2nd place) and YTV's *The Next Star* (Season 5) but judges would sometimes say that I hit the notes too sharp. I had way more difficulty monitoring my voice when I wore in-ears at live shows.

Soon after, I found out that I had a mild high-frequency hearing loss in both ears. I didn't expect to learn THAT while shadowing my mother in audiology for "Take Your Kid to Work Day." The doctors blamed meningitis that I had when I was 7 weeks old plus a family history of hearing loss. I didn't bother with hearing aids because my grades were good but after that day in the studio, I knew it was time.

Step 1: Finding the right hearing aid. I tried several RIC products but they were uncomfortable. I chose Oticon's because the earpiece curves better in my ear and because one side turns the volume up and the other turns it down depending on if I am playing guitar or piano.

Step 2: getting the sound right. I tried lots of different settings but I liked the DSL Child best. The automatic phone was a nuisance because it changed when I wore headsets in recording studios. I liked the auto learning because after a while, I didn't have to change the volume as much.

I only use one program which is set for music. Recently, I had it adjusted because the piano wasn't crisp enough (compression was 1.1 for mod-loud sounds) and now it sounds better (linear 1.0). I have a streamer but I don't wear it because it's awkward with my guitar and piano plus I jump around a lot on stage.

My hearing aids are very important for my work in music as I am a singing contestant on a new YTV show called *The Next Star: Supergroup* (Tuesdays, 7:00 pm EST, March 11-April 13). I have had no feedback on set and the aids never fall out when jumping around (I did worry about that beforehand).

Overall, I believe that my hearing loss makes me a better musician because I understand more about hearing and sound.

Editor's note- Kyle McVea recently won the TV music competition Supergroup and now has a professional touring and recording contract. His audiologist (and mother) reported that 'He had an amazing sound crew and equipment and was completely comfortable with the monitoring.'