How to Optimize Zoom Audio for Musicians

By default, Zoom's audio channel is designed to facilitate spoken conversations in a video meeting or conference call. It includes features (compressors and noise gates) to cut down on background noise and even out unexpected changes in volume levels. Unfortunately those same features can turn your musical performance into a garbled mess!

The good news is that with a little extra attention to your audio settings and a good fast internet connection you can ensure your musical performance on Zoom comes through loud and clear.

✤ **Check your internet connection!**
   It doesn't matter how well you play if your internet connection can't carry it out to the world.

- **Best Option:** Wired Internet. High-speed broadband internet with a wired Ethernet connection from your router to a laptop or desktop computer (Mac or PC).
- **Next Best Option:** Rock Solid Wifi. High speed broadband internet with a rock-solid wifi connection to a laptop or desktop computer, phone* or tablet*. This will usually work OK, but if you have the option, switch to a wired connection.
- **Risky Option**: Cellular data connection on a phone* or tablet*. Even high-speed cellular data connections struggle to carry music and video reliably. It's unlikely to sound good, and in the worst case, will sound terrible.

   Because the mobile Zoom apps lack the advanced audio controls described below, using a computer often provides better results than a phone or tablet.

✤ **Optimize Zoom's Audio Options**
   Here's how to bypass Zoom's built in audio filters to let your music shine through.
   *NOTE: These options are only available in Zoom's computer apps, *not* on phones or tablets.*

- On a Mac or PC computer, open the Zoom App.
- Click on your profile icon in the upper right corner, and select "Settings."
- Choose "Audio" from the icons on the left hand side.
- Under "Microphone" make sure the box labeled "Automatically Adjust Volume" is *UNCHECKED.*
- Click the button labeled "Advanced" in the bottom right corner.*
- Make sure the box at the top labeled "Show in-meeting option to "Enable Original Sound" from microphone." is *CHECKED* This will allow you to instantly bypass the [??]
- *Optional:* There are three choices under "Audio Processing." Select "Disable" for the first two ("Suppress Persistent Background Noise" and "Suppress Intermittent Background Noise".) Leave "Echo Cancellation" on "Auto." Technically, the "Enable Original Sound" option lets you bypass all of these at will during a zoom videoconference, so you can leave them all on auto if you prefer.
- Click "Back" at the top left.
- Close the Settings Window.
- **IMPORTANT FINAL STEP!** When you enter your next Zoom meeting, you should see a button in the top left of your screen that says "Turn On Original Sound." Click that button -- it will turn **blue** and read "Turn Off Original Sound." That indicates that you have bypassed the nasty filters and are sending pure musical goodness to the Zoom audience.

✤ **Optimize your sound gear**
   Make sure you're putting your best sound forward.

- **Best Option**: Digital audio interface into a desktop or laptop computer. This will give you maximum control over how you sound, and will avoid the limitations of built-in microphones.
- **Next Best Option:** Built-in microphone on a desktop or laptop computer. This can deliver surprisingly good results if you follow the instructions above to optimize your settings in Zoom.
- **Risky Option:** Built in microphone on a phone or tablet. Because Zoom's phone and tablet apps don't let you bypass the audio processing features, you're at the mercy of the software. However, it *can* work if you keep your volume low and experiment with how far you stand from your phone's microphone. Do that ahead of time so you're ready to rock at show time!

✤ **Schedule a sound check with your audio team.**
   Connect via Zoom to make sure you sound your best.