



Chelsea Joyce

SOUNDING OFF

It was somewhere between New Mexico and New York that Chelsea Joyce decided to stop wearing a bra. The 26-year-old sound engineer was midway through 2012's Warped Tour, and she was sleeping, eating and working 14-hour days alongside 12 dudes on a bus, as they rolled from city to city, parking lot to parking lot, doing sound for the 50-day rock tour with 41 shows.

"It kind of sucked because when I got off work, and I was exhausted, I felt like I still needed to keep my sports bra on," Joyce says, laughing. She worked as the "patch master," the person who sets up mics, wires the stage and the PA system. "About halfway through, I was like, 'Screw this! ... I don't care what I look like and screw them if they care.'"

After eight years (on-and-off) in the sound business — working at McDonald Theatre, Cuthbert, Sam Bond's, WOW Hall, Matthew Knight Arena and festivals — Joyce shrugs these kinds of moments off. She says there are not many women in the field because of a self-fulfilling prophecy fueled by the intimidation of a male-dominated industry. She's had to deal with come-ons and low expectations, but is convinced that a quick wit is the best defense. "My skin has gotten so, so much thicker because of it," she says. "It's pretty awesome."

But like anything worth living your life for, it was a journey to get to that thick-skinned place. Joyce first fell in love with the music scene going to punk rock shows as a teenager in Bend. By 18, she knew she wanted to study sound and headed to Full Sail University in Florida, where she spent 13 "crazy" months studying sound, lighting, video and sports broadcasting. After earning


her associate's degree, Joyce found herself across the globe.

"I left for a trip for what I thought was going to be three weeks to Israel," she says. "I canceled my plane ticket back home and ended up traveling around for 10 months." Joyce backpacked from Israel to Greece, Turkey to Egypt and, finally, to India. "I changed a lot because I learned how to be independent. I *proved* to myself I could be."

Upon returning stateside, Joyce earned her degree in sociology at the UO, and returned to sound, working up to 60 hours a week. She finds that "sociology and sound relate in a lot of ways," because of working with diverse folks in a dangerous job with heavy lifting and high voltage where "people are a liability."

Now, Joyce's days are filled with soundboards, sound checks, sub-snakes and XLRs. But the confidence she gained through travel may be her most valuable asset. "When I'm dealing with a band and I seem nervous, they don't have faith in my abilities. Especially as a woman too," she says. "A lot of bands don't know what to think because they don't see a woman much behind the board. Sometimes it works to my favor and they're like 'Wow, she must really know what she's doing,' and sometimes people doubt me because of it until I prove that I can do it."

Although Joyce loves working in sound, because it's "never-ending learning," she eventually wants to stage or tour manage. She's hopeful for more women in the field. "In the past month," she says, "there have been two girls who have come up to me while I'm mixing and said 'Hey, I'm studying sound. Can I shadow you some time? It's great to see a woman doing it.'" — Alex Notman



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