

1 [0:00:00.0] hi I'm Mitch Gallagher welcome to the
2 Sweetwater minute this time out we have
3 a very special guest with us
4 Andrew chefs is here hello thank you for
5 coming in appreciate you being here
6 thanks for having mixer engineer
7 producer true Metallica Black Sabbath
8 Adele all kinds of great credits we're
9 happy to have you here thanks thanks for
10 having me you bet you're here on behalf
11 of royal labs and mojave audio yeah and
12 you were doing a presentation that I
13 want to talk a little bit about but
14 let's um
15 step back talk a little bit about how
16 you got into the business how did you
17 get started as a audio professional well
18 I sort of discovered live sound because
19 I wanted to be in a rock band but I
20 played trumpet and there was a little
21 bit of a disconnect there so I started
22 doing sound for bands and then
23 discovered studios and fell in love with
24 it immediately saw my first console and
25 knew okay that's what I want to do that
26 was a Winston University of Miami did
27 their four-year recording program was
28 part of the music program down there and
29 then out of college got a job working
30 for a New England digital who made the
31 single veer way back in the olden days
32 and then from there just started making
33 records just that's it just went
34 independent and scrounged right clog my

35 way to the middle so how did you get in
36 on your first session how did you make
37 that break into the studio um well
38 fortunately actually coming from the
39 sink levere world when I stopped working
40 for sink aveer I had met lots of people
41 who had them and I knew how they worked
42 and had a program so I actually started
43 I got a lot of work as a programmer okay
44 and went from single ear programming to
45 sort of general synth programming and
46 then from there into editing when their
47 disc recording started up and from there
48 into Pro Tools and all the while
49 assisting and doing as much engineering
50 as I could and then finally when budget
51 started shrinking to where you didn't
52 have an engineer and a Pro Tools guy I
53 was both and then there you were
54 perfectly preserved it went yeah yeah
55 nice nice so you have worked a lot with
56 Rick Rubin over the years I have how did
57 you make that connection
58 I've been I'd actually gotten calls a
59 couple of times to do some either Pro
60 Tools editing or programming that just
61 didn't work out schedule wise and then
62 the first project I did with him was a
63 Saul Williams record amethyst rock star
64 and it's almost 15 years ago now and
65 that I was brought
66 because they had done a lot of tracks on
67 NPC 60 and then they'd recorded things
68 to tape but now they couldn't get it to

69 sync up so I sort of came in to
70 troubleshoot that and then while I was
71 there did some wu-tang remixes that
72 needed to be done and just sort of was
73 in the room and anything that came up
74 I'll do that I'll do that and so it's
75 turned into a pretty long relationship
76 nice great nice so the moral of the
77 story is never say no never say no and
78 if you're everywhere all the time
79 eventually you be in the right place at
80 the right and be prepared right right
81 yeah so one of the most recent projects
82 you guys worked on was 13 with Black
83 Sabbath mm-hmm tell us a little about
84 that project yeah I only mix the project
85 I didn't track it so unfortunately I
86 didn't really get to interact with the
87 band too much which would have been
88 pretty amazing but I think kind of the
89 main thing about that record was trying
90 to recapture sort of the spirit of their
91 first four records which I mean their
92 first record was done in two days they
93 tracked it in the first day and mixed it
94 on the second day to recapture that kind
95 of spirit of them as a band you know
96 real performance
97 but obviously you know have it live in
98 the world that records live in now so a
99 lot of that record was cut live a lot of
100 the solos are the solos right off the
101 floor while they cut the track so it was
102 awesome really really simple very few

103 overdubs on I mean some of the songs had
104 no overdubs Oh that'd be pretty cool to
105 walk in and push the pushin I mean
106 that's always amazing pushing up faders
107 like that and you know the drums brad
108 wilk played drums so he's an amazing
109 drummer you can start pushing up the
110 guitar psycho that sounds like Tony
111 lommi and then you push up the vocal and
112 like okay it's Sabbath you've done like
113 it's not a band that sounds like Sabbath
114 it's Sabbath right that's pretty cool
115 right right so you mentioned they wanted
116 to kind of recapture that spirit did you
117 go back and spend a lot of time with the
118 old records to kind of get a direction
119 for where you were gonna go with the
120 mixes none not so much actually I mean
121 it was more before I even got the first
122 song to mix I just listened to the first
123 four records again I hadn't really sat
124 down and listened to him in years and
125 years and I realized immediately like
126 sonically there wasn't really anything
127 to take away from it because that was
128 of a time and there's no way we're gonna
129 make the record sound like that but it
130 was really getting a sense of it being
131 four guys in a room and not it being a
132 slickly produced put together record
133 mm-hmm so really making it sound like a
134 record as that needs to happen now but
135 hopefully you get the idea that it is
136 four guys playing and that's what you're

..zeitgemäße Organisation von A

..Flexibilität

..bessere oder gleich gute Klangqualität

..(Un)Genauigkeit der Klangl

..Musikalität der Klangbearb

..spezifische Klangresultate

- 137 hearing right right
- 138 [0:04:53.3] Now, when you're mixing, obviously you come from a high-technology background, the Synclavier, ProTools and you're working in that digital world, but you also - in your studio - have a vintage console and racks and racks of gear, so you're really pursuing that hybrid approach. Can you talk a little bit about that.
- 139 [0:05:08.5] Yeah, I mean, it's actually really interesting though [it] sort of twists and turns as the technology comes. I mean as the hard disk recording technology sort of came into being and Pro Tools was able to do more things and stuff like that, it was easy to just immediately embrace it. Because you could finally do something much quicker than you used to be able to on tape and stuff like that. And you didn't give a whole lot of thought to the sonics of what was going on. And back then the digital technology was not so very good sounding. So, then going back to a more analog hands-on mix process ..
- 140 [0:05:42.7] And in the meantime mixing like that. Now, the digital was caught up sonically. So when I mix the Sabbath record, that was completely on the console. I mean it could have been, .. I was using flying faders automation. So, that dates at around 1994. But the rest of the gear 1979-1980 for the most part, but obviously the tracks are running off of Pro Tools and I'm automating delays either using something like the Moog 500 rack delay with through MIDI, which you couldn't have done a while ago, or plugins. Things like that.
- 141 [0:06:13.4] But now, since then, just because of the way the mixing process is and the creative process of working with bands, who want to start mixing before they're even done recording and their mastering deadline is on Thursday but they're tracking on Tuesday, I've actually started moving more back into the box. Because sonically it sounds amazing [and] it gives me all the flexibility. So it's, it's strange. You can, you know, make arguments for and against every method of working and, you know, I think the the thing that I always try and keep in mind is that nobody cares what I mixed it on. Nobody cares what it looked like, nobody cares what lights were on. They just get it coming out of the speakers and if that's awesome, it's awesome. If it isn't or I could tell you all day what console I used and you wouldn't care.
- 142 I: Right, right, right. [lacht]
- 143 [0:06:57.3] it's a very long answer to that oh
- 144 that's great that's all that's all good
- 145 so what is it that that dictates the
- 146 choice for you so if you receive a track
- 147 from a band and you say okay I need to
- 148 have EQ on this vocal
- 149 [0:07:08.2] I: How do you decide whether it's gonna be a plug-in or you're gonna go out to a piece of hardware?
- 150 [0:07:11.8] Well, when I was spread out on the console, generally, I would use the console EQ for broad strokes, a very musical EQ. You don't do that much removal of frequencies on a Neve. You do much more addition of frequencies, 'cause it just sounds great. But it's also broadbands not a lot of precise controls. So if I needed to take care of a harsh frequency in the cymbals or something like that, that would be in the box. If I need to do, I want to put a happy face EQ on this thing, that would be on the board. And now that I'm pretty much in the box over the last six months, it's kind of the same choices, but it's just all plugins and every once in a while I use outboard gear on hardware inserts just 'cause I really want a specific thing that I can only get out of a piece of gear. But .. there are just certain EQs that are musical and happy and there's certain EQs that do a job. And it just depends [on] what's going on and also because of a brilliant Al Schmitt quote where he just said "I don't use EQ or compression and then

spending two days with him watching him record a big band without EQ or compression".

151 I've now stopped using EQ unless I feel
152 like I really have to because I think
153 when you mix one of the first things you
154 do is all right let me go through an EQ
155 everything right and you don't have to
156 actually and it's it's a really
157 interesting sort of limitation to put on
158 yourself that you will not EQ unless you
159 have two EQ mm-hmm and that makes you
160 really start thinking about panning and
161 balance and arrangement in ways that you
162 don't when you can just carve out spots
163 for everything right right and
164 I: I would expect there's also just some habit when
165 I hear a kick drum I put this on it
166 absolutely absolutely and the idea of oh
167 I always use this on kick I always use
168 this on vocal it's one of the great
169 things in the box is that it's so easy
170 to try 50 different things on something
171 and save chains of five pieces of gear
172 as plugins and just say how's that nope
173 how's that nope how's that no and it's
174 eat stuff you spent a lot of time going
175 through once and then you can just use
176 it as a quick pallet so you stay
177 creative while trying all kinds of stuff
178 mm-hmm right right and you're working
179 primarily from your home studio mm-hmm
180 correct how are you able to make the the
181 transition from working in commercial
182 studios to doing things at home that's
183 really easy people don't have money yeah

184 when they don't have money you have to
185 own the means in production you know I
186 mean seriously that's a huge part of why
187 my studio exists is bands that could not
188 afford to book cello or you know Ocean
189 Way or the record plant and as much as I
190 love going to studios because I love
191 supporting the idea of studios and I
192 love having the support staff and I love
193 having larger tracking rooms when
194 there's no money for it I can't spend
195 money to make a record unless you know
196 it's on my label which I spend money to
197 make records for that but you know I
198 can't lose money so it became a
199 necessity and now I love it I would
200 never mix anywhere else it's just I walk
201 in and I start mixing I don't have to
202 figure anything out and I probably work
203 twice as fast as I would anywhere else
204 nice nice and Europe year I was on a
205 different level but in a situation
206 that's similar to what many people
207 watching this video are in where you
208 have a studio in a room that wasn't
209 purpose-built as a studio correct so do
210 you have any suggestions or tips or
211 approaches people can take for making a
212 room that's not designed to be a studio
213 work as a studio yeah I think one of the
214 main things that sometimes people don't
215 remember is that control rooms and
216 recording rooms are totally different
217 animals so first of all forget about

218 trying to be the live room at Ocean Way
219 you're building a listening room for
220 your control room and really if you
221 think about it some of the best places
222 you've ever heard music playback is in a
223 living room and the idea of my control
224 room I'm lucky because it's a very big
225 room and it has high ceilings but for me
226 it's that the room doesn't sound like
227 anything mm-hmm
228 so I hear my speakers and that's it I'm
229 not trying to get certain acoustic
230 things out of the room so the thing to
231 do is to fix what's broken with your
232 room
233 as opposed to try and make a fantastic
234 room things like base trapping you don't
235 have to tune the room for base trapping
236 just break up the corners you know put
237 lean the mattress up in a corner and see
238 if that makes it sound better and if it
239 does build something that's kind of like
240 a mattress but looks better if they're
241 really easy tricks about when you set up
242 your speaker's if you're in a small
243 rectangular room first of all don't set
244 up straight in the room try going
245 diagonally and that will break things up
246 get somebody to hold a mirror on the
247 wall and when you can see your speaker
248 you've just found the first reflection
249 off the wall just put a carpet on there
250 right you don't have to get like a
251 really expensive set of things I mean

252 there's some amazing products out there
253 which would work better than just
254 hanging up a packing blanket but you can
255 do a lot by hanging up a packing blanket
256 just cutting down on first reflections
257 fix the worst of the problems and just
258 make it so it's fun to listen to music
259 and you're good right and then just
260 learn your room mm-hmm and I think there
261 are also a lot of people who will spend
262 a lot of time treating a room and not
263 think about the fact that they have
264 speakers that sound terrible get good
265 sounding speakers and then you can
266 actually hear what's going on right
267 right
268 so you mentioned having fun listening to
269 music and we've kind of been dancing
270 around the issue of sound quality and
271 the reason that Mohave audio and royal
272 Labs brought you in here was for a
273 presentation you do called lost in
274 translation tell us what that's about
275 basically what it's about is I realized
276 about two and a half years ago that as
277 an engineer and a producer in a mixer I
278 didn't have a really good handle on what
279 happened when I was done with the record
280 so I know everything about making
281 records well certainly not everything
282 but I know a lot about making records
283 sure but I knew nothing about the
284 ecosystem involved in my record making
285 it to someone's computer through iTunes

286 or Amazon or streaming it through
287 Pandora or Spotify and what it sounded
288 like what the actual file formats were
289 what conversion process they use did
290 they do any mastering beforehand do was
291 it a single step encoder or a dual step
292 encoder all of this stuff that we sort
293 of kind did know about but not really
294 and I decided I wanted to really learn
295 about it and when I did realized I need
296 to tell people this because it's
297 actually really important because it's
298 so
299 easy to make a record and you think it
300 sounds awesome and then go great that's
301 done right let's send it off out into
302 the universe and very few people who
303 make records actually go buy their own
304 records to see what they sound like
305 people don't spend the time to upload
306 their own music to YouTube so they can
307 control what is being encoded into the
308 format's that most people will listen to
309 music so it was a way of sort of
310 quantifying it and originally the
311 Recording Academy NER has sponsored me
312 to do the talk and then since then I
313 mean getting dusty and John at Mojave
314 and grower to bring me out here to do
315 that was I mean it's amazing because it
316 feels like it's a it's a message that
317 people understand that everybody should
318 hear so you start thinking about what it
319 is you're listening to right and the

320 fact that there are manufacturers who
321 have nothing to do with consumer audio
322 distribution saying you know what we
323 need you to go tell this group of people
324 and we need you to go tell this group of
325 people it's just it's a great step
326 forward I think in making people sort of
327 appreciate music and appreciate audio
328 quality as having something to do with
329 the art of music which of course is what
330 music is all about right right right
331 now it's a it's like an hour-long
332 presentation or more and you play a play
333 examples and it's it's very revealing
334 when you hear some of it some of the
335 differences and things but for people
336 watching the video is there something we
337 can do as music creators to get a better
338 result in the end aside from educating
339 ourselves on this well I mean obviously
340 making your record sound as good as you
341 can helps but it this is not really an
342 issue about audio file mixing in V I
343 want to win a Grammy for my engineering
344 way it's more about however I've decided
345 my record is great and done and ready to
346 go out into the world how do I make sure
347 that that is translated in the best way
348 to the people who are actually going to
349 listen to the records so in that case
350 there Apple has published a great white
351 paper about how to master for iTunes and
352 they have a whole program mastered for
353 iTunes

354 so having 24-bit source files delivered
355 to Apple instead of 16-bit giving the
356 encoders half a DB of headroom will give
357 you a lot less distortion on a loud mix
358 then if you just give it a full scale
359 mix and this doesn't mean
360 don't limit it it just means you can
361 take your limited brick wall mix and
362 turn it down half a DB and encode it and
363 it will sound better than if you don't
364 so there are some really specific
365 guidelines but I think most of it is
366 just being aware of the fact that all of
367 these services sound different and that
368 all of these services are based on
369 content delivery not on music listening
370 experience and as consumers going back
371 to these companies and saying man your
372 stuff sounds terrible and I am no longer
373 going to subscribe or I'm gonna stay a
374 subscriber because I love your service
375 but write a letter to say please make
376 this sound better
377 you know this stuff sounds bad and so
378 hopefully they'll be sort of a not a
379 grassroots movement but the consumers
380 will be educated because anybody who
381 makes records for living is also a
382 consumer and we are the most informed
383 consumers there are yet very few of us
384 actually know what's going on right so
385 it's just an attempt to educate and give
386 context so that the next time you listen
387 to XM radio you realize what bitrate

388 that is and why it might not be the best
389 sounding place to showcase your record
390 yeah sure sure
391 I think there's increased awareness
392 right now because Neil Young has is is a
393 player coming out the high-resolution
394 apone all right yeah the high-resolution
395 player and there's a lot of buzz about
396 that it'll be interesting to see whether
397 that you know really catches on in a
398 broad sense exactly I mean I think that
399 it has potential to catch on as a
400 product itself but hopefully what it
401 really does is just makes regular folks
402 who buy music think about oh there's
403 more than one option for how I listen to
404 this and maybe pono isn't the one I want
405 but I actually want to go after finding
406 a CD which is getting more and more
407 difficult or you know going back to
408 vinyl or something but not just sort of
409 taking whatever you can get and saying
410 well that's all there is right right
411 so you kind of came up the classic route
412 you went to recording school there
413 studied recording anyway in school and
414 then worked your way up through through
415 different ways the industry has changed
416 so much yeah what do you advise do you
417 have for someone who wants to get into
418 being a mixer wants to work in the in
419 the music production area run away I'm
420 kidding but I mean I would say that
421 there used to sort of be

422 myth in the music industry that it was
423 like playing the lottery but the odds
424 were pretty good you know you could toil
425 away and not make much money and then
426 all of a sudden you'd be a gazillionaire
427 and be on MTV Cribs and nobody's
428 becoming a gazillion or so the first
429 thing is make sure that it's your
430 passion and you love it because
431 otherwise you really shouldn't do it do
432 it as a hobby you know there's plenty
433 you can do in your spare time but if you
434 love it and it's really what you want to
435 do then I think at this point it's very
436 hard to find a mentoring way into the
437 industry you know there are very few
438 studios you can go be a runner at and
439 then be an assistant and your work your
440 way up so I think if you just start
441 doing it that's the best way to do it
442 the best way to learn how to record a
443 band is to record a band so now I mean
444 especially through you guys it's easy
445 and not that expensive to get a decent
446 sounding set up with a few microphones
447 get yourself a couple of lawyers a
448 couple of my hobbies set them up with
449 your laptop and start recording bands
450 and learn about acoustics and learn
451 about electronics and learn about all
452 the stuff because I think the one thing
453 and this has always been the case is
454 that recording is very technical and
455 involves a lot of physics and involves

456 acoustics involves electronics and now
457 it involves computers and digital audio
458 theory so there's a lot of technical
459 stuff that you need to know but that
460 technical stuff should be just a given
461 so that it's at the service of your art
462 and the creative process so just read as
463 much as you can read interviews with
464 other people you know I mean interviews
465 with me are useless but interviews with
466 other people are awesome I mean if you
467 can sit down and read ten pages of what
468 Chad Blake thinks about something and
469 what maybe Morgan thinks about something
470 you'll learn just as much from that
471 watch pensado's place brilliant
472 absolutely brilliant actually sit down
473 for an hour with someone as just intense
474 and invested in the art of making
475 records as Dave is and the questions he
476 will ask is like hey what about the
477 reverb on that thing in the third verse
478 of that song on beat 4 and like what and
479 then you go back and deconstruct your
480 own process and so I think just as much
481 as you can learn and be exposed to
482 people who've been doing it longer than
483 you just do it because that's as close
484 as you'll get to being able to sit in
485 the back of the room and be
486 that by an engineer right right great
487 advice great advice thanks for coming in
488 today
489 of course the the presentation was

490 awesome there's just I mean so much
491 value to that I think you know like you
492 had said what we're doing is creating
493 art and so getting it out there with the
494 best possible quality I think it's just
495 a paramount importance yes very cool
496 that you're doing this and we really
497 appreciate it
498 awesome thanks great to see again all
499 right I'm Mitch Gallagher thanks for
500 joining me for this we came in it
501 he's Mitch Gallagher