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7 rules for hearing survival

Sound Advice · SAMC Sofia, 15 October 2026 · with Ziggy (Metropolis), Armin & Alen

Your ears are the one instrument you can't replace. Noise damage builds up without pain, and it's permanent. These seven habits keep you playing, mixing and dancing for life.

1 Know your numbers
Every +3 dB halves your safe listening time. Put a free dB meter app on your phone and check your booth.

2 Plug in before it rings
Put your earplugs in at soundcheck, not at peak time. Ringing means the damage has already happened.

3 Wear proper music earplugs
Reusable music earplugs (SNR 24 dB) cut about 22 dB in the bass and mids and more in the harsh highs. You still hear the music, just quieter.

4 Monitor down, not master up
The booth monitor is usually your biggest dose. Keep it as low as you can and point it at your body, not your head.

5 Give your ears quiet time
After a loud night, give your ears a quiet day. Skip the headphones on the way home.

6 Ringing for over 24 h? Act
Ringing that won't go away, or sudden muffled hearing: see an ENT doctor within days. Early treatment matters.

7 Test once a year
Get a hearing test every year. Know your baseline before something changes.

Custom earplugs for your crew?
Personalised or custom-molded earplugs for artists, labels and festivals: **alen@ertg.eu**

How long is "safe"? (per day)

Busy street	**85 dB**	8 hours
Rehearsal room	**94 dB**	1 hour
Club dance floor	**100 dB**	15 minutes
DJ booth & monitors	**106 dB**	under 4 minutes
Festival front row	**110 dB**	under 2 minutes

NIOSH recommended exposure limit: 85 dB for 8 hours, 3 dB exchange rate. Venue levels are typical values.

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