

The Eye of the Storm

“When things are swirling, move to the eye of the storm” he says. “Quote of the day.”

The other interns and I smile politely, nod approvingly and make encouraging sounds. I wrote it down because even if it was just an office comment, it resonated for me somehow within its cliché. You could say the semester before was “swirling.” My personal life was maybe not in shambles, but it was rough. Junior year is a raucous time for everyone. What was evocative about this seemingly harmless quote was that it represented my experience at Dualtone Music Group. It signified the admission of my true passion in the music industry: something that until this year I was afraid and intimidated to admit to myself, even though everyone else pretty much knew. So after a “swirling” semester, I retreated to the deepest question within myself: toward “the eye of the storm”.

Before delving into my internship I should explain my schedule this summer: On May 9th I began my time at Dualtone, working nine to five (and sometimes beyond), Monday through Friday. I worked for six out of the eight weeks of my internship allotment. On June 20th, I began the adventure of a lifetime with three incredible women and my band members, The Mother Pluckers. We stayed no more than three nights in over thirteen cities, staying with friends and family and playing music to whoever would listen. After the month-long whirlwind, I returned to Dualtone for my final two weeks.

The daily tasks as a Dualtone intern can range from fulfilling merchandise orders and taking inventory to something like a goose chase exploring Nashville to find the best deal on record players. Much of what each intern does depends on their interest and skill level.

Dualtone recently began a monthly vinyl subscription service, The Vinyl Den, that interns got the opportunity to brainstorm marketing and miscellaneous ideas for. One of my favorite tasks was updating or researching Spotify playlists. Social media is a huge aspect of the label, and Spotify is comparatively new and different. For much of our generation, it is the only way that we listen to music; playlists are created and shared amongst millions of followers and, especially for independent or up-and-coming artists, it is a major contributor to new listeners. Seeing how artists can grow their fan base on social media helped me to understand how better to showcase the Pluckers, and this knowledge will guide me in future musical endeavors.

In fact, a lot of what I was doing at the label assisted the Pluckers and me in pursuing our passion. I learned how to better assemble a comprehensive itinerary, how to approach booking and all around how to portray an intentional image as a band. While the funding for my internship at Dualtone was only used for my eight weeks spent there, both my new knowledge and my flexible schedule allowed me insight into the world that I hope to become a part of and gave me a new understanding of *possibility*.

What makes Dualtone unique as a label is its small size: there are only eight full time employees. I got the opportunity to get to know each of them through various tasks, meetings and lunches; a chance not many interns experience in large offices. Each person offers a unique insight into the music industry and how to negotiate within its confines and push its limits. They are some of the “coolest”, most hard-working people I know. In short, I consider each of them a singularly powerful role model.

With these role models in mind, one of the most humbling pieces of advice or perhaps forewarning that I received from this experience was that “most musicians are pretty unhappy.” In years before this internship, I might have nodded and said “yes, that’s why I am going to be a

_____.” Defining success in the music industry is a huge gray area especially when it comes to performance: If you do not “make it big” are you still a successful artist? If you do, will you be made miserable by celebrityhood? In such a competitive field in which increasingly quantity is valued over quality how can you ever expect to be satisfied? How can you remain true to yourself but make a living doing something that you love.

These fears alone could frighten any logical person away from the music industry.

However, through the knowledge gained with my summer at Dualtone and throughout the course of The Mother Pluckers Couch Surf Tour, I was able to face the storm and realize that the only thing that would keep me from feeling success would be if I did not try to pursue music in the first place. Ultimately, this summer helped me find the “eye of the storm” and it is a calm place indeed.