

*American Songwriter* Magazine is a constantly growing bimonthly publication in a consistently narrowing market. What began as a small, local music magazine in 1984 has evolved into publication read worldwide, and in spite of industry standards, subscription and readership numbers are actually increasing. The magazine focuses on an interesting niche of the music industry—songwriting. Like many similar publications, they include Q&As and features with established and up-and-coming artists, but every issue also includes guitar, gear and songwriting tips. Not to mention that every artist featured in the magazine is a songwriter as well, regardless of the genre in which they fall.

With an in-office staff of only four, including publisher Albie Del Favaro, editor-in-chief Caine O'Rear, managing editor Evan Schlansky and office coordinator Carrie Acree, much of the magazine's print and online content comes from freelance writers and editors who work from home. This made for an ideal and busy work environment for the five summer interns.

One skill that I did not foresee to accrue as an editorial intern was web design. Since freelance writers weren't in the office to put their own stories on the *American Songwriter* website ([americansongwriter.com](http://americansongwriter.com)), interns would format and copy edit each news story, Q&A, feature, and review in Wordpress, which I now feel very comfortable working with. I was also lucky enough to be assigned to write many of these stories as well. In my eight weeks with the magazine, I wrote 22 articles, most of which were news stories that I would be assigned to and expected to finish within an hour. Even after working at a couple of newspapers in the past, I've never had to turn around stories so

quickly. I found that I thrived under the pressure, and learned to trust my instincts in word choice and tone.

My favorite article to write, however, was an interview with country singer-songwriter Brett Eldredge. Although the questions I asked him were prewritten, and the interview took place over the phone, I felt empowered knowing that I had earned the skills to calmly conduct an interview with a well known musician. He actually sounded much more nervous than I felt.

Another high point for me was to be given the responsibility to copy edit the magazine in print. With only two editors in the office, the edits made by interns were not only taken seriously, but also incredibly necessary. It was satisfying to make a correction, small or large, and see the final version of the story improved because of it. One mistake in a very well written piece can derail the entire argument, and although editing is a far less creative process than writing, it can be just as important.

Social media is incredibly important for publications these days because it brings traffic to their websites. *American Songwriter* has accounts with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and Tumblr. Marketing interns' main responsibilities were to take care of these platforms, but I was often assigned to write tweets for online news stories. I was encouraged to be clever and connect succinctly to the story, which was often easier said than done. I also had a small amount of previous experience editing video material, so I was put in charge of editing footage from in-office performances for YouTube.

Having artists perform in the office was one of the most exciting and surreal parts about working at *American Songwriter*. None of the bands and artists would be

considered famous, but all are definitely up-and-coming, and it was incredible to be in an audience of five for their performance. I sat a couple of feet away for performances by Bob Schneider, Jared Ashely, Devon Allman, The Howlin' Brothers, and Mandolin Orange.

I loved my work environment not only for the free live music, but largely because of my co-workers. Our shared interest in both music and journalism gave everyone an automatic common ground, which made me feel at ease almost immediately. We would also go to many of the same concerts and discuss them the next day at work, which is something fairly unique to our office and our industry.

My experience this summer absolutely confirmed my career aspirations. I love writing about music, whether it be an album review, a feature, or news story. But I realized that what I want the most in my future career is the work environment that exists at *American Songwriter*. It doesn't matter the genre or size of the publication, but the people who work there. It takes a certain type of person to work in publishing; someone hardworking, entertaining, talented, passionate, and even a little bit strange. I want to continue to work with these people. It doesn't need to be at a music magazine necessarily, but I do hope to write for some sort of publication after graduation.