

DR. AUDIO

New digital editing service to make 'house calls'

BY BARRY RICE The days of doctors making house calls may be over, but freelance audio engineer Tom Krol plans to revive the tradition—with a twist.

Under the banner of TK Audio, Krol will visit small recording studios and corporate production facilities that haven't yet invested in digital editing equipment. Instead of treating patients, he'll manipulate sound using a digital editing system on a Macintosh computer.

Krol believes TK Audio is the first service of its kind in Chicago. He's invested \$32,000 in personal funds and small-business loans to acquire the tools he'll carry in his doctor's bag:

- a Mac 650 with a 1.7 gigabyte hard drive that can store two hours of stereo sound;
- ProTools digital editing software equipped to handle four tracks;
- StudioVision music sequencing software;

• SampleCell software used to create drum machine and keyboard sounds.

Since acquiring the equipment last month, Krol, 27, has already mastered a CD for local artist Wendy Morgan of Renegade Records. He's now marketing the service to other potential clients.

He points out that many sound engineers work on a freelance basis for facilities that don't have efficient editing equipment or engineers who know how to operate it.

"Two years ago I completed a job for Allstate that I could have done in a fraction of the time if I had had my own digital editing equipment," he recalls. "They're still splicing tape with a razor blade. If I would have had the audio on hard disk, I would have been finished by lunch, but it took me two days."



Tom Krol

After receiving a bachelor's in sound recording and music from DePaul University, Krol began freelancing for What the Hale Music and Allstate Insurance. He came up with the idea for a portable editing service during a trip to Atlanta, where he heard about an audio engineer with a similar service.

"There's a lot of digital editing going on in Chicago, so I know there is a market for it," he says. "It's easier for a small recording studio to buy a multitrack recorder and run it than

to learn how to use a digital editing system. It requires a little bit more engineering."

A typical job will work like this:

- Krol will transport about 100 pounds of equipment to his client's facility. He can bring his own computer monitor or use a special converter to hook up to a client's TV.

- He'll transfer the audio from a DAT or any other digital or analog format to his hard drive.

- After editing anything from voiceover tracks to music mixes on ProTools, he'll transfer the finished product back to his client's DAT, videotape or other format.

Because he doesn't have the overhead of operating an office, Krol says his rates (between \$40 and \$60 an hour) are lower than many large recording facilities. He also charges \$50 to travel to the client's facility.

Though he expects most of his business to come from small recording studios and corporate media departments, Krol plans to test the agency market to see if they would "hire an outside portable studio for projects that would require more editing equipment than they have," he says. "I'm talking about big agencies. A lot of times they want to use their own people, but they have limitations. They don't have the processing power I do."

TK Audio is located at 1730 W. Erie St., 60622; phone, 666-1920. ■