

DISC MAKERS' STUDIO PARTNER PROGRAM PRESENTS:

37 RECORDING TIPS



These valuable tips and techniques were collected from some of the country's top studio and mastering engineers to help you get the most out of the recording and mixing process.

BEFORE YOU GO IN

- 1 Record your songs during live gigs and pre-production rehearsals. Even a simple single track recording may reveal weak parts of songs.
- 2 Have all the musical and vocal parts worked out. (Know your guitar solos!)
- 3 Using a computer or sequencer? Prepare all sequenced material before the session.
- 4 If you plan to use a click track, make sure your drummer is comfortable playing to it. (To get tight, practice to a click track at a very slow tempo.)
- 5 Rehearse more songs than you plan to record. You never know which songs will sound strong on the final tape. (If you plan to have a four-song EP, prepare six songs just in case.)
- 6 Take care of your body before and during your recording sessions. Eat well, get enough sleep, and keep your ears rested and clear.

SETTING UP

- 7 Be early! At some studios, the clock starts running whether you're there or not. Find out about their cancellation policy as well.
- 8 Make the studio a comfortable and relaxed place. If it's not, it will show in your finished product.
- 9 Make sure you and the engineer have the same vision – go over your songs with him/her before recording. Before booking your studio time, ask to hear other material the engineer recorded.
- 10 Depending on whether your studio has 8, 16, 24, or 48 track capability, plan out how you will leave room for all of the essential parts. This should simplify the mix and eliminate the need for bouncing tracks later.
- 11 Use new strings, cords, drum sticks and heads – and bring spares!
- 12 Find out the hours of the local music store just in case...
- 13 Don't use new gear or different equipment that you haven't used before, even if it's "better than what you have." Surprises can cause problems.

THE RECORDING PROCESS

- 14 Remember, it's emotion and feeling that make the best song, not necessarily the best technical rendition.
- 15 If you mess up a part while recording, don't stop and start over. That can easily cause you to burn out. Instead, check to see if the engineer can punch in the correction.
- 16 You don't have to fill all the tracks on the tape – don't try to force something that won't fit.
- 17 Always keep in mind the focus of your music. If it's the vocals, plan to spend the most time on them. Don't waste time on things that don't highlight the focal point.
- 18 Get the sound you want while recording. (Never assume that you can fix it in the mix.)
- 19 Unless you have unique effects, record individual tracks clean and add effects later.
- 20 Don't necessarily double track everything. Doubling a lead vocal can hide all the subtleties that make a song personal and likable (although it can work well for a chorus).
- 21 Know when to quit for the day. If you're tired, it will show.
- 22 Keep guests out! It's your recording. Guests will distract you and may sway your opinion of how the music should sound.
- 23 Make backup copies after every recording session.
- 24 Tune up often.
- 25 Singers: always bring water but don't use ice! Ice constricts your vocal chords. Hot tea with lemon and honey works well to relax your vocal chords.
- 26 Always get a track listing and accurate time log from the studio.

MONITORING THE MIX

- 27 Listen to your music at moderate levels in your car or on a boom box. This is how most of your fans will listen to it, and mixing at loud levels will fatigue your ears and distort the "true" sound.
- 28 Sometimes it's good to take a day off and come back to listen. The same applies for mixdown. Ears don't last very long in the studio!

As you review each mix, make sure you can comfortably hear all of the instruments. Tweak the mix on a small pair of speakers at an extremely low volume. Headphones are also very valuable at this stage, but don't base your final decision on them. You should be able to pick up each instrument even at this level.

29

Learn to recognize ear fatigue. You're better off quitting a session early when you're tired than wasting time making a bad mix that will have to be redone anyway.

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MIXING

Listen in the studio to CDs you're used to hearing on your home stereo to get an idea of how the studio's system sounds.

31

If mixing somewhere other than the recording studio, make sure you use the same speakers. If not, the mix will sound completely different.

32

Once you have selected an engineer (or a producer) to mix your recording, have them do the first mix. Their ears are better trained than yours. Try to keep an open mind.

33

Think about the songs as a whole and not just the individual instruments. Otherwise everyone will want their instrument louder in the mix.

34

Determine a band spokesperson ahead of time. An engineer getting five different opinions on how to mix will grow tired and might cause him/her to rush through the job.

35

Decide which format you want the finished mixes to be on: high resolution .wav or .aiff files on CD-R, DVD-R, or flash drive are the preferred format, however an audio CD or DAT are viable options as well.

36

Budget for and count on unforeseen delays.

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★ EXTRA TIP ★

Always, always, always make a safety master.
It preserves your recording investment
should your original master get damaged.

THE NEXT STEP...

Thought about what to do with your recording once it's done? Disc Makers has partnered with your studio to give you the best recording and the highest quality CD and DVD manufacturing. You have a lot riding on your recording. Only Disc Makers offers you everything you need to make your CD a success, including:

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