



HEADLINE STUDIOS

Is This You're First Time?

BEFORE YOU BOOK ANY STUDIO TIME

Work out a budget of how much money you have to spend. This way we'll be able to advise you on how many tracks you will realistically be able to complete to a high quality standard. It is better to record fewer tracks to a high quality than to rush through loads in a small amount of time.

Make sure you are ready and all your material is written and arranged. Don't waste valuable time and money in the studio on things that can be done at home or in the rehearsal room.

This point can't be stressed enough.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SESSION

If you're working with a producer discuss production ideas ahead of the session.

If possible pass on a rough demo of the songs or arrange for him/her to see you live at a gig or in the rehearsal room. It can also be useful to hand over reference CDs that serve as a good example of production styles you are trying to achieve.

Change guitar strings and drum heads at least a day before coming into the studio and make certain you have extra sets of everything just in case.

Make sure all your equipment is serviced and working properly. If you are sequencing tracks or using beats have them on a CD or hard drive when you arrive.

If you are using a click track, work out the BPM for the tempo in advance. This will save time in the studio. It is advisable to rehearse using a click track prior to the session; the studio can reveal in detail any inconsistencies with tempo.

Provide the engineer/producer with lyric sheets; this will be your mutual reference point to find start/stop points during tracking and mix-down.

Come into the session rested and clear-headed.

Recording can be a physically and mentally demanding process.

If you are not using on-site catering facilities make sure you bring plenty of food and water.



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During the Session

The studio is an expensive place to party so try and stay focused and refrain from drinking and other recreational activities.

Tune up as often as possible. Between every take is advised.

When work is going on in the control room try to keep talking to a minimum as this may distract the engineer/producer.

Take regular 5-minute breaks to give your ears a rest. If you're not actively involved at times, socialise in the studio lounge allowing the participants to concentrate fully.

If the entire band is present during mix-down appoint a spokesperson to be the liaison between the band and the engineer/producer. Work out any differences of opinion as a band and try not to put the engineer in the middle as a referee. Listen for the overall balance between sounds and think about the song as a whole.

Not every sound can be front and centre. Do what is best for the track, not for you as an individual.

Relax. Remember you are not just recording sounds you're recording a whole vibe and mood.

Studio Lingo

LIVE RECORDING

This is when the band are recorded playing together similar to a rehearsal or live performance situation. It is possible to overdub extra parts on to the recording after you have done your live takes.

OVERDUBS

This is when the band are recorded individually one after the other.

CLICK TRACK

This a metronome type sound that the performers will hear through their headphones that keeps the song at a constant tempo. Using a click track to can help greatly when you get to the mixing stage.

GUIDE TRACK (Ghost Track)

This is a rough recording of a song made early on in the session that gives the band a guide to play along to during an overdub recording situation.



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The Recording Process

Where possible the drummer should arrive 2 hours before the rest of the band. This allows a decent amount of undivided one on one time between the drummer and the engineer/producer.

If it is a live recording the rest of the band will set up and sound check individually in an order set by the engineer/producer. Traditionally this would be drums, bass, guitars, keyboards then vocals.

After this has been done you are almost ready to record.

If the recording is to be done using overdubs, after the drummer has sound checked the rest of the band will set up in the control room and sound check ready to start recording guide tracks.

During the process outlined above the engineer/producer will also set up a headphone mix for each individual musician. This is so you can hear each other clearly and to also hear how the engineer is hearing you.

At this point if you are to use a click track the engineer will set it up through your headphones.

The engineer/producer will now ask you to play all together just to fine tune the levels and ensure everything is ready to start tracking.

You are now ready to start recording takes.

The Mixing Process

Once you have finished recording all the parts required you have reached the mixing stage of the process. This is the point when all the individual tracks are balanced, equalised and any effects (reverbs, delays etc) are added and the tracks become how they will sound on your finished product.

It is advisable to mix on a separate day to recording.

Once each track is at a point that it is considered by everyone to be finished the engineer will bounce all the individual tracks down to 2-track ready to put on a master CD that can be played on a normal stereo system.

The engineer/producer will now take the final 2-track mix and master it to ensure that it is at a suitable level and equalised well enough to be played on most stereo systems. Mastering is an art in itself and some studios specialise solely on this process.

The recordings are now complete... almost!

It is recommended at this point that the CD is taken out of the studio and played on many different stereo systems, car stereos, crappy boom boxes and anything you can get your hands on. This is to ensure that your music sounds great wherever and on whatever system it gets played on. If anything needs correcting at this point you may want to return to the studio and spend a couple of hours getting things as you like them.