

Getting the most out of your recording session

The rules? --- There are no rules!

The Recording Process --- Some options to consider

One at a time or all together?

A great advantage of multi-track recording is that all instrumentation does not need to be recorded at the same time.

Whilst recording "one part at a time" will inevitably take longer, the final mixed arrangement can be more carefully controlled by the artist e.g. It is common for instruments providing rhythm foundation (e.g. percussion, bass and rhythm guitar) to be recorded first, followed by other accompaniment.

This approach does allow for the arrangement to be built up in "manageable" elements (*any minor technical errors corrected and / or "best takes" chosen before moving on*).

That said, many small combos will record their entire instrumental arrangements at one time – performing several "takes" to ensure that they have a choice of "best performance". This then opens the possibility of adding details such as main vocal separately followed by any harmony vocals or extra instrument embellishments.

The choice is ultimately up to the artist and how they feel most comfortable performing. (And budget)

Editing and mixing

Many artists just wish to end up with basic "raw mixes" – comprised of the best "takes" with minimal editing – but no audio processing.

However, if an artist wishes to distribute their work it is inevitable that some degree of editing and mixing is performed – i.e. all elements of a recording are balanced so that they sound harmonious.

Some artists leave this task up to a "producer" whilst others will do it themselves with the help of a competent recording engineer.

The advent of digital technology has made a wealth of tools available (although the time taken to get things right has not got any shorter).

Mastering

"Mastering" is applied to add the final gloss to a mix. Once your songs are recorded and mixed, they can be shaped, scooped, equalized, compressed etc. so that they sound as though they belong together.

Some producers concentrate on making mixes loud so they can compete with other commercial records when heard on the radio or on your iPod. However, an important element of the mastering process is to ensure that your recorded songs still remain true when played over a wide range of audio equipment. Carefully processing (mastering) the finally mixed recording can add elements which will make your recording stand alongside any commercial label release.

Please remember – **This is YOUR recording session.**

Take advice / have a good think about what you want to achieve before starting

1. Rehearse well
2. Find a quiet room where you feel comfortable performing that will ultimately be used for the recording session
3. Write down a basic overview of what you want to achieve during the session e.g.
 - a. Start and finish times
 - b. Allow 1 hour for setting up recording equipment and a sound check
 - c. What songs you wish to record?
 - i. How many "takes" of each do you want to do
 - ii. If there are a few band members – who is involved when?
 - d. Allow time for review of takes before moving on to next step
 - e. Allow for a short breaks during the recording session
 - f. Allow time at the end of the session to prepare basic raw mixes for review
 - g. Bring a digital storage device so you can keep a copy of all your hard work – you may wish to work further on it later!

After recording –

- a. Raw mix?
- b. Further work?
 - a. What needs doing?
 - b. How long are you willing to spend?

It is possible to choose a particular song to work on here – and allocate some mixing time and any specific actions that you may want. Further songs may be completed later and then the entire collection mastered to ensure a coherent package.

Hope this helps a little

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