

A Basic Guide to Getting the Most from your Studio Session

Getting the Basics Right

There is no substitute for being prepared. Practice, practice, practice. Make sure everyone knows their parts note perfect. The more you practice the better you get, and the more likely the session will run without any hiccups. An under-rehearsed band tends to make a lot of mistakes, therefore using up valuable studio time recording re-takes. The studio session is the real thing, **not a rehearsal**.

Fit new strings on guitars and put good condition heads on any drums. Use guitar tuners and try to have the drum kit tuned. Always bring a spare set of strings in case of breakage. Make a list of all the equipment you will need with you – instruments, amplifiers, effects pedals, leads, strings, skins etc. Make sure you don't forget bits of equipment that you then waste time getting whilst the clock is running on the session.

Have Realistic Goals

Recording takes time so don't plan to do an unrealistic number of songs in the time booked. Speak with the studio about the schedule for recording and take their professional advice. If possible, talk to the sound engineer in advance about the session and what you want to achieve.

Allow as much time for mixing as recording if possible. At a bare minimum, you will need half the time spent recording to do the mixing. The mixing is critical to getting the sound and feel you want – and a recording that sounds professional. Don't skimp on the mix!

Time Management - Get to the Studio on Time!

At the start of the session the engineer will wait until you have set up your instruments before placing mics, stands, headphones etc. After this is done the engineer will need to soundcheck each instrument to set up levels adding any equalisation and processing that may be necessary. This can then be recorded and commented on with adjustments being made if necessary. Allow time for set-up and do this efficiently – don't waste time!

The Recording

Try to get backing tracks as accurate and solid as possible, as mistakes in the rhythm tracks stand out and a tight performance really makes a song (hence the practice, practice, practice previously mentioned). Relax, but do not accept a take unless you are completely satisfied with it.

Think hard about the sounds you want to create. Take the engineer recorded examples of how you want the instruments or vocals to sound and they may be able to recreate those sounds in the studio (i.e. take recordings of yourselves or other artists using the effects and sounds you want on your recording).

Take advice from your engineer. Very often, bands wish to recreate their "live" sound. This is sometimes fine. But studio recordings are very different to gigs and the engineer will have experience of what works (and what doesn't!). Listen to their advice.

And Finally ...

Be patient! Recording, by its nature, is a repetitive process which will include periods of inactivity for the musicians. Bring something (sensible) to occupy your time and always be professional - remember, you're at work!