



## Recording a Demo

A good studio will have everything a rehearsal studio has and more, including full recording facilities, effects, sound engineer and possibly separate drum and vocal booths. How you record your tracks depends on your competence and preferred method of working.

- Live Recording = Record your songs "live" as if you were performing at a gig - allows you to retain the energy of performance and is the quickest way if you are an experienced band or singer.
- Layered Recording = Each instrument is recorded separately, often to a click track or guide vocal - much slower but produces more professional results - better for newcomers but far more expensive due to the extra time taken.
- Recording to Backing Tracks = Many studios now provide this cheaper alternative and will often provide the backing tracks for you to use. This method is suitable for newcomers, solo artists, duo's and vocal groups.

Costs range from an hourly rate to \$70 per day and you will have to include the mix down time into your budget (anything from 1 hour to 7 days depending on amount of tracks recorded & instruments used) and your finished 1/4", 1/2", 1" or 2" master tape which you should negotiate to retain. (If buying your own master tape Ampex are good but make sure that the tape width is compatible to the recording studio's equipment.) The hourly or daily rates rarely include the cost of the master tape, cd duplication, artwork, backing tracks, licensing, musicians and producers fees unless stated otherwise.

If you can spare the time and cash, record 8-10 tracks, use the best 2-3 on your demo tapes and press an album to sell at your gigs.

A studio may offer a package deal that reflects their working preferences. For instance - those that prefer to block book and work on albums, long term projects, bands will offer a block booking package at a reduced price i.e, hourly rate, reduced block booking rate e.g. 8 hours

A more recent concept is the small production studio which concentrates on package deals designed for solo artists, songwriters and vocal groups. The singer can choose between a wide range of professionally produced quality backing tracks from a variety of artists provided by or licensed to the studio specifically for demo use. This usually consists of a set time period (1 or 2 hours etc.), in which your voice is recorded and mixed with the track by a sound engineer and/or music producer who may also offer original songwriting production/remixing services. The studio normally retains the master tape which may get erased or re-used for other artists (you may have the option to purchase the master), and you get to take home the finished CD complete with neatly produced artwork, label and inlay.

### Who Owns the Copyright on recorded material?

1. The author of the song owns the copyright (if that's you - copyright protect your music before allowing anyone to hear or view your composition).
2. If you collaborate with another artist/musician to create a song you both own the copyright unless agreed otherwise.
3. If the studio provides musical expertise - i.e, puts music to your lyrics - technically they own the copyright to the music and you own copyright to the lyrics. Check with the studio / musician / producer for their policies and negotiate possible copyright purchase or royalty payments prior to recording.
4. If you are recording a cover version YOU are responsible for obtaining permission for use from the artist, publisher or recording company who owns the copyright. Acceptable use for a covers song usually includes non-commercial use i.e, a demo for bookers, agents, managers or A&R, however, if you intend to record cover versions with the intention of selling the CD at gigs, radio airplay or release then you MUST obtain permission and pay any fees required.

### Who Owns the Master?

1. If you purchase the medium (i.e., tape, cassette, minidisk) on which the master is recorded then it belongs to you.
2. If the studio owns the medium on which the songs are recorded - they own the master in production but you own the completed master. (In other words the song is still yours as is the finished product, however the tape or other medium on which it was originally recorded is retained by the studio. Usually these tapes get re-used and it's not an issue, however, dubious individuals could use snippets of your song or even re-mix and release this material without your permission.

This problem is easily solved - most studios will negotiate and although you'll pay more to take the original master away with you - it's worth the potential worry and aggravation.

## **What to put on a demo!**

Ideally before you record your demo you need to think about what your aiming for. If you want a solo singer/songwriting career then original songs are a must.

Whatever area you want to work in albeit covers or original, cabaret, theatre, festivals or the solo/duo/band pub/club circuit then the demo should be a compilation of your interpretation of the type of songs you will be performing (i.e., ambient, blues, choral, classical, country, folk, gospel, jazz, opera, rock, theatrical, heavy metal) for your potential audience.

Basically you need to tailor your demo tape/cd to the market you are aiming to perform for. For a working musician this would be the style of music you feel comfortable playing with competence regardless of whether it is a cover version of a favourite song or artist or your own work.

The demo has to show your capabilities and potential so aim to produce something that will appeal to your potential booker/agent, manager, publishing or record company to show off your talents and gain their interest.

For booking or entertainment agents an audio or video demo should be made up of three or four 30 sec to 1 minute snippets of a variety of material rather than full songs and never send anyone an original song without copyrighting it first!! 1 fast, 1 slow & 1 mid tempo song is the average but with 'snippets' you can get away with 5 tracks, with the last track a full song (you can use a song that is included in an earlier 'snippet' - if they are interested they may want to hear more so do 2 demo tapes - one with 'snippets' to send out and one with 3 good full songs or a show reel for serious follow up enquiries.

If you are singing along to one of your favourite artists songs make sure it is a 'backing track' and does not have the original artist singing - some people have made this mistake and it sounds really unprofessional - if you want to be taken seriously then you must have a professional attitude even as an amateur!!

Review your demo on a regular basis. Does it still reflect the type of music you are currently performing? Does it contain material that demonstrates your abilities to their fullest extent whether that be vocal, song writing or both? Has your voice or style of music matured, developed, changed? Are YOU happy with your demo?

## **Recording on Home Studios**

You can save a lot of money and by purchasing a few good pieces of equipment and learning how to use it effectively. Whilst this is not viable for a band using live drums (unless you have the space and understanding neighbours!), other artists can learn to produce high quality recordings. There are tons of books and articles available on the internet which provide information on recording, mixing and effects.

Don't send out demos without researching the management/record company first for an idea of what they are looking for, some only deal with bands or songwriters and many managers will not consider artists who perform 'covers' of their favourite artists.

Managers will not do anything for you until you have done a certain amount for yourself, you will be expected to audition or be seen working so make sure that what you put on the demo tape/cd is material you perform well and can reproduce in an audition or at a gig even if its to a backing track.