

STUDIO RECORDING

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Recording in a studio is a good option for people:

- who don't want to invest in their own recording equipment
- or, who are looking for a more professional result and would like to be in the secure hands of an audio engineer.

How long does it take?

You've all heard the stories of famous bands going away for months to record. If you're using a studio, it's most likely you'll be paying by the hour so you probably won't be taking quite so long. The best thing to do is to ask the recording studio how long they expect it will take. A demo CD of 3-4 tracks could be completed in one day but normally takes a weekend. Set aside one day for recording, and one day for mixing.

How much does it cost?

This will depend a lot on how long you take. Low end studios normally charge between \$40-70/hr for recording which will include a sound engineer. You could also get a day rate which is a little cheaper.

You will probably be charged extra for equipment loans and extra tapes or CDs so make sure you are know how much all the hidden extras will cost you. In particular, many studios can charge disproportionate amounts for CDs. A CD-R might cost \$2 to buy at the local shop but to get a copy in studio might set you back \$15.

Lots of studios generally record to hard disc, so it would be a good idea to invest in some kind of external hard drive you could back up your recordings to. You generally cannot take it away until you have paid the bill!

No such thing as a free lunch – or is there?

Look for universities or colleges who offer sound engineering courses in your local area. Many of these courses need bands for their students to practise on and it can be a great way to get a free recording. You should be able to get a decent result, but it will probably take much longer than a professional studio.

How can I find a good studio?

Go somewhere tried and tested by people you know. Ask any friends who have recorded before and find out how the recording went, what the engineer was like and how happy they were with the final result. You can also check your local press for ads, and most music shops will often have noticeboards.

It's good to go to a studio that suits your style of music. If you're a hard-core punk band and the studio only do RnB, that studio is probably not the one for you. Most studios will have demo reels with a collection of their showcase recordings. Ask to hear one in a similar genre and see if you like it.

Try to have a chat with the engineer if possible. The engineer is the person who is going to realise your dreams, so see if they are on your wavelength.

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Studio preparation checklist

Once you've decided on where you are going to record it's a good idea to be as prepared as possible and know what you want. The clock will be ticking once you are in the studio and the last thing you need is extra stress from little things you could have prepared earlier.

To help you prepare we've put together a checklist:

BEFORE YOU GET INTO THE STUDIO CHECKLIST

- Essential gear**
 Bring all the gear you will need. This includes drumsticks, leads etc.
- Extra gear**
 Make sure you bring **extra** strings, drumsticks, picks etc. in case things break.
- Borrowing gear**
 Try to get the best gear you can. If you've got friends with a particular amp or guitar or pedal you like the sound of see if you can borrow it for the recording. A good studio should have range of bits and pieces you may be able to make use of.
- Tune drums properly**
 A well-tuned drum kit with new skins makes huge difference.
- Use the same tuner**
 Different tuners may have slightly different pitches, so make sure you all use the same quality tuner.
- Know your tracks**
 Rehearsal time is always cheaper than recording time.
- Take along CD's**
 If there's a particular sound you are after, take along examples so you can play them to the engineer.
- No friends or family**
 Keep your friends and family out of the studio. You'll be less focused with these kind of distractions.

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and...ROLLING!

OK. You've found a studio, you've rehearsed your tracks and now you're ready to make magic! Recording can be a nerve racking process for many musicians because you've got to live with the results for much longer than a live performance. Here are some tips to help you get the most out of your recording session.

- Try to set up your band as you would in the rehearsal room so you are all playing TOGETHER. This will give the recording more VIBE!
- Make sure you have got a good headphone mix, and communication is good back to the control room. Don't put up with crappy or buzzing headphones, it will just put you off performing. Also, don't have the headphones too loud if you are a singer, it will throw off your pitching
- Don't wear yourself out by giving every take your all. You might have to run through the songs two or three times so hold back some energy for the runs that matter. When you are ready it will all click into place
- It's all about the music. Don't get put off by all the knobs, wires and mysterious things the engineer does. Let them worry about all the technical stuff and try to just focus on your job – performing and playing the music.
- Take advice but don't be bullied by the engineer. Remember who is paying the bills.
- Once you've finished a track, wait until all the sounds have died away before shouting with joy (or disappointment) at how you played. This will pick up on the microphones, and you'll ruin the recording.
- A bit of fresh air can do you a world of good. Take the time to go for a walk around the block to help you refocus. Always try and remain objective.

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Mixing

- If possible, it's better to mix the tracks on a different day to the recording. You and the engineer will most probably be tired after recording all day and you'll get a better result if you can mix the tracks with fresh ears.
- Have a listen to the mix at a really low volume.
If it sounds good mixed quiet it will sound GREAT loud!
- Another common problem is that when listening to the same track over and over again you get used hearing the vocals and end up mixing them too soft. For this reason it's good to do a 'vocal up' mix which is just a mix with the vocals turned up slightly.

Mastering

Sometimes seen as a bit of a black art, it is really a function of arranging your songs on the CD, fine tuning overall levels and tones, and cleaning up the tops and tails of each song. Most studios can do a simple mastering job for you. There are many mastering specialists that can prepare your CD for mass production.

To get your music on Uneathed we need it in this format:

mp3 : 128kbts/s , 44.1khz in stereo

Ask the audio engineer if they can give you an mp3 version at the above settings. This will save you having to do the conversion yourself.