

-Recording-

Drummers:

- Put new drum heads on the kit. Let them set for a day or two.
- Bring extra sticks. Bring some drum muting rings, or preferably, moongel.
- Oil up the pedals so that they do not squeak and perform any other maintenance needed to ensure proper functionality.
- Separate the cymbals from the drums on the vertical axis as much as you can.
- Space the kit out as much as you are able to/feel comfortable. Cluttered kits don't record well.
- If a whole lot of filler is needed to stop the bass drum from sounding out of whack, then there's something wrong with either the tuning or the drum itself. This needs to be sorted out ahead of time. The most that should be needed is a feather pillow inside the drum.
- If you're after a punchy, fat kick sound, make sure a port is cut into the front (resonant) head. If your port is on the edge of the skin, rotate the skin so that the port is at the top.
- If playing rock/metal, try to get used to hitting the drums hard, but the cymbals relatively soft.
- Practice your parts to a metronome, unless you play strictly 'live' music like jazz, blues etc. In that case you should practice your parts with the band as much as possible.
- Know the songs like the back of your hand.

Bassists:

- Make sure the intonation/sound of the instrument is as close to perfect as possible.
- Put new strings on the bass. Let them set for a day or two prior to tracking.
- Bring sufficient spare strings, picks, cables, batteries (for active pickups) etc.
- Ensure your playing sits solidly with the drums. Practice to a metronome. Know the songs well.
- Ensure that you are playing the instrument in-tune. It is common for basses to be played sharp even when the tuners say your open strings are 'in'.

Guitarists:

- Make sure the intonation/sound of the instrument is as close to perfect as possible.
- Put new strings on the guitar. Let them set for a day or two prior to tracking.
- Bring sufficient spare strings, picks, cables, batteries (for active pickups) etc.
- If you have locking tuners, bring an allen-key.
- If using a tube amp, ensure it has been re-tubed recently and sounds good.

- Practice rigorously to a metronome. You may be the only player tasked with playing at least two identical performances, and possibly even 4 or beyond. You need to play consistently and sit well with yourself. If you have a recording rig at home, practice double-tracking the same rhythm parts.

Vocalists:

- Practice good microphone technique. Stand up close to the pop shield when singing & back away for the bigger punctuations. Try to control yourself dynamically, rather than relying on a compressor for it.

- Don't have a big night out before coming to the studio. Make sure your voice is fresh & ready to go.

- Bring along some honey/tea, or whatever it is that soothes your throat.

- You may be tasked to repeat certain phrases a multitude of times in search of that 'perfect' take, so make sure your voice is up to the task.

- If your voice is on the fringe, then don't push it. The last thing we want is for the vocalist to start croaking midway through a recording session.

Everyone:

Whilst booking out a studio to finally get that CD released may seem like a big adventure and vacation, there is still a lot of hard work that goes into releasing a commercially-ready product. Fight the temptation to bring in a slab of beer and get hammered, as that is counter-productive to your own goals and finances.

Sometimes the hours in the studio can build up & that may not leave a lot of time for life outside. It's important to note that bringing in friends/girlfriends/family etc. to the session ultimately affects productivity negatively. It is possible to maintain greater perspective and workflow if cutting out distractions from the outside world as much as possible. Remember, when you're in the studio working, as far as you're concerned, you are doing the most important thing in the world.

The sessions may get long, but that's never a reason to neglect personal hygiene! We all have to live with each other in the same room for days on end. Don't expose someone else to what you wouldn't like to be exposed to!

All the prep tips & advice given here is based off my own experience in the studio regarding what will work toward achieving the goal of finishing your album the best, quickest & most efficient way. Getting the preparation down allows you to enjoy your experience in the studio rather than be constantly snowed under by stress and deadlines.

Editing

- Allow some time for the editing of drums prior to recording the instruments on top. Unless the drummer is superman, you will find the odd mistake you want fixed. This can be done in natural-sounding ways like combining parts of one performance with another. It doesn't mean we have to chop the drums up & put them in mechanical time. It is important for the rest of the recording process that the drums hold solid time.

Mixing Only

- Ensure that the session or tracks you are providing are in a comprehensible state.
- Make sure that all editing has been done ahead of time, unused takes have been removed from the session and the files have all been cleaned up and consolidated where possible.
- Name the tracks consistently across all your songs/sessions. For instance 'Kick' in song 1 should be 'Kick' across the entire project, rather than 'BD' in song 3 etc.
- One song per folder.
- Whilst I take Pro Tools, Sonar, Cubase session files, I prefer if the songs are provided as consolidated tracks at whatever bit depth and sample-rate they were recorded at. Preferred rates are 24-bit 48kHz WAV.