

## *SongSmith Records*

### **Recording Tips and Procedures**

Thank you for considering SongSmith Records to record your project! Our goal is your utmost satisfaction! To achieve that end, we present the following “Recording Tips and Procedures” to help you prepare for and understand the recording process. Everyone involved in the project must prepare for the recording Session. It is impossible to just walk into the studio, play or sing a few songs, and walk out with a finished, quality product. This information is by no means all-inclusive. It should serve as a general guide for the Client. The following things should happen before the Client books a Session:

The material to be recorded should be in a highly polished (performance) state of readiness. The studio is not the time to change verses, intros, choruses, lyrics, chord structure, instrumentation, etc. Such changes waste time and cost the Client money. You should practice the music in the weeks before the Session with AND without a “click track” or metronome. You should also record your Project to a cassette player or phone to check for any pitch and timing problems. Be sure to bring multiple copies of any sheet music, lyric sheets, or chord chart(s) of the songs to the Session so that the Engineer, Producer, and other musicians can easily follow the song structure when corrections need to be made to the basic tracks. **Please double space and number each line of lyric to make punch ins and outs easier.** SSR will confirm the details of the Session with the Client after the \$200 Deposit is paid. SSR will prepare for the session by creating a template of the session, planning for how many tracks are needed, the number of musicians and their placement in the studio, overdub procedures, microphone selection and placement, equipment setups and checks, signal flow checks, headphone mix(s) setup, as well as a myriad of other things.

All string players (guitars, bass, violins, etc.) should put new strings on their instruments a few days before the Session to give them a chance to stabilize and give the best tone possible. Old strings sound dull and lifeless in recorded music. Cellists and string bass players **MUST** use a “rock stop” or other device to prevent damage to the carpet in the studio. SSR has a few special Wenger “cello chairs”, provided gratis for use upon request. SSR will also provide music stands for use at SSR gratis upon request. SSR has a very nice DW 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary drum kit in the drum room. It is not necessary for drummers to “kill” the drums in the studio. All drums record in the “Drum Room”, and if they are played too loudly, the mikes may “bleed” the signal into one another to a great degree causing problems when the parts need to be edited and mixed. Drummers may show up 15 minutes before the scheduled session to unload and set up their own drums if they wish. Drummers should put on new heads and tune each drum for consistency in tone and pitch if they chose to use their own drums. The Client is not billed for this setup time. Drummers **MUST** bring a carpet to set their drums on **IF** they have “spikes” on their drums that will damage the carpet in the drum room. A carpet is not necessary

if the drums are equipped with rubber isolation pads. All musicians involved in the Project need to be SURE their equipment is in good working order, free of buzzes, rattles, and hums. All musicians need to bring extra supplies for their instrument (strings, sticks, picks, fuses, electrical and signal cables, patch cords, keyboards and their stands, capos, auxiliary percussion, batteries, etc.). SSR musical instruments may be used by special request.

You should get a good rest before the session and bring any favorite food, snacks, and beverages to SSR. You are welcome to use the refrigerator in the Artist's lounge. SSR has a handicap accessible restroom available for your use in the lounge. Smoking is allowed only outside on the back patio. SSR usually will provide some light snacks and beverages gratis during the Session. Vocalists are encouraged to warm up as needed, but not "overdo it". The best vocal takes are usually the second or third "take" of a track. Food or drink is not allowed in the studio, control room, drum room, or vocal booth at any time. Vocalists may bring bottled water (only water!) into the vocal booth.

It may be less expensive to record all parts/instruments of the song at once, yet better results sometimes happen when the instrumental parts (rhythm parts) are recorded first, maybe with a "scratch" vocal part, and then the "real" vocals, background vocals, and lead instruments are overdubbed to the Project. Usually, the bass and drums record first, maybe with other rhythm parts/instruments, then the lead parts (guitar and vocals) are added later. This allows some of the musicians to leave the session if they wish. If the Client is also playing an instrument during the Session, it allows for greater concentration on each part, leading to fewer mistakes and better results.

Once the Session begins, each track recorded has to have the signal flow and level checked. Usually if the Client just plays through a song in "warm up", the Engineer can get a good signal level, requiring only minor "tweaks" before the recording process begins. When everybody is ready to record, the Engineer will say "Silence in the House". At that point, he will "record arm" the track(s) to be recorded and push the "big red button". The recording process of the raw tracks will begin. The Client should NOT start the song until the Engineer says "We are rolling". After the Engineer says "We are rolling", wait two or three seconds and then start the count off to the song. It is best if the Drummer starts the song with a click of the sticks. The drummer should click "one, two, three", and a silent beat on "four" to allow for editing space at the beginning of the song. The idea is to allow space for pickup notes if needed. There must be a split second of silence before the song starts for the Engineer to make easy edits. A "click track" of any tempo can be sent easily to the headphone mix if desired for rhythmic consistency. If the Client is using many tracks and overdubs, a click track makes track alignment easier. At the end of the "take", it is VERY IMPORTANT for no one to make any sounds or noise until the Engineer says "Got it!" Many a good track has been ruined by a cough, comment, or other noise during the "fade out" of the track.

After all of the raw tracks have been recorded for the Project, the Client should listen to playback in the control room. Any mistakes that cannot be corrected by editing may need to be re-recorded. After all of the raw tracks meet the Client's expectations, the tracks are edited (if possible) to remove unwanted musical mistakes, extra noises, count off sounds, etc. Pro Tools can work wonders on tracks. Many times wrong notes can be removed and other notes "copied" to the area affected. Intonation problems may possibly be corrected by pitch correction software. Timing errors might be corrected by cutting the note before the "attack" and after the end of the "final decay", and then moving the data (note) to the proper location.

After editing the raw tracks, the fun begins! The "Mix" is where the Producer will tell the Engineer what to do. This includes where to "pan" (Left or Right) the individual tracks, how loud they should be in relation to each other, how far "back" or "forward" in the mix the tracks should be, how much (if any) compression or equalization should be applied to the tracks, any special effects such as reverbs, delays, doubling, etc. should be done (if any) and where, if any parts or solos should be cut. The list is almost endless!

Once all of the tracks are "mixed", they are then recorded (in real time) to a stereo "Master Track" in Pro Tools. This stereo Pro Tools file is then "bounced" to the hard drive in the requested format. SSR records at 44.1K, 16 bit. This is the standard CD Red Book specification. For the mix to play back on a CD (or MP-3), the data must be "bounced" to the hard drive in the Client's Session file. All "bounces" are then assembled in a different program, mastered, normalized, and then burned to CD-R if you wish. Completed stereo master files are uploaded to "Transfer Big Files" for the artist to download and use as he/she sees fit. **Uploaded files should be downloaded as soon as possible as they are on the server for only a few days.** You should Google any of the terms not understood. A great source of information is the [www.sweetwater.com](http://www.sweetwater.com) web site. Just click on their "Expert" tab and follow the links to the glossary. Once the CD-R is "burned" (a process that takes only a few minutes), it is played back on a small, separate player to check the viability of the recording. Clients are welcome to listen to the CD-R on any of SSR's playback devices, or in the Client's car to check for quality. **NO PART OR WHOLE OF ANY PROJECT IN ANY FORM OR STATUS WILL LEAVE THE SSR PREMISIS UNTIL ALL CURRENT FEES ARE PAID.** Remember, the Project may sound a little different on your home stereo or your car stereo, depending upon the quality of the system AND the acoustic surroundings it is played in.