

Part 6: Minor notes

By now it's apparent this is pretty selective reading, aimed at the beginner, not the professional. Probably the biggest point made here is that you don't need ten thousand dollars to build a home studio, although I probably have half that much invested when you figure up the cost of the instruments. The instruments and gear you should already have unless you don't play yourself and want a studio for hire, in which case let them bring their own stuff. For around \$900 if you shop around you can get all the basic essentials, which would be the multitracker, a compressor, an effects processor, at least one good mic, an EQ (not mandatory), and something to mix it down to (CD, DAT, hard drive etc.)

However, don't underestimate the importance of having money to spend on the decor. Not just for acoustic purposes (carpet everything, eggshell foam does not work), but for mood and ambience. Make it a cool place to hang out and relax. Atmosphere can be very conducive to ideas and imagination. If you've got old posters or autographs taped to the walls, stick 'em in some cheap glass frames. It's the difference between a hippie-basement and a Hard Rock Cafe. Lighting is also important for setting a mood. I use an assortment of electric beer signs, but table lamps will do as well. Anything's better than fluorescent lights or hanging incandescent bulbs.

One last minor note, try not to do what I do when recording initial tracks, that is to think "Oh, that's good enough, no one will notice that little mistake." Whether or not anyone else notices, you will every time it plays. Fix it right then and there. I always think I'll go back and fix it later, but when I try, the actual sound of the instrument never quite matches, even though I use those goofy templates discussed in part 3. Sometimes I end up replacing the whole track just for continuity sake, sacrificing some halfway decent licks in the process. I guess the key is to take your time. Walk away and leave everything set where it is if you get stuck or run out of time.

Home recording equipment and band gear have made some quantum leaps in recent years, becoming higher-tech, smaller size, and lower cost. If you want to make your own recorded music to become rich and famous, I think you'll be disappointed but best of luck to you anyway. If you just want to get your music heard, or be able to store ideas that might otherwise dissipate from memory, or want to play in an original band and record as a learning tool, a home studio might be just a credit card away.

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