

# The Production Process

## Introduction

The concept behind Mojo Recording Studio is to provide a professional studio environment where you can come to work with an in-house producer, utilise his experience and skills, and have access to a facility with professional grade equipment. The goal is always to produce a great record.

An Acrobat file is available by clicking on the link – [The Production Process](#). Print off the guide and give it to all the band members.

## The Producer's Role

Your producer will suggest ideas for the project, propose changes to the song arrangements, coach the artist and musicians in the studio, control the recording sessions, and supervise the entire process. Your producer's aim is to bring a fresh perspective to your project, be objective, and draw on his experience to help you realise your goals.

Involvement may vary depending on the project. Some artists and bands will have very set ideas about what they wish to achieve. Your producer's role in these circumstances is to help you achieve those goals with the minimum of intervention. Your producer is not there to impose his ideas on you or your music.

Alternatively, a singer songwriter who comes to the studio with a song at a raw concept stage of development, may require the producer to become much more involved in the creative process.

The production process can be broken down into the following steps:

Pre-Production

Scratch Track Recording

Tracking

Editing

## Mixing Mastering

### Re- Production

Pre-production should be done by you/your band prior to your first session at the studio. Typically it involves recording, reviewing and revising your songs, writing lyrics, choosing the overall sonic pallet and instrumentation as well as variations of that theme for specific parts in the songs to provide colour.

Every artist and band will have a different writing method but the one tool that's invaluable is a recorder. At a push, a microphone or a feed from your PA system recorded into a smartphone or tablet, will allow you to review the songs as you work through the writing process. Multi-track recorder apps are also available which can allow to layer your recordings i.e. vocals on track one, guitar on track two and so on...

Those who own a laptop should consider buying a basic recording interface. A decent 2 in 2 out recording interface can be purchased for as little as £60 to £80. Most will come with DAW software included, usually a cut down version of the professional version, but will have most functions available to make decent recordings. If you are writing songs this is probably the best investment you can make.

The point of the exercise is to ensure that by the time you come to the studio to record, your songs should be well crafted.

Your producer at Mojo will ask you for recordings of your songs after you book your session. He'll listen and assess your songs and may offer helpful advice if he thinks it may be useful in your writing process and preparation.

### Scratch Track Recording

At the start of your session, your producer will record a scratch track of each of your songs. A scratch track serves as a starting point to get a rough recording of your songs into the DAW. All musicians and vocalists may be playing and singing simultaneously, or at least the key players required to provide a representative rendition of the song. This will allow

your producer to generally assess the arrangements in more detail and suggest any last minute changes he deems would be productive.

It also serves as a base recording/reference for the musician's to play alongside, when tracking their individual parts later on in the session.

For solo artists, the same general process applies. Needless to say there's likely to be a longer gap between this and the next step, depending on the creative input that is required of the producer. Normally after consultation with you, he will work on developing arrangements and proposed instrumentation, leading to the development of a scratch track. The track will usually consist of combination of virtual and real instrumentation. He will then, if required, arrange session musicians before proceeding to the tracking stage.

## Recording/Tracking

Tracking is conducted on an individual instrument by instrument basis, replacing the tracks initially recorded for the scratch tracks. Vocals and backing vocals are usually recorded last in the process.

As a general rule, we do not record all the instruments simultaneously during the tracking sessions. Due to the excessive spill and phase issues between all the instrumentation, we believe a superior recording can be captured by recording instruments individually. Drop-ins and comps can also be conducted more effectively.

Guitars, bass and keys can be recorded in both the live room and in the control room where there isn't the necessity for headphones. Large 12" Tannoy HPD Gold monitors are installed in the control room specifically for this purpose. Instrument speaker cabs and combos are located in the live room.

We have an range of outboard modern and vintage preamps, in addition to the preamps in the mixing desk. 1960's Telefunken V672s though to modern Focusrites are utilised during the tracking sessions to provide variations of colour and punch to the recordings.

## Editing

There is usually a multitude of different editing and production processes

to be completed before mixing can take place.

During the tracking phase, there will be multiple takes of vocals and individual instruments recorded. It's usual for these to be comped (composited) together to make up one track from the best parts of these multiple takes.

There will be occasions when re-amping may be required. All guitar and bass cabs are DI'd in addition to microphone recordings. A DI track can be sent out via a re-amp box to an amp and cab and re-recorded if a further alternative track is required.

Midi keyboard tracks may need to be edited and quantised, and will need to be converted from midi to audio.

Drums will require processing. All drums need to be phase adjusted. Spill between individual drums will also need to be minimised.

There are many more...

## Mixing

The mixing process involves assessing all the individual recorded tracks and adjusting the volume, tone, dynamics, panning and space. The last one 'space' may be unfamiliar, but is essentially how far forward or back a sound appears. A mix is a more like a three dimensional space, not just left and right.

As this is not a tutorial, and before your eyes start to glaze over from too much information, suffice to say, we use large array of both software plug-ins and modern and vintage outboard equalisers, compressors and effects processors. For those who are interested, see the [Equipment List](#).

Plug-ins have revolutionised the mixing process in recent years, enabling a level control beyond anything dreamt of a few years ago. Yet a lot of people still refer the past as a reference for that warm analogue sound. Plug-ins have got better at emulating outboard equipment, but the general consensus amongst professionals still favours outboard. It just sounds better, which is why we still go to the bother of running a guitar through an 1176 compressor and a Neumann equaliser for instance, rather than the plug-in equivalents.

Regardless of the tools used, which certainly can have a large impact on the sound of the mix, there are many subtle elements which go into the melting pot to produce a good mix. It's not just about creating a volume balance. It's more about understanding and emphasising the elements in the song, to set the mood for what it's about, what you're saying and the emotion it is attempting to portray. Be that love, longing, loss, anger, aggression, happiness, excitement, the list goes on... It's the same for every genre of music.

## Mastering

Mastering ensures that all the elements which go the make up the finished mix are 'glued together' and sound as a finished record should. This is accomplished using a combination of plug-in and outboard mastering eqs, compressors and limiters.

We have professional grade mpeg encoders to prepare your songs for publication on Soundcloud, itunes etc. We can also master your songs ready for CD glass master and CD reproduction.

We have many years of experience doing this and have invested in acquiring the correct tools for the job. Your songs will sound as a commercially produced record should, be 'radio ready' and will stand up back to back with anything you listen to.

However, we do not profess to be dedicated professional mastering engineers. To our knowledge there are none currently based in Ireland. Our masters will always fall a few percent short of the level a dedicated professional mastering engineer will bring to the table. They will have invested tens of thousands of pounds on outboard equipment specifically designed for mastering, and will always be able to squeeze out that 'last few percent'. To the normal person listening to a downloaded mpeg, the difference will be negligible, but we prefer to be clear on this and that you be totally informed.

## Attendance

After the tracking sessions have been completed, there are some phases in the process when it would not be useful for you to attend the session. Usually a lot mouse clicking holds very little sway to the majority of musicians.

We prefer to take everything we have and compile a rough mix for evaluation. We prefer that the artist or a few band members attend the session. We find it's usually much more productive to the decision making process, rather than sending files and messages back and forth.

We'll review the rough mixes with you and come to decisions on any areas that require changes and/or additions, before developing the songs further to completed mixes.

On presentation of final mixes, any last minute tweaks can be addressed and rectified before sign-off. Again, this necessitates the artist or a few band members to attend the session.