

Chapter 1 : Modern Recording Techniques by David Miles Huber

Modern Recording Techniques is the bestselling, authoritative guide to sound and music recording. Whether you're just starting out or are looking for a step-up in the industry, Modern Recording Techniques provides an in-depth read on the art and technologies of music production.

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xviii David Miles Huber is a producer and musician in the electronic, dance and downtempo genres, whose CDs have sold over the million mark. His latest music and collaborations can be heard on www.davidmiles.com. He has served as chief engineer and technical director of a recording studio and has taught several courses in modern recording techniques. He is a member of the Audio Engineering Society.

Chapter 1 Introduction 1 The world of modern music and sound production is multifaceted. The combined efforts of these talented people work together to create a single end product: The process of turning a creative spark into a final product takes commitment, talent, a creative production team, a marketing strategy and, often, money. Over the history of recorded sound, the process of capturing music and transforming it into a marketable product has radically changed. With the introduction of the large-scale integrated LSI circuit, mass production and mass marketing—three of the most powerful forces in the Information Age—another option has arrived on the scene: Along with this concept comes the realization that almost anyone can afford, construct and learn to master a personal audio production facility. On the techno side, those who are new to the world of modern digital audio and multitrack production, musical instrument digital interface MIDI, mixing, remixing and their production environments should be aware that years of dedicated practice are often required to develop the skills that are needed to successfully master the art and application of these technologies. A person new to the recording or project studio environment

Figures 1. Courtesy of Solid State Logic, www.solidstatelogs.com. The goal of this book is to serve as a guide and reference tool to help you become familiar with the recording and production process. When used in conjunction with mentors, lots of hands-on experience, further reading, Web searching, soul searching and simple common sense, this book, I hope, will help you understand the equipment and day-to-day practices of sound recording and production. DIY do it yourself Tutorial: Giga-tons of sites can be found that are dedicated to even the most offbeat people, places and things and search engines can even help you find obscure information on how to fix a self-sealing stem-bolt on a steam-driven nut cracker. As such, I strongly urge you to use the Web as an additional guide. Further information relating to this book and the recording industry at large can also be found at www.davidmiles.com. Truly, this is an amazing time in production history—we live in a time when we can choose between an amazing array of cost-effective and powerful tools for fully realizing our creative and human potential. As always, patience and a nose-to-the-grindstone attitude are needed in order to learn how to use them effectively; in short, it can free you up for the really important stuff: In addition, these facilities

Figure 1. Courtesy of Broken Radio, www.brokenradio.com. Photo by Robert Wolsch. In effect, the most important characteristics that go into the making and everyday workings of such a facility include: Courtesy of Paisley Park Studios. Such a studio will often have high ceilings to accommodate the large sound buildups that are often generated by a large the number of studio musicians. During the s, studios were generally small. The basic concept was to eliminate as much of the original acoustic environment as possible and replace it with artificial ambience. In fact, through improved studio design techniques, we have

Figure 1. Courtesy of Skywalker Sound, www.skywalkersound.com. Ideally, the control room is acoustically isolated from the sounds that are produced in the studio, as well as from the surrounding, outer areas. It is optimized to act as a critical listening environment that uses carefully placed and balanced monitor speakers. At the heart of the control room is the recording console. The console allows the engineer to combine, control and distribute the input and output signals of most, if not all, of the devices found in the control room. As with recording studio designs, every control room will usually have its own unique sound,

feel, comfort factor and studio booking rate. These market forces have made it necessary for certain facilities to rethink their operational business strategies. Often, these changes have met with some degree of success, as is illustrated by the following examples: As a result, many pro studios now cater to artists and project studio owners who might have an occasional need for a larger space or better equipped recording facility. In addition, after an important project has been completed in a private studio, a professional facility might be needed to mix the production down into its final form. Most business-savvy studios are only too happy to capitalize on these new and constantly changing market demands. Creative studios often enter into lasting relationships with audio-for-visual and broadcast production markets, so as to thrive in the tough business of music, when music production alone might not provide enough income to keep a studio afloat. These and other aggressive marketing strategies many of which may be unique to a particular area are being widely adopted by commercial music and recording facilities to meet the changing market demands of new and changing media. No longer can a studio afford to place all of its eggs in one media basket. Tapping into changes in market forces and meeting them with new solutions is an important factor for making it or simply keeping afloat in the business of music production and distribution. The rise of the project studio

Figures 1. Courtesy of Tony Sheppard, www. Photo by Ed Colver. One of the greatest benefits of a project or portable production system centers around the idea that an artist can select from a wide range of tools and toys to generate specific sounds or to get the particular sounds that he or she likes. This technology is often extremely powerful, as the components combine to create a vast palette of sounds and handle a wide range of task-specific functions. Such a system might include one or more keyboard synthesizers, synth modules, samplers, drum machines, a computer with a digital audio workstation and sequencing package, effects devices and audio mixing capabilities. Systems like these are constantly being installed in the homes of working and aspiring musicians. All of these system types can be designed to handle a wide range of applications and have the important advantage of letting the artist produce his or her music in a comfortable, cost-effective, at-home environment whenever the creative mood hits. Such production luxuries, which would have literally cost a fortune 20 years ago, are now within the reach of almost every working and aspiring musician. The portable studio

Of course, as laptops have grown in power, it has become a simple matter to load them with your favorite DAW software and audio interface, grab your knowledge is Power! Such a system is literally powerful enough to let you compose, produce and mix in the studio or on the beach of a remote seaside island under battery power

Figure 1. Studio in the palm of your hand To take these ever-shrinking analogies to the nth degree, newer handheld recording systems that can literally fit in your pocket can be used to sample and record sounds with professional results, using either their internal high-quality mics or, in some cases, external professional mics under phantom power. Truly, it is a small world after all

Figure 1. In addition to personal drive and passion, one of the most crucial aspects of putting together a high-quality, cost-effective project studio is definitely knowledge. This all-important ingredient can be gained by: There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of choices for recording media, hardware types, software systems, speakers, effects devices the list goes on. How does it move the audience? How can it be sold? Making the project studio pay for itself

Beyond the obvious advantage of being able to record when, where and how you want to in your own project studio, there are several additional benefits to working in a personal environment. An obvious advantage of a project studio revolves around the idea that you can create your own music on your own schedule. The expense incurred in using a professional studio requires that you be practiced and ready to roll on a specific date or range of days. These time and expense billings might also be taxdeductible expenses. After the project has been recorded, the artist will still have a taxdeductible facility that can be operated as a business enterprise. When the next project comes along, the artist will still have a personal facility in which to record and can put the advance bucks in the bank.

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