

Time to Get Serious About Rehearsals (IMRO article)

Rehearsing is an integral part of being in a band and when you consider the amount of time spent in the studio, bands should give themselves the best possible conditions in which to start the creative process. Below are some tips for bands to get the best out of rehearsal time.

Plan Your Rehearsal: It's best to formulate a plan for your rehearsal, this should set out how you're going to use the time in the studio. For example, what percentage of time are you going to devote to songwriting and working on new tracks as opposed to existing tracks? Certain factors should influence your plan - firstly if you have an upcoming gig, then you should obviously concentrate on your live set. However, if you've only a limited number of songs, constantly rehearsing over these songs can be a fruitless effort and may even make your songs feel a little stale. In this case, it's best to warm up by running through your existing set (Don't stop to agonize over any small mistakes) and then get down to the task of writing. Then to unwind, run through the set again at the end of your jam when you can give it your all.

Spend On Your Band: If you are serious about your band, then you should approach it like any other business venture. This will mean a financial investment of some kind, whether it be for recording time to lay down a demo, rehearsal time or simply money for musical equipment. Some artists complain about paying €10-€15 each for rehearsals and then go out to the pub after and spend twice or three times that.

Equipment: There's a saying in the industry that goes "dirt in, dirt out". This essentially means if you do not have good equipment to begin with, then your gig/rehearsal will not sound good. All a PA system/ Engineer can do is amplify (and clean up) the sound you present to them. Hence, a cheap keyboard is always going to sound like a cheap keyboard - there's no magic button that can change this. So remember, a good sound is down to good equipment.

Take a Break: It may sound obvious but it is important to take a couple of short breaks during your session. (This does not mean going to the pub!) Rehearsal rooms generally get stuffy so go outside for some fresh air to combat lethargy and keep the brain juices flowing. Bearing in mind that just because you're not playing it doesn't mean you can't use this break time beneficially by discussing set lists, gigs, transport issues, A&R etc

Break down your Songs: Sometimes it can be difficult to be objective about your own songs, it can also be difficult to listen to all the other "parts" or arrangements of a song when you're trying to play your own instrument. Try breaking down your songs by letting one or more members of the band step back and just listen instead. This method also gives you a chance to see if any instruments are competing for space in a song rather than complimenting one another. Try playing through the song instrumentally first, then just with drums, bass and keys and then continue this process in different combinations. This method is good only for the earlier stages of song writing but will really help to tighten up the band.

Network: A rehearsal studio is the perfect place for you to begin making connections with people within the industry. Firstly, get to know the bands who rehearse in the same building as you. If you're starting off this is the easiest way to get support slots. Get to know any promoters, managers, engineers or other industry people who work around the rehearsal studios.

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