

Recording Vocals in the Recording Studio - 10 Tips to Success

By Alex Fraser

1 Get into the right mind-set.

Sounds obvious right? If you're going to rap the biggest club anthem the west coast has ever heard, make sure you're amped up and ready - not five minutes outta bed. Singing an R&B love song? I'm not suggesting you be "ready for action" but at least be relaxed.

2 Know your lyrics.

If you know your lyrics well, then your song delivery will be far more confident. If you're not sure what words are coming up, it affects every other part of your performance. You'll also annoy the engineer when he/she has to cue up the 10th take because you forgot the next line, and then has to edit out your page turn..

3 Sing cool, not correct.

This one deserves a little more explanation. Modern studio technology can re-tune your voice if you sing out of key, and tighten your timing up. So instead of trying to sing or rap technically perfect, try to convey the right emotions and "feel" in your performance. No matter how good the studio is, no technology can compensate for an unemotional vocal delivery.

4 Get a good headphone mix.

This point is more obvious. Before you start singing, take some time with the engineer to get a good headphone mix. You should concentrate on the balance between your voice and the backing music, and the overall volume. Every artist has different requirements. Find out what works for you. The engineer will expect to work with you on this, and can help you get the mix you need. If you find you're singing too quietly, turn the headphone volume up. Too loud? Turn it down.

5 Be decisive: Let the engineer and producer know what you want.

From a producer's viewpoint, nothing is worse than working with an artist who seems to be under performing, and on closer investigation is trying to use a headphone mix with one ear working, but is too polite to complain. If something is wrong, say so. But be polite. Don't do the following..

6 Don't be a Diva (or male equivalent)

Ok, so you're paying for the studio time, so you get to call the shots. That's only fair. But be nice! After all, you want the producer and engineer on your side. If you annoy them, they may not be inclined to make the effort on your behalf. They certainly won't go the extra distance to make you sound better, and who knows what they're saying about you behind the sound-proof glass..

7 The Crew/Friends stay at home.

Maybe a little controversial? Unless you can honestly say members of your crew contribute to the creative process, I wouldn't advise having any more people than necessary in the studio. They will prove a distraction - even if it's a good distraction. After all, you're there to work, and they'll be plenty of time later to enjoy your new track in your car system.

8 Need a break? Take it.

You've been laying down takes for the last hour, and your voice is beginning to strain. Take a break. There's no point in carrying on, only to find out later your voice sounds like a sand grinder on those takes. Trust me, you'll be doing the producer and engineer a favour. Also, be aware of "tired ears." After listening to the same bit of music for so long, your ears will begin to play tricks on you, and you'll "hear" things which aren't there. So take a break!

9 Drink plenty of fluids.

Again, sounds obvious. Your voice is an instrument, and needs TLC. Take plenty of liquid into the studio - but no dairy (milkshakes, etc.). It's not good for your vocal chords. Try water, not beer.

10 Don't be nervous.

Ok, this one's pretty lame as far as points go, but it's all too easy to walk into the studio, see that single microphone all alone in the big live room behind the glass, with all those people looking at you.... You get the picture. Remember, everyone is on your side and wants the best from the recording.

Above all - enjoy!

Al Fraser is the producer and manger for SmoothBeatsOnly.com, a website supplying R&B Beats and Instrumentals to up-and-coming artists and record labels. Al also runs the SmoothBeatsOnly Blog, which features recording and promotion advice for R&B singers and artists looking to move forward in the music industry.

To listen to beats and instrumentals, go to <http://www.smoothbeatsonly.com>

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