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By James F. Rupert

If you are an individual with a photographic memory, there is no need for you to read the following article. However, if your memory for details is anything like it is for the rest of us (I can't remember what color an orange is!), you'll have to join in with the select group of ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths of humanity that is forced to commit to paper the information it wishes to preserve.

As the title implies, (see it up there?) keeping records in a studio can end up killing a lot of trees for the paper you will end up consuming. And I'm not even including financial records in that statement. Records of your work in the actual recording process should be knocking off just as many oaks and maples as invoices, bookkeeping and accounts receivable.

For the convenience of your customers and the sake of your own nervous system it can really pay to develop some kind of plan for preserving the in-session information that you take for granted during the session itself. That same information is not so crystal clear a year later when the customer wants a re-mix of his master or wants to add a few more tracks. You might find yourself wishing you had written down a few more things twelve months earlier.

To make things clearer, let's go through a hypothetical recording session with a hypothetical rock group at our hypothetical studio. The group has backed its truck up to your door and is about to load its equipment into your beautiful, 50,000 cubic foot, acoustically controllable, temperature and humidity regulated, not-an-egg-carton-on-any-wall studio facility. (I said this

was all hypothetical, didn't I?) The group has given you the cash deposit you have told it is mandatory before it can start and it is preparing to begin throwing its gear inside. Right after you tenderly finger your lower abdomen and tell them the sad story of your hernia and your inability to lift anything heavier than a twelve pack, you should be preparing to fill out the first of a series of forms throughout the session.

While the group members are unloading their equipment, your insurance company will love you if you start making out an inventory list of what they are bringing in. (See Fig. 1.) This list tells what they are bringing in and has two boxes by each item for checkmarks. One box is for when they come in and one is for when they remove it at the end of their appointment. A group representative will then sign the list after the equipment is unloaded to verify that it is accurate, and after the gear is reloaded in the truck to state they have received everything that is theirs back. Tell them you will provide them with cords and direct boxes (and see to it that you can) so they will not have to check off dozens of little nickel-and-dime items. This way nobody can call back in two months demanding a cymbal or effects box that they are just sure they left there when they were in to record. You don't want to rip anybody off, but at the same time you don't want the green weenee stuck to you either. This list makes it the group's responsibility to pick up and remove its own personal property. It also could save you a few dollars if a piece of your studio equipment somehow should turn up in the band's stuff during the check-out process. You have proof that the piece in question was definitely not brought in with them. This doesn't prove it's yours, but it is most assuredly not theirs. Even if you're recording a busload of nuns, go ahead and fill out that inventory sheet if they are bringing in equipment. Also, be sure and give the customer a photo copy or carbon-copy when the session is over. It's for everybody's protection.

Now we'll skip ahead to when you've got them corralled in the studio and have pointed out where you want each player in the room to set up. You've set up your mics and direct boxes and answered all the preliminary questions. While the group finishes setting up and tuning, you return to the control room to plan out your channel assigns and general signal routing. Now is the time to make like Matt Dillon and whip out a track sheet faster than greased lightning. A track sheet (see Fig. 2) is the backbone of all the records you will take during this session. With this form you will have instant future reference to every decision made during the recording of each song the group lays down.

The example in Fig. 2 is a typical track sheet for a small 8-track studio. By the time the song is finished and mixed down to stereo there will probably be two of these forms filled out for each song. The first will be for information during the initial recording, the second for mixdown. On the recording sheet, the original EQ used will be of more interest than the volume settings, but during mixdown the volume settings for each channel are of considerable importance. On the original

multi-track session, note the particular instrument used on each channel in the respective box for that channel. If tracks end up being bounced you can split each box in half and list the new bounced track designation in the lower half of the box.

It would probably be a very good idea if you also were to list the microphone used for each track. If the track was taken direct or, in the case of drums, with multiple mic set-ups, state so on the sheet. (You can always jot down the multi-mic arrangements on the notes section of the sheet.) If you've used an outboard equalizer, also note that, and which track(s) it was used on. Don't forget to list its settings on the sheet.

The track sheet allows you to get all the information you will need in case the multi-track mother tape ever has to be worked on again. I've even included spaces for the reverb and digital delay settings and channel assigns. If the original recording was done dry, you can note it right on the sheet. Depending how much of a purist you are you might be doing your multi-track work dry and with totally flat EQ. (Too purist for this kid!) However you are laying down the sound, the important

things is to preserve the information of how you handled it for you or anybody else who might have to rework the tapes at a later date.

The form also has spaces for a lot of convenience information. You can list the final time for the cut, what kind, if any, noise reduction was used, tape speed, tape counter setting and who worked behind the board. If you are doing work for an advertising agency or professional organization, you can list their purchase order number under the client's name on the "Client" space provided, making invoicing them upon project completion just that much easier. As nit-pickey as some of the poop on the sheet sounds, it's data you need to know now and will need to know down the pike. It not only can save you a lot of time, it can keep you from looking pretty stupid to that same client later. When the recording date's over you can pop it right in the box with the tape so it's there when you need it again. Nothing to it, see?

While the actual recording is going on, there probably are going to be a few mistakes and bad takes by the group. You can list these on what is called a "take sheet." (See Fig. 3.) The take sheet lets you know what is on the en-

tire multi-track mother tape. In addition to the counter settings you can mark down the number of slate tones you laid down to show which number take it was for that particular song. You then know how many slate tones to listen for in high speed searches to find the final "keeper." If you have no slate tone pulser, you'll just have to listen and count. (It's a bite, but you'll be a better person for it, believe me.)

After you have determined the final take, you also can then list the final counter reading for the keeper on the track sheet. At the top of the take sheet you'll see spaces to note both the track sheet it corresponds to and the master reel number. You should start your own numbering system for your reels and put the same number for the reel on the track sheet and take sheet. That way, everybody will know what goes with what. If the song requires editing from multiple master reels, you can list the track sheet number and still squeeze in other reel numbers under the "Master reel" space. Shoot your take sheets in the master reel box with the track sheets at the end of the day.

Either on the back of a track or take sheet or on a separate form you can

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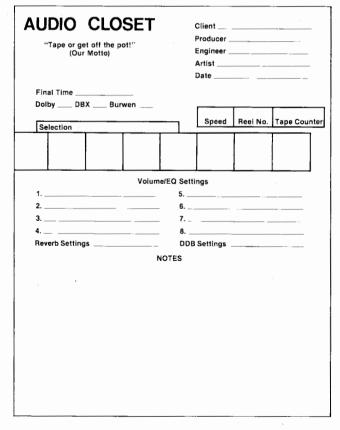


Figure 2

design, you should be keeping a record of the work done for the client. It's a good idea to list separately the time and charge for the different phases of production such as studio time, editing, production/assembly and mixdown. Ad agencies, especially, will want to know how much time was spent on each phase in order to return appropriate charges to their customers. A sheet of lined notebook paper will work fine for this, so dig out all those "Big Chief" tablets you haven't used since you drew horsies on them in grade school. Include all this information on the final invoice when billing the client.

Once the project is finished and reels

have been numbered, you're going to have to store them in a safe place where you can put your hands on them in a hurry if need be. This is where that reel numbering system comes in. You might start with alphabetical headings followed by numbers for each reel. For example, the Altoona Sprocket Company tapes could be filed and listed under A-1, A-2 and so on. Bulldingy Manufacturing under B-1, B-2 and down the line. The same number is written on the end of the reel box, on the track sheet and on the take sheet. Smart folks would then start an alphabetical index for the reels in a separate notebook or on 3" x 5" file cards. After that it's just a matter of being able to file alphabetically and you'll never have to frantically search for lost matters again. This system can be implemented for both 1/2" and 1" multitrack masters and 1/4" mixed masters.

A reel filing system can be a lifesaver. We once had a group called "Fateful Lightning" wait 45 minutes while we were searching for its tapes, which turned out to be mistakenly stuck in among the masters for the Roth Chemical Company. Imagine my embarrassment when I had to tell my assistant to go "loose" the 'Fateful

| | | ient | Track Sheet # Master Reel # Tape Speed Date | |
|-------------|---------|--------------------------|--|--|
| Take# | Counter | Title | Remarks | |
| 1 | 000 | Love Is A Monkey Buster" | Bass out of Tune | |
| 2 | 081 | 11 11 11 | Drummer went to restroom | |
| 3 | 101 | 11 11 11 | Singer forgot words | |
| 4 | 121 | 11 11 11 | Singer went to restroom | |
| 3 4 5 | 163 | 11 11 11 | Broken String | |
| | 188 | 11 11 11 | Drummer Needed Restroom Again | |
| 7 | 235 | // // // | Keyboard Lost RHYTHM | |
| 6789 | 293 | " " " | Engineer Needed Restroom | |
| | 310 | " " | Singer Sneezed | |
| 10 | 351 | " " " | Restroom Flooded - Sepsion PostPowed!! | |
| | | | | |

Figure 3

Lightning' where the tapes of Roth were stored." (OW! That one hurt even on this end!)

These forms are only intended to be a starting off—not a jumping off—point. Your own situations and methods may call for additions and refinements of your own invention. This is not only fine, it is recommended. Anything that works for you is the right way. If you're lucky enough to also own a personal computer with graphics display, you have a potentially superior record keeping system right at your fingertips. (No pun intended.) How you preserve the information is not as important as just keeping it in the first place.

I hope this article has helped impress the importance of proper record keeping upon the brains of those of you who do not have photographic memories. Those of you who do have photographic memories and have read this far can probably recite the last few pages word for word and toss in the first six lines of "Gunga Din" as an encore. As for me I seem to have forgotten how to end this article, so I will leave you now. I sure wish I could remember what the name of the game is that you use this basketball in...