

is this a **STUDIO** or a **PAPER** factory?

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

