

MICROPHONES AND MUSIC

A stepping stone for different people

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Into the microphones a hopeful

younger guitarist sings and plays, his music transformed into electronic impulses that snake their

Studio dictionary

Recording studios abound with their very own jargon. Here's what some of it means.

MULTI - TAPE RECORDING entails separate, synchronized recording on one piece of tape. Individual tracks isolate the sounds of each instrument or group of instruments, voices or groups of voices.

Multi-track tape recorders can have up to 64 separate tracks using recording tape up to two inches wide.

As with anything labelled professional, they are expensive. Home recorders normally utilize two tracks (stereo) on quarter-inch tape, and are cheap compared to studio equipment.

Multi-track recording allows singers and musicians to record their portions of the score at different times if necessary. It also permits flexibility in "overdubbing."

During overdubbing, finished tracks are mixed until a desirable blend is obtained. A lead guitarist's recording level, for example, can be brought up when he does a solo and turned down when singing is resumed.

An eight-track cartridge player, such as the type used in many private cars, is substantially different from a studio eight-track recorder. The former can deal only with

one of the four two-track stereo programs contained on it at any one time.

The studio machine can record or play all eight tracks at once. Tape speed and quality also differ significantly.

The term **16 IN — 8 OUT** refers to a recording console that can accept up to 16 separate microphone inputs and combine them in up to eight different outputs. These would normally be attached to an eight-track studio recorder.

Some other combinations are 12 in — 8 out, 24 in — 16 out and 32 in — 24 out.

A **DEMO**, or demonstration recording, is used by a musical performer for promotion, to obtain personal engagements or land a recording contract.

While less effort and fineness is usually put into a demo than a recording destined for commercial release, demos can still be elaborate.

JINGLES are the musical "beds" for spoken radio or television commercials, or frequently a whole commercial — those 30- or 60-second singing advertisements that can delight, or provoke madness.

Often more care and expense are lavished on a jingle than on a five-minute song on a commercially successful album.

way through a \$30,000 maze of equipment.

Outside on the streets of Lethbridge, the noise of traffic, people and pets merges into a collective, garbled clamor.

But in the basement of this concrete-block building, controlled, musical notes are shielded from the exterior din by baffling panels and insulation.

Headphones are standard issue on both sides of Southern Sound's control room glass partition — for the man plucking strings and the one sliding control knobs.

Stop and try again

With perfection as their goal, they stop in the middle of a take and try again. The reels of recording tape are spinning again.

It's slightly more than a year since Southern Sound recording studio opened for business below Pruegger's Music, 530 5th St. S., after five months of construction and preparation.

Co-owners Dave Filchak and Wayne Cropley run the studio with help from engineer Dean Bohne, office manager Michelle Hamilton and a fluctuating number of unpaid volunteers caught up in the excitement of putting sound onto records and tape cassettes.

The business is worth about \$90,000, if someone wanted to buy it, Filchak estimates. One-third of that is in equipment.

That includes a 16 in. — 8 out board, or console, an electronic wonder that molds sound like plasticine.

Voice enhanced

A mediocre voice can be fashioned into a good one, says Filchak. More important, a good voice can be enhanced to its full potential, complemented by musical instruments, provided by singer or studio.

The result may be a 45-rpm single record, a long-playing album or a "demo" tape aimed at boosting the performer's career by being played to the right people.

Services can be tailored to a performer's desires and needs. But a standard package deal for a 45 record costs \$990. That covers 12 hours of recording and mixing, the services of one engineer, tape rental and 1,000 copies of the record, labelled and stacked neatly.

Production complex

The price is much higher for an album — \$3,630 — but production is more complex.

Ten hours recording time and 18 hours of overdubbing and mixing are included, as are labels, inner sleeves, full-color jackets and plastic "shrink-wrap" for the 1,000 records pressed.

The performer must supply or pay for the color cover photo. Southern Sound is in the process of setting up a photographic studio and graphic arts department for this procedure.

The actual manufacturing of vinyl records is out of Southern's hands, and is likely to stay that way, Filchak says.

Completed tapes are sent to Los Angeles for that portion of the business, the costs of which would be prohibitive for production in Lethbridge because of limited man-

ufacturing orders.

The possibility of having a hand in uncovering a new Elton John or Carole King is the glamorous side of the business for Filchak and company. But the bread-and-butter work consists of jingles.

Musical recordings for use as part of radio or television commercials are generally what pay the rent for small studios such as Southern.

Locally, such businesses as Capitol Furniture, Art Williams Travel, Minute Muffler, Time Air and Johnson's Drugs, Taber, have sold or are selling their products to the sound of Southern's jingles.



HEADPHONES STANDARD ISSUE



DAVE FILCHAK IN SOUTHERN SOUND'S CONTROL ROOM

Jingle purchasers can buy "institutional" jingles from bigger companies at lower prices usually through radio and TV stations, but commercials aired in other cities will have identical backgrounds.

Southern stresses individuality.

"Nobody else will have that jingle," says Filchak.

"It's theirs."

Creative work

For that uniqueness, customers pay \$700 for a 30-second jingle, \$1,200 for 60 seconds and \$1,400 for a 60-30 combination.

Such work is creative, Filchak insists, but the inspiration that sustains the 16-hour days he and his staff often put in comes largely from the "fun" projects — record singles and albums.

Several local performers have hired the studio, including singers Tom and Curt.

Recently, Southern recorded a 45 rpm single of a folk protest song called Three Rivers, a musical outcry against a proposed dam.

Paying a small studio to record one's material isn't the traditional route to hit parade stardom, of course.

More common is the recording company contract, under which the singer, musician or band leaves it to the likes of Columbia, RCA or Warner Brothers to immortalize them in wax.

That route has its pitfalls, Filchak points out. Recording giants often sign up a performer but never get around to cutting a record. If

they do, the financial return to the artist may be much less than he dreamed.

The big money for many performers comes from concert tours and other live events. Then, the practice of selling albums "off the stage" can be a lucrative one, and it's the small recording studio which can supply them, 1,000 at a time.

Southern is in the process of establishing its own label, probably to be called Paradise Records, Filchak says.

After a year in the business, Filchak, 28, says without hesitation, "I love it."

He's happy with the studio's financial performance, although most of the income has been put back into new equipment and constant improvements, he says.

His fiscal survival is due in part to his income as a professional singer-guitarist with the Lethbridge band Oddio.

Professional studio

"We've had to learn a lot. I've been studying and studying. It feels like I'm back in school."

"But it's a professional studio. A lot of people don't realize that."

Filchak is working on his own album, when time allows.

With 21 years as a guitarist behind him, Filchak's comment about the role of a recording studio in people's careers could apply to his own.

"We're a stepping stone for different people."



EARL DOUCETTE, FILCHAK DISCUSS MUSIC ARRANGEMENT