THE ULTIMATE 10 STEP GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL DIY-RECORDING

DIY THE SELF-RECORDING BAND

Recording your own band can seem like a pretty daunting task. But it is absolutely possible to get great results DIY-style if you pay attention to a few key things that can make or break the outcome of your project. So, if you decide to give it a shot and try to record your own band, follow this 10 step system to successful DIY recording and finally get your desired results!

Full disclosure: I believe hiring an experienced engineer/producer and using a great recording studio with a good sounding room and high-end gear is still a great way to get amazing results, of course.

BUT: I also believe that the gap between the results of professional recording engineers and the results of musicians who take recording on their own seriously is getting smaller and smaller. In fact, I think the self-producing artist is the future of the recording industry. We will see a lot of people doing it themselves successfully by educating themselves on the recording part of the process and hiring professionals for the most critical and complex tasks that come after the recording, like editing, mixing and mastering. So, if you want to try and go down the DIY-route, do it the right way! If not, up your budget and use a studio with experienced professionals. Half-assing either of those approaches won't get you anywhere.

So, let's dive right into this and follow the proven 10 steps that countless bands have already used to produce successful releases on their own.

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The Ultimate 10 Step Guide To Successful DIY-Recording

Step 1: Write Great Songs

It seems obvious, but the truth is: So many recordings are not great, simply because the songs suck! If the music and the lyrics just don't resonate with people, the best production team in the world can not make it have an impact. It all starts there.
So the first of those 10 steps to successful DIY recording is to write music that's truly special and amazing. Be authentic, write about your own truth, about how YOU view the world. Don't try to satisfy anyone with what you write. And then create music that supports your lyrics, that evokes strong feeling and emotions in the listener by emphasizing what you are trying to say. It's pretty damn sure that you are not the only person in the world feeling the way you do, so if you are authentic and find a way to express yourself through your songs, there is probably an audience that your music resonates with.

Step 2: Work On The Arrangement

Before the actual recording starts, there's another important thing to work on. As soon as the songs (lyrics, melodies, harmonies, structure) are perfect, you should take time to focus on the arrangement. This means deciding which part is played by which instruments, what exactly every instrument plays, how the transitions from part to part are gonna be and when to leave space for the vocals or an important line of any instrument. In most cases it doesn't make much sense to have the full band going full volume all of the time. Also, it's usually not a good idea to have everybody play complex, virtuoso stuff at the same time throughout the whole song. But it's practically always a good idea to listen to each other and support the groove and feel of the most important elements in each part.

So, Ask Yourself These Questions:

Big Picture:

- Do all of the transitions work as intended? Do the quiet parts really sound quiet and the loud, huge parts sound loud and huge? Should we maybe reduce one part a bit further to make the next part appear even bigger?
- What's the ideal tempo for the song?
- Is the arrangement as a whole too dense? Do all elements really have to play all the time?
- Does it make sense to have a lead guitar lick, multiple layered vocal harmonies and three complex drum fills during the spectacular bass solo? And does a bass solo ever make sense at all? ;-)
- Would it be more interesting to bring in a new element in verse two to separate it a bit from verse one? Will the listener stay engaged from start to finish? Or will he/she stop listening carefully after the first chorus, because everything is exactly repeated from that point on?

Single Elements:

- Does the pitch of the song fit the voice and range of the vocalist? This is not only about being able to hit all the notes, but to get the most emotionally appealing performance. You should definitely test your limits there!
- Is there enough space for the lead vocal? Should it be upfront and clearly intelligible all the time, or should it be treated almost as a part of the instrumental arrangement and feel more embedded within the band.
- Do the rhythmic pattern of the guitars and bass fit the groove of the drums? Oftentimes everybody thinks they play the same, when in fact they don't. During recording you then hear things like: "What? That note is supposed to be early? I've always played it exactly on the beat!" Or: "What do you mean you play straight 8ths in that part? Why don't you follow my kick and snare pattern?"
- Are all of the drum fills really perfectly playable?
- Would a more simplified and straight drum pattern maybe be a better fit for some parts?

We could go on an on with more questions like that, but you get the point. It all starts with the arrangement and it is key to get this right or otherwise the final product won't be very appealing. No matter what gear and recording techniques you use.

Step 3: Improve Your Playing And Singing Technique

Yup, I know, still no word about gear and the stuff you probably thought is important. We'll get to that, of course, but until you've worked on all the core elements that go into producing a great record, it doesn't make any sense to touch a knob or press record. If you haven't payed enough attention to either the songwriting, the arrangement, or your playing and singing skills, the results of the recording just won't sound great, no matter how advanced your gear or recording techniques are.

Here Are Some Specific Important Things To Pay Attention To (I See People Get These Wrong All The Time):

Drums:

- The Balance between the cymbals and shells (I always call this "the key to better drum recordings", because it is so important). 90% of all drummers hit the cymbals too hard and the shells not hard and consistent enough.
- How hard do you hit in general? Does that affect the tone of your drums and cymbals? (Hint: It does!)
- Where exactly do you hit the drumheads and cymbals? How does that affect the tone of your drums and cymbals?
- The angle of your sticks when they hit the drums. How does that affect the tone of your drums and cymbals?
- Are you hitting consistently or too dynamically?
- Is your timing accurate? Can you feel the groove, or does it sound sloppy?
- How fast can you really play the part before it starts to get rough?

Bass & Guitar:

- Do you play upstrokes or downstrokes? Most of the time downstrokes sound heavier, clearer, more defined, tighter and just better. Especially when playing palm mutes.
- The angle of your pick and where you grab it. How does that affect your tone?
- The way you "lean into your instrument" and how this effects the pitch (by slightly bending the neck).
- How hard and consistent are you hitting the strings?
- Is your timing accurate? Can you feel the groove, or does it sound sloppy?
- How fast can you really play the part before it starts to get rough?

Vocals:

- How accurate is your intonation? Can you hit every note perfectly, or do you struggle with certain notes?
- When you have to hit those really high notes, are you able to do so without losing impact and power in your voice? Or can you barely hit them and therefore sound weak in those parts?
- Are you able to sing multiple takes of the same song without losing or compromising your voice?
- Did you study and practice general vocal techniques like proper breathing and warmup exercises? If not, I highly recommend to do so!

Step 4: Get The Gear You Really Need

Now here's the part you've probably been most excited to hear about: Gear! We all love gear, don't we? Unfortunately, you're about to see that it's not as important as you might think it is and that it definitely won't turn bad performances, weak songs and poor arrangements into masterpieces. The good news is, though: You don't have to spend a fortune on recording gear and I'll show you exactly what you need to produce amazing results without breaking the bank.

At first, we've got to get our priorities straight. It's important to understand which pieces of equipment have the biggest impact on your recording, so we can spend our money where it really matters.

This List Is Showing You The Elements With The Biggest Influence On The Quality Of Your Recording At The Top. Further Down The List, The Items Get Less And Less Important:

- Instruments
- Strings, drumheads, guitar picks, sticks
- Amps & Cabinets
- Room acoustic treatment
- Speakers / Headphones
- Microphones/DI-boxes
- Audio-Interface (all-in-one solution, or combination of individual preamps and converters). Hierarchy "within the interface" in order of importance: *1. Connectivity and flexibility - 2. Preamps - 3. A/D-D/A Converters (analog -> digital & digital -> analog)*
- Computer
- Recording software ("DAW" = Digital Audio Workstation)
- Everything else (plugins, hardware compressors, EQs, effects, etc.)

So, you see that the source tone is always the absolute most important thing to focus on. A different set of guitar strings, or a different snare drum or set of cymbals will dramatically change the sound of your recording, while using a different microphone preamp will make a very very subtle difference.

Instruments & Room Acoustics:
Get the instruments and amps that work best for your style of music and taste, then optimize your room, so that everything sounds as good as possible in there and only after that improve the actual recording gear. I'll talk about how to improve your tone and room acoustics in "Step 7: Setup".

Do the research about what works for your desired sound and be ready to purchase stuff that really works versus stuff that you like for some other reason. You may think that a certain guitar is the most beautiful instrument in the world, but is it really the best choice for your style of music? What do other bands in you genre typically use?

Speakers & Headphones:
Now, before you worry about how to record stuff, there's one more very crucial thing to pay attention to: Your monitoring. If you're not able to analyze and judge your recordings, you can't improve them. So a good pair of fairly accurate monitors plus some quality headphones are a must! Invest some time into trying some out and finding the right ones for your taste and room. They should sound accurate and detailed, but not too fatiguing. Remember that you're going to spend a lot of time listening to them and it should be still fun after hours of working on your recording.

Microphones & DI-Boxes
Let's get to the actual recording gear: The most important part of your recording setup are the microphones (and where you place them, see "Step 7: Setup)". Here are the essentials that you need, along with recommendations of some of my favourite, affordable mics:

- 3-4 dynamic all-round microphones (Shure SM57, Audix i5, or similar)
- a dynamic "bass drum microphone" (AKG D112, Audix D6, or similar)
- 1-2 pairs of inexpensive small diaphragm condenser microphones (Røde NT5, Oktava mk 012, or similar)
- one inexpensive large diaphragm condenser microphone (Røde nt1-a, Sennheiser MK4, or similar)

This selection should be sufficient for any standard band formation. With this equipment you can record everything from complete drum kits to guitar amps or vocals. As an alternative to the large diaphragm condenser microphone (although sooner or later you pretty much always need one), a dynamic large diaphragm microphone, such as the popular Shure SM7B, is also an option.

It's also a great idea to get a good DI box to be able to track DI signals along with your guitar and bass amp recordings. If you want to know more about recording DIs and which DI boxes to choose, check out my blog post on "How To Properly Record DI Tracks"

Audio Interface:
What I call the "audio interface" here is a combination of inputs/outputs, microphone preamps and AD/DA converters. It's the thing that connects your microphones, instruments and speakers to your computer. This can be an all-in-one solution, or individually selected pieces of gear that work together. Basically all of these sound pretty good, nowadays. So I would worry more about connectivity, features and number of inputs/outputs than about sound quality.

Computer:
Which interface to choose also depends on your computer and its connectivity. And, talking about computers, I would highly recommend starting with what you already have. Almost any half-decent up-to-date PC or Mac has enough power to record entire band projects with several tracks. If you plan on buying or having a new computer built for you, make sure to get expert advice (from an audio specialist) to avoid spending too much money unnecessarily.

Recording Software:
On your computer you need to run a dedicated recording software, often called "DAW" (Digital Audio Workstation). Sonically, there is no difference between the different DAWs out there. Especially if you're using it for recording and not so much for mixing, you're not gonna need all the fancy plugins and editing options that come with the more expensive DAWs. It's mainly a matter of features and workflow. Just go with what you can afford and what you are comfortable with and you'll be fine.

Outboard Gear & Plugins:

The least thing you need to worry about is outboard gear and plugins. To be able to get great results when recording your band you won't need expensive compressors, EQs, etc. You also don't need external high-end microphone preamps. I know that using stuff like this is fun, of course, and I don't want to stop you from buying it, if you can afford the cost. But only after you've improved all the other things we've been talking about here, such a purchase starts to make any sense.

And please keep in mind: All those nice-to-have recording toys will never, ever, ever save you from putting in the work and optimizing your songs, arrangements, technique, instrument setup and room. And they have never been and will never be the reason for a song to become successful. Never. If there was only one thing I wanted you to remember from reading this section about gear, it would be this.

Step 5: Pre-Production

You've done everything to optimize your songs and arrangements for recording. Now it's time to put them to the test! You can do this by recording first drafts, raw demos of the whole band live, or as overdubs. Or try both if you're not sure, yet, what's the best way to go about it for your band. This is the time to experiment!

Install your recording software of choice, watch tutorials and read the manual until you're comfortable with the basic functions (you don't need to know about mixing or mastering). Then connect your interface and select the interface as your audio device within the software. Choose a minimum of 24 Bit / 44,1 kHz (48 kHz if you plan to make a video for the song) on your interface and in your project settings (always make sure the sample rate (kHz) is the same across all of your devices/programs), connect your speakers, headphones and microphones and there you go! That's all you gotta learn, regarding the technical part of setting up recording gear. What really matters is all of the following stuff. And it has pretty little to do with computers and recording equipment.

Pre-Pro Setup:

Get together in your rehearsal room or home studio and setup your instruments and amps just like you would for the actual recording. As soon as you have your tones going and everything feeling right, set up a couple of microphones and record a few takes of your songs. You don't have to capture it perfectly or pay attention to every sonic detail. One mic in front of the cabs, a pair of overheads, a kick drum mic and a vocal mic and you should be good to go. It's all about getting a first impression of how the songs and the arrangement work and experimenting with stuff that's not perfect, yet. In fact, if you can get things to work and sound great with very few microphones, or even just a pair of room mics, there's a great chance it will sound awesome when recorded "properly" later on.

Experiment With Tones And Headphone Mixes:

You can also try out different guitar tones, drum tunings and dampening, or positioning of instruments and amps in the room. Search for the spots in your room where each instrument sounds best. You might be surprised by the difference this can make!

For drums you can easily test this by walking around with a well tuned floor tom in your hand and hitting it in different parts of the room. Look for low frequency build-ups (too boomy) and dead spots (to thin/weak). Then set your drums up where you have a beautifully balanced low frequency response. A full, fat tom sound that's not too resonant or boomy. This will work perfectly for the whole kit. Then, when you set it up, try moving the cymbals as far away from the shells as possible, to improve the balance between the cymbals and shells. (Again, "the key to better drum recordings")

Testing different mics and microphone positions can also be enlightening and fun during pre-production. It can give you an idea of what works and what doesn't, so that you're able to make decisions quicker when you start setting up for recording the "real" takes. And if you use a more sophisticated microphone setup during pre-production, you should definitely experiment with different headphone mixes and volumes. Also, find out whether you want to use a click or not. Optimizing what you're hearing on your headphones and how you react to it is absolutely crucial for being able to deliver an exceptional performance during recording.

The Goal:
Remember, it's not about capturing the perfect takes, or tones, yet. You should zoom out and focus on the big picture here. This stage is all about testing, getting comfortable with your setup and experimenting. Find the weak points and eliminate them before they can become a problem during recording. Tobe able to do so, don't forget to label the recordings properly and make notes as you move along, so that you can sort through everything easily as soon as you're done. It's not fun to compare "Take_4" to "Take_57" without remembering all the changes you made inbetween, during "Take_5" to "Take_56". This can become a frustrating mess really quickly.

Step 6: Analyze, Get Feedback, Practice And Make A Plan

Now you should have some nicely organized and labeled pre-production recordings. Listen to them, analyze them and compare the different scenarios you've recorded.

Questions To Ask Yourself:

- Did the work you've invested into improving the arrangements pay off?
- Does the song structure work?
- Are all the important elements clearly audible, or are some parts still a cloudy mess?
- What about the guitar tones? Do they work together? Are they too close, maybe?
- The drum tones? Does the snare cut through?
- Do you need more vocal harmonies or did you maybe overcook it, already?
- Which elements will need overdubs and doubles in the final production?
- Can you actually play everything well? Are there any timing or intonation issues?

Get Feedback On Your Pre-Pro Recording:
It's also a good idea to get outside, objective feedback during this stage. Show the recordings to your mixing engineer and ask him for feedback. He might find stuff, that's going to be difficult to deal with during mixing. He might also suggest easy-to-implement solutions for it. And let your friends who are not musicians or engineers have a listen, as well. To get the perspective of the average music fan or listener can be very valuable. Do they like what they hear? Do they get your message?

Does it have the desired impact on them? Great songs, played on great sounding instruments should already work quite well. Even without the perfect production.

Make A Plan And Practice:
After analyzing and gathering feedback, it's time to make a plan. Write down all the things you want to improve, along with strategies and tactics on how to improve them. Then estimate the amount of time you'll need to get everything to perfection. Finally, schedule individual practice hours, as well as band rehearsal dates. It's best to turn this into a routine quickly and stick to it until you achieve the desired results.
Also, write down all the things you liked about the pre-production. That way you can remember and use them during the actual recording process.

Step 7: Recording Setup

The time has come, you are prepared and ready to setup for recording! As I've touched on briefly earlier in this article, the room acoustics have a huge influence on the results you'll be getting. So let's improve that before setting up your instruments, amps and microphones.

Room Acoustics:

Bass Traps:
The first thing to do is to treat the corners of the room. Because every untreated room has an exaggerated low-frequency response and in the corners is, where the bass (low frequencies) builds up. To do that, you can use Rock Wool covered in fabric (best value for money), old mattresses, or thick foam that you put in every corner of the room. The thicker/deeper the better and the higher the better. Ideally you'll stack it from floor to ceiling. That should even out your bass response and everything will sound less boomy and more controlled.

Early Reflections And Overall Reverb Time:

General Reverb Time:
To reduce the overall amount of reverb in your room and get a more direct, controlled sound, you can put some broadband absorbers in there. These are thick, dense panels made of sound absorbing materials, like (again) rock wool, or foam. Foam is very expensive, though, and most cheap, thin foam products do more harm than good. So I would stay away from those and use either really thick high quality Basotect foam (VERY expensive), or use rock wool. You can make it look nice buy building wooden frames that you fill with the wool, cover with fabric and put on the walls.
If none of this sounds appealing to you, because you're a lazy slob like I used to be when I first started out, than just lean some old, thick mattresses, or any thick pieces of soft, dense material against the walls. It will most likely be better than nothing.

Thicker is better:
The reason why I say it has to be thick is because the thicker the absorber, the lower the frequencies it can affect. So, a thin piece of foam will only affect the very high frequencies and thus make your room sound dull. You want a broad, even absorption across the entire spectrum and to achieve that you have to use thick, effective absorbers.

Reducing Early Reflections:
You don't want to cover the whole room with absorbing stuff, because you'll end up with a very dead, dull and lifeless room, if you do. One of two parallel surfaces is usually enough. So if you put an absorber on a spot on the wall, try leaving that spot on the opposite wall of the room as it is. That way you're gonna get a more natural and ambient, but still controlled room sound.
Now, when you setup your drums and amps, the goal is to keep the direct signal into the mics clean and reflection free, while still maintaining that "live" and natural ambience of the room. The way to do that is to set up your stuff close to where the absorbers are. Meaning that the close, surrounding surfaces should be absorptive and the untreated spots should be further away (on the opposite end of the room).

So, try putting absorbers behind your guitar cabs and around the entire drum kit. That way the reflections of the closest walls ("early reflections") will be reduced dramatically and won't interfere with your direct signal that arrives at your microphones almost at the same time. The reflections from the walls further away, however, will still be there. But they'll arrive at your microphone significantly later and quieter, so that our ears can clearly separate them from the direct signal and perceive them as ambience, "air" or reverb.

Instrument Setup:
I can't stress enough how important new drumheads and bass/guitar strings are. The choice of strings and drumheads really matters, as well. Experiment, read, get recommendations for your style and taste and go with what you like the most. You can start this process during pre-production and slowly find out what works for you. Please remember: A crappy drum kit with brand new, high quality heads will often sound better than a great, expensive kit with old, crappy heads. The same goes for guitars and strings.

Just as important as putting new strings and heads on your instruments is setting them up and tuning them properly.

Drum Tuning:
I could write a whole new guide on drum tuning (and I probably will), but for now I just want you to take a look at the existing resources on that topic (there are plenty!) and I beg you to learn that stuff. It's SO crucial, yet so many drummers don't have a clue about it. Don't be one of those guys!

Guitar / Bass Setup:
There's just absolutely NO excuse not to have your guitars perfectly set up. It's very easy to figure out and do. There are plenty of tutorials on that and I'm sure you can quickly find a resource that you like and understand. If you don't want to do it yourself, just take it to a good tech. It's cheap and absolutely worth it. I highly recommend to learn it, though. It's a skill you can make great use of over and over again.

Things to take care of:

- intonation
- action
- relief (neck bow)
- pickup-height and -angle

And of course, please make sure everything works and nothing in your room is making any unwanted noise. This includes rattling screws on your drum shells or hardware, a squealing chair, or a wildly resonating radiator.

Mic Setup:
Now it's time to find the perfect position for every microphone. Keep in mind: Changing the distance from the source, or moving the mic slightly to the left or right can have a bigger impact on the sound than changing the type of microphone! You have gained some knowledge and experience during pre-production and you've probably made a choice which mic to use on which instrument. Now you can refine their exact position.

Some Quick Tips:

Drums:

- Kick drum mic: Inside, closer to the batter head: more attack ("click" sound); closer to the resonant head: more body and low end fullness
- Snare drum mic: Turn your mic away from the hi-hat to reduce bleed (hi hat leakage into the snare mic). The closer to the batter head the more body you get. Further away the sound get's more open, full and rich, but you're gonna pick up more of the cymbals. The more you point it towards the center of the head, the more attack you're gonna capture. Point it more towards the outside near the rim and you're gonna get more overtones and a more open, but slightly less aggressive sound. You can use an additional mic underneath the snare, if you want. If you do, you should flip the polarity on your bottom mic using the "phase" or "polarity" switch on your preamp/interface or in your DAW.

- Toms: Basically same as snare (account for additional leakage from the surrounding cymbals); Point the mic straight down at the head (steep angle) for maximum attack and clarity. A flat angle will soften the attack.
- Overheads: Decide whether you want to represent the kit as a whole, for a more natural, ambient sounding kit, or if you want to focus on the cymbals only, for maximum clarity, separation and definition. This determines if you place the mics directly above the cymbals or just where you get a good stereo representation of the kit. Then, measure the distance from the kick and snare to both the overhead mics and try to get them equidistant to each of them. That way your kick and snare will stay in the center of the stereo image, when the overheads are panned left and right in the mix. Think of this line as the center of the kit:
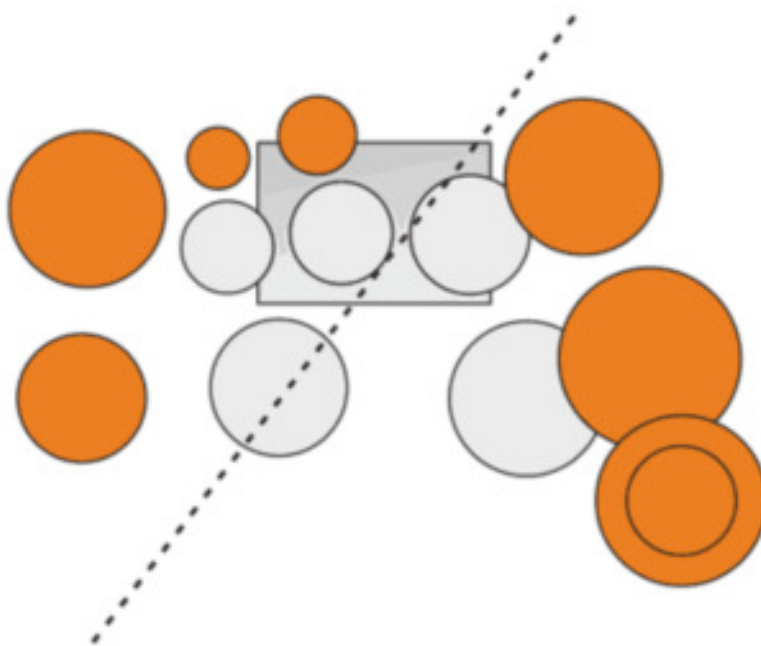
- If necessary, add additional microphones to capture any cymbals that are too quiet in the overheads

- Room Mics: Time to get creative! I always recommend setting up mics that add vibe and depth to the dum kit. No one ever listens to drums with his/her ears directly stuck to the shells and cymbals. If you do, stop it, it's probably unhealthy. So these mics will also give us a sense of reality. But the main goal here is to make the drums more exciting. Walk around the room while a drummer is playing and find the spots where it sounds the most energetic and impactful. In the corners and close to the walls you will get more low end and by moving up and down you can also hear the shell/cymbal balance vary quite a bit. Place the mics wherever you think it sounds exciting. No had rules here. Mono, stereo pair, something is better than nothing. Even a cheap, crappy mic can sound pretty cool as a room mic. Also, try pointing the mics away from the kit to make the room sound bigger.

Guitars/Bass:

Microphone:
The more you move the mic towards the center of a speaker cone, the brighter your sound becomes. Move it more towards the outside and you'll get more low end and a duller sound. If you increase the distance, the sound becomes more open. If you get closer to the cab, the sound get's more direct with increased low end. Find your sweet spot.

DI Tracks:
Plug your bass or guitar into a DI box and from there go directly into a channel on your interface, using the XLR output of the DI box. From the jack output you go into your amp, dial in your tone as usual, put a microphone in front of the cab and record the DI signal and the mic signal at the same time.
Instead of using a microphone, you can also record the direct output that many bass amps have and see if you like that sound. Oftentimes that works pretty well! But don't confuse that with the actual DI signal coming out of your DI box. This is something different and you'll always want to record this.
Instead of using a DI box you can also just plug your bass directly into your interface, if it has dedicated instrument inputs (often labeled "high-Z"). Don't use a mic-input or

line-input without a DI box, though. These "expect" different impedances and levels.

Vocals:
Put a pop filter in front of your mic and experiment with distance and angle. Listen for harsh "s"-sounds and loud plosives ("p", "t", "k", "b"). They can cause distortion and are hard to control in the mix. Varying the distance, angle and height also gives you different sonic characteristics. You can get more body out of a rather thin sounding voice, by getting closer to the mic, for example. Or you can compensate for a nasally sounding voice, by moving the mic up or down a bit. Experiment and see what you like!

Step 8: Press Record

You've made it! Nothing can stop you and you're about to get the results you've always wanted!

Now relax, get a vibe going and make sure everyone is comfortable. Maybe adjust the lighting and make sure you have enough drinks and snacks. Also, always get some spare drumheads and strings. They can die pretty quickly and you don't want that to interrupt you session for too long.

Everything ready, everybody pumped and excited to start? Great, now press that record button and let it flow!

Step 9: Comp, Consolidate And Export Your Files

After you've wrapped up the recording process, it's time to sort through your takes. Then you comp them together and consolidate your files. Put non-overlapping tracks of the same source together on one track and insert short crossfades at the transition between the clips in your DAW. This will prevent nasty clicks.

Then consolidate the track, so you have one long file from the beginning of the song, all the way to the end. Do that with every track and make sure the files all start at beat one of the same bar. That way they are perfectly aligned, when imported into a new session.

Always make backups of the different stages so that you can go back anytime in case you make a mistake!

Exporting Your Files:

- Export your files into a dedicated folder for each song.
- Label the files and folders in a way that makes sense to anyone outside of your band.
- Put the tempo information (bpm) in the name of each folder, or on a sheet that you include in each folder.

Step 10: Send It To Your Editing/Mixing/Mastering Engineer(s) And Be Excited For The Awesome Results!

Recording is something you can learn relatively fast and get decent results from your rehearsal room. Professional editing, mixing and mastering are disciplines that take years to master. And each of them can make or break the sound of a recording. If you want truly professional results there's absolutely no way around hiring an experienced professional. One who knows your genre and is able to turn your recordings into a finished production that you're going to be proud of forever.

This is the time to let go of your baby and put it into the hands of someone you trust. Someone who can bring out its full potential. Find that person and talk to him/her about your expectations, desires, goals, taste and vision. Give him/her all the info you can think of (reference mixes, things you like/ don't like about your recordings). And then make sure that the following steps will be taken care of:

Editing:
This includes pitch and timing correction, as well as cleaning up the tracks and removing unwanted noise. Explain how clean and perfect you want things to be. For some genres it has to be absolutely perfect. For others it's better to embrace some of the imperfections and go for a more organic, natural production. Communication is everything here.

Mixing:

This process has the biggest impact on the sound of your production. And also the biggest potential to screw things up. It's where all the individual elements of your recording get balanced against each other and processed to achieve maximum impact, power, clarity and vibe. All while keeping the raw energy and feeling of the performance. Talk to the engineer about your vision and taste, so that he/she can work towards a clear goal.

Mastering:

The final touch on your production. It's where the overall loudness and frequency balance get adjusted and where the engineer makes sure that the master translates perfectly onto all kinds of listening systems and environments. Also, the transitions and gaps between the songs should be addressed, as well as the balance between the individual songs to get a coherent master and a perfect listening experience throughout the whole record. This step can be done by the mixing engineer or a different, dedicated mastering engineer. Many people will tell you that hiring a mastering engineer is always better. I think there are pros and cons to both of those methods and you should ask your mixing engineer for advice here, as it highly depends on his/her workflow, preference and experience.

Take Action:

Implement everything you find helpful and watch your recordings improve! Let me know if you have any questions, I always love to find out more about how I can help you get the results you've always wanted! Also, please share the results you've gotten, using this system.

That's it for that long-ass guide. Make good use of it, tell your friends about this free goodie and keep your eyes on your email inbox, as I will provide you with all kinds of useful resources to level up your DIY-recording skills! Have a nice day!

Benedikt Hain | The Self-Recording Band