

When the Music Matters

Producing a Master – By Tina Poffenbaugh Terry

You want to record your band, but your budget is tight. Self-production is one cost-effective way to record with limited finances. It's not uncommon to view CD credits that indicate the band produced, recorded, mixed and mastered the release. Is this a good idea? There are exceptions, but usually not. Mastering is the one part of the production process that musicians should outsource to a professional.

Mastering is essential in creating a recording that is competitive in today's marketplace. It is the final stage of a recording. To be done right, it's crucial to find a person with the right technical knowledge, experience, the right equipment and, most importantly, a good ear. These are the very reasons the group, Hobex, sought Jeff Carroll at Bluefield Mastering for their latest Tone-Cool Records release, "U Ready Man?"

Improving the basic tracks is the ultimate goal in mastering. Studio

that allows for the mastering to be done by someone other than you. It will be a noticeable improvement to the quality of your final recording. Carroll calls it "your last chance to make sure the recording will be its best, possess a 'sound' and plays back well in a variety of systems – whether it be a car, a boom box or a high-end hi-fi system."

The mastering of "U Ready Man?" took off in one direction and, with experimentation, shifted to a slightly warmer sound. Hobex's lead singer, Greg Humphreys was skeptical, but with a few minutes of comparisons of other mixes, the warmer sound won out. Humphreys states of Carroll's work, "He boosted the bottom end a decibel or two on some songs, adjusted gain structure between all the different tracks and just generally made it sound better than it did going in."

The warm tones of "U Ready Man?" is the reason it gets regular rotation in my CD player! "U Ready Man?" is a proficient collection of old-school blues, jazz, funk and soul with a quaint, jam-friendly approach.

Remember, it's about quality, not quantity! Hire someone to master your release! Professional input is well worth the expense.



Photo credit: Julie Welch

Hobex group members.

control rooms aren't always the best listening environments. Carroll informs, "The size of a room, monitors, monitor placement and even ear fatigue from mixing long hours can result in acoustical anomalies, which impact crucial judgments in the production process." The mastering engineer will be your fresh set of ears and your objectivity.

You want to put your best foot forward, right? Then create a budget

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