

## **Home Recording Studio: Do I Need a Home Recording Studio and How The Heck Do I Build One?**

By Deborah Richards

Do you need a home recording studio? Few questions are more common among new voice talent than questions about home studios. Let's take it one at a time, shall we?

Yes, you need a home recording studio, and here's why.

Whether you are working with traditional agents or an online casting site like Voice 123, auditions are sent via e-mail. You are required to perform the audition and either send it via e-mail to the agent or upload it to the online casting site.

Many studios will happily record your auditions for a small fee, but if you're an increasingly active voice talent, you may audition for ten, twenty or even thirty jobs a week. Do you really want to pay \$20.00 to \$50.00 per audition? These fees can be crippling to struggling younger talent and cut into the profit of more established voiceover artists.

Since studios charge less for auditions, you may get perfunctory production at best or be bumped for a higher paying job at worst. The studio must focus on the higher paying customers. It's just business.

Bob Bergin, a very talented voice talent and coach, told me to always try to be one of the first in line for an audition. I found this piece of advice, along with most everything else he says, to be absolutely accurate. Your own studio increases the chance you'll be one of the first auditions heard by the client, and increases your chance of being hired.

Finally, your own studio means that you're responsible for the quality of your audition. Another voice talent and actor, the late Jordan Williams taught me early in my career to treat every audition as if it were a paying job. I also produce each audition as if it were a paying job, which means good levels, editing out breaths and vocal anomalies, and mixing the perfect music or sound effects when applicable. No one on the planet cares as much about the quality of my auditions as I do.

Convinced? Worried about where the money's coming from? Chill baby... it's easy and much less expensive than you may think.

The first thing about a home studio is the same principal used in deciding where to locate a business. Location, location, location. Pick a room in your home that is isolated from other electronic equipment, preferably without windows. A large walk-in closet is perfect. Plus the clothing acts as a baffle (sound proofing and

keeping echoes from walls and ceilings to a minimum). If you don't have a closet, you might need to put some acoustic material on the walls and ceilings in the area you choose. Foam eggcrate works very well and is inexpensive.

Second is the microphone. Here's where you can spend a lot of money. Many studios prefer a top of the line Neumann like the U 67. These can run thousands of dollars but it has unbeatable sound. Middle-of-the-line mics such as a Behringer, Sennheiser or Shure are also very popular. These mics run from the \$100 to \$500 range, and usually require a preamp to power the microphone as it feeds into your computer.

Lately a newcomer has gained a lot of popularity. It's called a "Snowball". It has a good sound, feeds directly into the USB port of your computer, and needs no amplifier or preamp. The cost is around \$100.00.

I have a student who uses the "Snowball" because he travels a lot of wants the portability of taking his laptop and snowball and setting up his studio where ever he goes. He used it for an audition that landed him an industrial voice job worth thousands of dollars.

Whether you spend thousands, hundreds or tens of dollars, invest \$10-\$20 in a decent pop filter or windscreen. Popped p's are no fun. And while you can reduce them with a little creative editing, it always sounds better to prevent plosives.

Editing software is another must-have. I have students and peers who use everything from "Garage Band" to "Wave Lab". Personally I prefer "Wave Lab" and "Adobe Audition". I would also recommend "Pro Tools" and "VoxPro". Nearly everyone in the business has their favorite and swears it's much better than the competition.

So which one should you use? You decide. Most of the editing software manufacturers have free temporary downloads so you can "play" with their product. Try at least three or four of them, then buy the one you think is the most user friendly. When you are editing a huge industrial project that runs oh... say 90 pages or more... you'll be glad you have a user friendly system.

Additional equipment should be considered as well, such as phone patches and an ISDN connection. These are more expensive. In many cases they require special wiring and should be installed by professional audio engineers.

I have a high quality home studio, but I am also a frequent customer of Captive Sound Studios when I need to connect with studios across the country or around the world.

Having a home recording studio will give you competitive advantages in a fiercely competitive marketplace. Don't wait. Build your home recording studio now!

