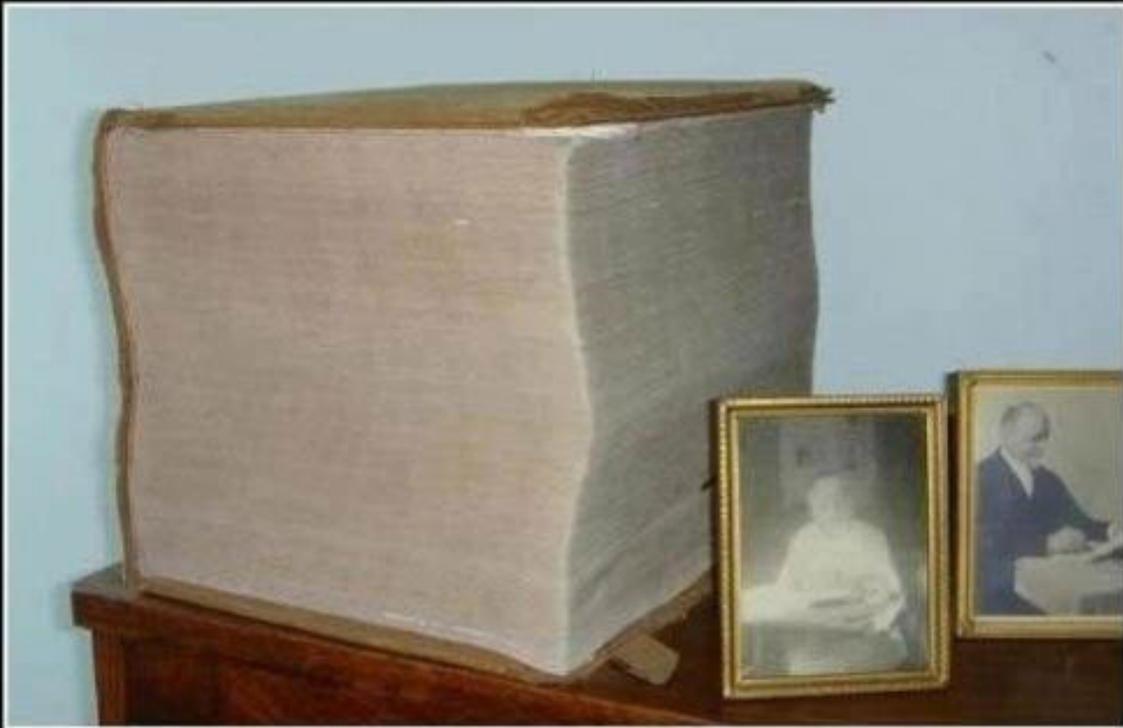


Making a CD



Making a CD Pocket Edition, 1st Chapter

By Coleen Walters

This handout is in two parts. The first part is an outline for discussion in a workshop setting and is intended merely to stimulate thinking about the many things worth considering when making a recording. The second part is more informative and is based on our Basement Music experience in making more than 100 CDs over several years. The pricing estimates are from 2015 and, while Basement Music cannot do your work because of an MLAG conflict of interest, we hope this information will prove helpful to you as you prepare your Cohen/Grappel Recording Grant Application.

Best of Luck!

Recording your own CD

Why are you making this recording? Family, friends, promo for jobs or a full commercial effort ...

Should I do it myself? The trade-offs and costs of the necessary equipment and software.

Preparation to go into studio:

- a. Have someone record your performance and then listen with a truly critical ear, do you need a better arrangement? Where are the problem sections of a song?
- b. Should you use a click track? Practice with one beforehand, especially if you have any problem keeping a strong, steady beat.
- c. Practice playing while wearing headsets, you'll be needing them in the studio.
- d. Determine your song selections in advance and prepare two or three more than you think you'll need. Sometimes things just don't work out.
- e. Arrive with new strings on your instrument(s) and have spare ones with you.
- f. Know the songs inside and out.

In the studio:

- a. Make yourself comfortable, do whatever is needed to "nest".
- b. If you make a mistake, keep playing. The engineer will be able to cut and paste, you don't need to re-record the entire song.
- c. Tune often
- d. If you are doing vocals, don't drink iced water – it constricts the vocal cords. Room temperature is good but some hot tea with lemon is even better.
- e. When listening back to your recording, listen for the whole. If vocal, then that should be the focus; if instrumental, and then focus on that.
- f. Know when you can no longer "fix" something.
- g. Know when to quit for the day. Your ears and your fingers can both be fatigued.
- h. Let the engineer have the first go at mixing, keep an open mind.

Mastering:

This happens after the recording and mixing are finished. Many times you may want to send this out or, if they know how, you may want to work with your recording person. Mastering puts the final "polish" on the CD and is just as critical as all the other components of the process.

Copyright:

- a. There are basically three agencies that will obtain mechanical licenses for you, Harry Fox (<http://www.harryfox.com/songfile/public/publicsearch.jsp>), Rights Flow (through their division

Limelight service songclearance.com) and Easy Song Licensing (easySongLicensing.com). In addition to the statutory rate of \$.091 per copy, they will all charge a \$15.00 administration fee. This would be for each song for which you need a license. Only Harry Fox allows you to search through their data base to find who owns the copyright. You do need to be careful though ... there will be many listed for the same song but that is because the artist has copywritten their own arrangement of a cover. Be sure you know who actually wrote the song!

- b. We've given you examples in our handout of how to go about arranging for licenses when the artist hasn't registered their song with any of the processing agencies.
- c. Licenses are required for physical, digital and streaming versions of your product. Physical and digital are at the same rate, streaming rates depend on whether it is activated or not and many times the fees are paid by the streaming agency. It is up to you to know if they do.
- d. You must have the license in hand before you produce your product.
- e. It can take up to 45 days to get the license in hand. Harry Fox is usually quicker than that but, if you want the other agencies to find out who to pay the royalties to, then you will need that much time. The license will tell you what you need to include in your liner notes as credit information.
- f. You can pay in increments but a fee will be charged each time. So if you know you will be pressing 1,000 CDs then you should go for that number for the license.

Packaging and Graphics:

- a. Decide on the style of packaging you'll be using. Look through your collection of CDs for ideas, just about anything can be done these days.
- b. Your graphics will need to be designed to work with the style you choose and will have to be prepared in the templates provided by the reproduction plant.
- c. Be sure to proof and re-proof everything and have someone who has not seen it in progress proof it as well.
- d. You'll need images that are at least 300 dpi.
- e. Avoid gradients or color blends for the face of the CD. These are silkscreened and aren't as forgiving as what is printed on paper.
- f. Files should be submitted in QuarkXPress, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Pagemaker, Macromedia FreeHand or CorelDRAW. Be sure to check on the version that will be accepted. You may find that you really do need a graphic designer to help you out.
- g. If you want to sell in stores or in on-line stores you will need a barcode.

Replication:

There are several places you can use but be careful when comparing prices. Some publicity may only show the cost for the replication only and many times there are lots of add-ons for barcodes, email proofs, shrink-wrap, shipping and other costs. Be sure to get an all inclusive quote.

We hope you find this information helpful as you plan for your CD experience.

Making Your Own CD

Practice and Preparation

Our best advice is to be as prepared as practice can make you. This involves more than simply practicing by oneself. Performers don't always "know" how the song is coming across as they're performing it although you certainly can tell when you make mistakes. It's a good idea to record your practice sessions and listen back with a real critical ear yourself. You hear things you didn't hear while you were playing. It's also good to get constructive criticism regarding the performance from others who are sympathetic and familiar with what you're doing. For example, the arrangement (the start, the end, the breaks, the levels etc.) might benefit from changes and sometimes you need someone else to suggest them. Often performers will "hire" a producer to oversee the making of the recording and it's most important that the producer be creative in suggesting various ideas from ways to improve your performance to adding instrumentation, etc. A producer also needs to be critical to make sure you aren't fooling yourselves, and patient to extract the best performance from you. Most of us "folkies" can't afford real producers so you might want to ask your engineer or a friend to take on that role.

If you make a mistake, the engineer will probably want you to just keep on playing. Remember, mistakes can be fixed pretty easily and various snippets can be combined to make a cohesive whole if that is needed. There's really no reason to be concerned about it ... it's mostly a lot of fun and people are always surprised at how "good" it sounds when finished.

Copyrights and Mechanical Licenses

You will need statutory mechanical licenses for each song that you do that's under copyright. It's called "statutory" because it's a pro forma thing if the song has been recorded before. If the song has not been recorded ever, then permission of the copyright holder is necessary. The license usually stipulates the terms and conditions of your recording, how the copyright holder wants his name or publishing company listed on the recording, and so on. It can be very "legal" or very informal. The mechanical license is for reproduction rights only (performance rights are handled by BMI and ASCAP etc.).

You also need express permission of the copyright holder to publish the lyrics on your CD if you choose to do that. Most popular music can be licensed through the Harry Fox Agency which serves as a clearing house for this sort of thing and they have an on line service that is quick and easy. The current statutory rate is \$.091 a copy, so if you made 1,000 CDs for example, you would owe each copyright holder \$91. Harry Fox charges a \$15.00 administrative fee per song as well. If the song is somewhat obscure or otherwise not handled by Harry Fox, then you need to track down the copyright holder to get the license. Max Wolf, who handles these things for the Kate Wolf estate, for example, has his own form that he wants you to fill out but the royalty payment is the same since it is set by statute.

As another example, we recently had to track down a guy in Switzerland and draw up a form (we pretty much copied the Harry Fox form) for his signature. So it can be really easy or a veritable detective mission. We spent about a week tracking down the copyright holder for a song we put on the recent Doofus album but finally found them. In other cases, it may be nothing more than an E-Mail saying fine go ahead and some copyright holders will not even

want the royalty money considering it an honor and privilege to have you record their song. Doofus paid pretty close to \$1,000 in royalties on our most recent effort. This is something you need to take into account when planning your recording and these charges are not included in our estimated costs. If you are making a recording with 20 "covers" of other people's songs, you can see that 20 @ \$91 is not just spare change. This is why so many people do pretty much nothing but material in the public domain.

To clarify: technically speaking you don't need permission to record a song if it's been recorded even though the term "mechanical license" sounds like a permission. The copyright holder is obligated under statute to provide you the license in return for the statutory royalty payment (currently \$.091 per copy). The license may stipulate how they want their credit information to appear on the final product. Getting approval to print the lyrics is a separate issue and you will need separate approval for that. It's more difficult to get since there isn't a streamlined internet process for doing that but it's usually free once you get the permission.

Studio Costs

You should probably plan on spending anywhere from \$3,200 to \$4,000 to get everything done. That would include the cost of replicating 1,000 CDs (as an example) and also includes shipping to your doorstep (not including the price of the new garage you will need to store them all!)... of course, much depends on how long it takes to get something down that satisfies you ... good preparation is the key. In that regard, a good concept of what you want to achieve is critical. You don't want to be in the position of saying "I don't know what I want but I'll recognize it when I hear it" ... that's a pretty good guarantee that you'll spend more money than if you knew what you wanted to achieve from the outset. You may want to have other musicians serve as "guest artists" on your CD but they should be well rehearsed before coming in to record.

Studio time can, of course, vary greatly. If we do your recording and graphics, you should plan to spend between \$1,700 and \$2,500 with us. This could be more, or less, it just depends on how efficient you are with your time. If you do your own graphics, then you will surely save money but most people aren't prepared to do that and hiring a separate graphics design person is probably more expensive. Remember too, if you do want us to help with the graphics, be sure to come with some general idea of what you want the concept to be. It's a lot easier to refine your idea then to come up with something original that you might like. If you have some pictures, great, we can scan them. We can also take some digital pictures here. Remember, the better the quality of the pictures, the better they'll look in print. We have examples of what we've done with other folks and catalogs to look through etc. Be sure to at least give all of the above suggestions some thought because that's the best way to save money.

Replication Costs

Here are some approximate representative pricing samples from the company we are currently using. All options include printing on all sides of any insert. Plan your graphics accordingly.

2 panel booklet, full color front and traycard 1,000 CDs for \$1,249
2 panel booklet, 500 CDs for \$849
2 panel booklet, 250 CDs for \$699

4 panel booklet, full color front and traycard 1,000 CDs for \$1,349
4 panel booklet, 500 CDs for \$949

4 panel booklet, 250 CDs for \$799

6 panel booklet, full color front and traycard, 1,000 CDs for \$1,499

6 panel booklet, 500 CDs for \$1,049

6 panel booklet, 250 CDs for \$899

As you can see, it doesn't make much economical sense to go with less than 1,000 copies. Put another way; let's say that you spend a total of \$3500. To get your money back you would need to sell 234 at \$15. Unless storage is a real problem, go for the 1000. A barcode is included in these prices.

Bottom line, plan on spending between \$3,200 to \$4,000 for 1,000 CDs. Again, we can't promise how long it will take you but we've had pretty good luck at getting the best work out of everyone in a relaxed atmosphere. The studio experience may be stressful for some people (especially in a big formal place) so you will want to visit the studio and see if it feels like a comfortable place to work in.

Other Things to Consider

One other thing to think about and practice...Whenever possible, it is really best to record the instrument tracks first and then add the voices. This gives the best options for mixing balances later, keeps bleed-over at a minimum and makes editing of the tracks much easier (we can replace single notes, you don't have to play the whole song again). Several of our customers have done their albums this way. It also has the advantage of allowing you to focus on only one thing at a time, makes it much easier to hit both the instrument notes and vocal notes right on. This method doesn't work for everyone but it is worth trying.

Try recording just the instrumental arrangement then practice singing along with it. In the studio you'll have headsets to wear. Think about this option, you can give it a try in the studio. It's really easier than it sounds.