

masters of Mastering

by Andy Kaufmann

EXCLUSIVE!

MC



Bruce Maddocks

Company: Cups 'N Strings,
www.cupsnstrings.com

Clientele: *The Ring 2, Batman Begins, Pirates of the Caribbean, Matchstick Men, Disney Records*

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Bruce Maddocks learned from the best of the best when he was named chief engineer at Capitol Studios. As the man in charge of 12 rooms, nine devoted to mastering, Maddocks picked the brains of a host of mastering engineers, each a world-class specialist in their branch. By the time he opened Cups 'N Strings, his one-stop studio located in Santa Monica, Maddocks was equipped to offer mastering as one of his services.

MASTERING PREPARATION

Show up ready. Have a sequence in mind. [Your mix] should be as close as possible to being clean: no clicks, pops, or noises. If [you want your song] to be a minute-thirty, walk in the door with it at a minute-thirty. I've had experiences where

all of a sudden [the session] went from a quick edit to this weird experimentation. And when it was all said and done, [the artist said], "Oh, I just like the first thing."

I ask for the highest resolution within reason: 48k, 24-bit — it can be a WAV file or AIFF, it can even be SoundDesigner. That gives me the opportunity to use both the digital and analog tools to the highest resolution that makes sense.

RECORDING FOR OPTIMAL MASTERING

If people call me ahead of time, I ask them, other than a very slight bus compressor across the stereo bus, not to level maximize anything. Give me a least 2, maybe 3, dB of clean headroom. In other words, don't drop the ceiling to -3. Be very careful and respectful of the mix and make sure that you're not clipping anything.

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGE

With home studio mastering, what you're going to have is somebody who bought some plug-ins. Nothing against these plug-ins, because they're all really solid. What it really comes down to is knowledge. If they don't have some kind of studio background, some kind of hands-on experience with equalization, compression and especially level maximizing, (a plug-in) the wrong hands can really mangle something. A lot of times, you'll see on Craigslist [ads describing] major record label mastering sound, 25 dollars a song. But you've got to say, "Well, what's the guy's skill-set?"

COST

For major motion picture stuff, the cost is 200 dollars an hour. For the smaller independent stuff, it's 75 dollars an hour. One of the things I try to do with guys who are doing indie stuff is that I ask them to bring me [mixes that are] as close as possible to the finished goods. I realize they're on a budget, they're probably going to be on a fairly tight delivery schedule, and if they hand me stuff that needs to be de-clicked or needs to be re-edited, it's not to their advantage, even at a reduced rate, to pay me to do their cleanup work. If it's something that needs heavy amounts of noise reduction or fixing, then I guess we have to do it, but with the understanding that this is going to take time and it's going to cost more than what you initially thought.