

## **What's old gets discredited.**

We're all about modern techniques and modern music making.

Today I want to share with you four wonderfully brilliant and simple tips for recording that are born out of an old school approach. My hope is that even if the music you make is "modern" by definition, you'll learn from these tips and find ways to implement them in your own home studio sessions.

### **Old School Tip #1 – Find The Best Place In The Room**

Al Schmitt said that when Dylan stepped into Capitol to explore the studio and plan the album, he walked around the live room and asked the best question he could have ever asked: "Where would be the best place for me to sing?" Together they discovered just the right spot for Dylan to sing, and that's exactly where they placed him on recording day.

**Dylan understood rule number one when it comes to getting a great sounding recording: find the best sounding place in your room to perform.**

Do you do that?

Even if you have a small bedroom studio, have you found the best sounding nook or cranny in that room? Have you done that for each instrument you record? If you take a few moments before a session to locate your recording "sweet spot" then your microphones will have an edge when it comes to capturing your source in the best possible way.

### **Old School Tip #2 – Get The Technology Out Of The Way**

Dylan's manager communicated something interesting to Schmitt that dictated his mic technique and approach.

In Al's words:

Jeff told me that Bob did not want to see a lot of microphones around. So I had to use as few as possible, and to try and disguise the ones that were there as much as I could. I don't know why this was. Perhaps because he wanted to have more of a very relaxed, living-room atmosphere, with him and the musicians not so acutely aware that they were being recorded. – **Al Schmitt**

This is just so gutsy.

Dylan (clearly a musical legend with much studio experience) didn't want him or his band to be so focused on the fact that they were recording. Instead he wanted them to relax and focus on playing great music. Dylan knew that in order to give his best performance (which always leads to a better recording) he had to

feel like he was just with his guys, making music. The microphones were a visual block for him. So he wanted them minimized as much as possible.

**I think a takeaway for us is that we should go out of our way on recording days to make our space (no matter how big or how small) as comfortable and creative as possible.**

This can be done with lighting, candles, clearing the clutter, hiding cables, or simply getting microphones out of your way and putting the musician before the mic placement. There's a reason why many young musicians choke up in the studio – it's stressful and non creative. Make their (and your) job easier by getting the technology out of the way of the music making.

### **Old School Tip #3 – Use Fewer Inputs And Tracks**

Even though Capitol Studio B has a classic Neve 8068 console with 56 tracks, only 8 of them were used on the entire album.

Wow.

So the console was basically a glorified 8 channel audio interface. **Sounds like something us home studio folk have lying around.**

When you use fewer tracks and inputs, a couple of great things happen: your mix comes together faster (as we'll see in a second), you have fewer phasing and masking issues, your stereo spectrum becomes wide and clear, and **in the digital world you'll likely have more headroom.**

### **Old School Tip #4 – Record In Full Takes Whenever Possible**

This gives that real live vibe and chemistry to the recordings that makes a song so compelling.

Al Schmitt explains:

[Back in] those days you could not edit or fix things, and so you had to do the take when things were emotionally right. And you chose the take that had the feel on it. This is why so many records from back then are so much more emotional and touch you so much more deeply. – **Al Schmitt**

Great point Al. But for the many (or majority) of us who overdub (i.e. record one instrument at a time) there is another great application to this concept.

Record in whole takes and long chunks as often as possible.

Let your drummer play from start to finish, even if he flubs an important fill or two. Let the guitar player listen to the beginning of the song, even if he doesn't come until verse 2. It's that context of the entire song that draws out a real performance, and not merely a mechanical recording. It's so subtle and nuanced, but amazingly obvious when you hear the difference it makes. I try my best to record in whole song chunks, and capture 2 to 3 takes of most things. That's it. You can always choose the strongest take and edit out any major issues later.

"Record So That Mixing Isn't Even Necessary"

In closing, I want to point out one of the most powerful results that can come from applying these four old school recording tips.

**If taken seriously and applied with passion and diligence, it is possible to end up with tracks that for all intents and purposes don't need to be mixed.**

**Your Best Mix is a perfect Recording!!!**