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# The Audio Recording Academy

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*Advanced Record Production  
and Label Creation*

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**COURSE LENGTH 12 WEEKS**  
**1 - 4 hour lecture/theory class per week**  
**4 -10 hours in studio recording sessions per week**  
**TOTAL HOURS PER WEEK: 44**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

***Pre-requisite:** [Audio Recording or Recording Arts Diploma or Certificate](#)*

A small group of students, who have shown exceptional technical knowledge, satisfactory public relation skills, and proficiency toward personal time management while completing an Applied Audio Recording or Recording Arts Diploma program, have an opportunity to become assistant engineer/producers on one full length recording project.

Under the tutelage and guidance of a TARA instructor, students will be involved in every aspect of completing one professional, label quality full length recording. Participating students will gain much needed industry credibility that they can leverage when seeking out their own projects after the program is complete.

In addition to the technical education TARA students learn in their first year, the assistant engineer/producers will be exposed to advanced recording techniques, the varied roles a record producer plays in and out of the studio, as well as writing grant, financial management and the basics of starting an independent record label.



## WEEK ONE

### *Lecture #1: "What is a Record Producer?"*

- a) The seeker of a good act (A&R)
- b) The art critic (artistic input into the songs)
- c) The coach of the team (keeping the morale up, keeping the project on schedule)
- d) The financial backer of the project (executive producer)
- e) The mediator between band members / label / other involved parties

**In Studio:** For the duration of week one the students will meet with the band / artist and discuss the project as a whole in terms of the above headings; familiarize themselves with the particular studio they will be working in, as well as begin studio set up as it applies to the CD they will be working on.

## WEEK TWO

### *Lecture #2: "Pre-Production"*

- a) Why do pre production – the map of the project
- b) Establishing everyone's role in the project during the mapping stage
- c) Getting personal with the band: the importance of trust when taking artistic risks
- d) Helping the band to realize their artistic vision

**In Studio:** During week two the students will do rough recordings of all of the songs the band have written for the CD. Even if all of the songs don't make it on to the final project, pre production allows everyone to get a feel for the songs, deal with any arrangement issues, work out individual musical parts, as well as begin to get a feel for the artistic direction of the final recording project as a whole.

## WEEK THREE

### *Lecture #3: "Funding & Grants - PART 1"*

- a) The record producer as executive producer in more detail
- b) 'Putting Art into Words': the philosophy and importance of bios & writing in grant applications
- c) FACTOR, Ontario Arts Council, different grant opportunities

**In Studio:** during week three, the students will finalize the pre-production recordings as well as do rough mixes for the sake of submitting the demos to grant applications and interested parties such as labels, managers of the band / artist so they are kept up to speed with the direction of the project.

## WEEK FOUR

### *Lecture #4: "Funding & Grants - PART 2"*

- a) 'Professionalism and presentation'
- b) How to describe the music (round table discussion)
- c) The particulars of the grant: how to apply
- d) The appendix of a grant: bio writing, photos.

\*Special Guest Lecture in Studio: "How to Tune & Prepare Drums for Recording"

**In Studio:** In this week, the students will review the pre-production material, decide on the songs they will record for the full length and begin recording drums for the final project. Also,



they will consider any gear improvements that can be made and seek out gear sponsorship and rentals for the recording.

## WEEK FIVE

*Lecture #5: "The Long Haul: Keeping the Studio Fun"*

- a) The Producer as The Coach in more detail
- b) 'Leadership in The Studio': how to establish the rules without being a tyrant
- c) Keeping positive to keep the 'vibe'
- d) The right 'vibe' = the right 'take'

**In Studio:** Continuing recording drums to click track. Re-emphasize the importance of proper cabling and getting the sound in the room right. 'Fixing it in the mix' will cause more problems later on. Get it right the first time.

## WEEK SIX

*Lecture #6: "Advanced Preamps, Mic & Studio Techniques"*

- a) Analog preamps to give digital recording weight.
- b) 'Straying from The Norm': Old different gear = original sound.
- c) EQ at the mic'ing stage: how to choose the right mics for an array of sounds on tape
- d) The pros and cons of editing, time compression / expansion

\*Special Guest Lecture in Studio: 'How to Do a Guitar Intonation Set Up'

**In Studio:** the student engineers will try out some different mic techniques on guitar, bass in order to get the right 'sound' for the final product. Emphasize the importance of good gear, amp EQ, in the mic'ing stage as well as proper care of instruments (intonation).

## WEEK SEVEN

*Lecture #7: "Advanced Recording Techniques for Interesting Mixing"*

- a) Doubling, guitar overdubs for fullness
- b) Stereo field mix techniques to make the sound come alive
- c) Avoiding the 'Big-mono
- d) Mid-side, stereo mic'ing, setting up a natural reverb chamber
- e) Direct recording as well as acoustic / electric guitar combinations for presence & clarity

**In Studio:** Continuing guitar overdubs, applying some of the lecture techniques - Emphasis on keeping the 'feel' of the song in mind when choosing mic and mixing techniques (being a tech show-off might ruin the song).

## WEEK EIGHT

*Lecture #8: "Recording Vocals: Advanced Techniques PART 1"*

- a) 'The Vibe' as central to good vocals (you can't force good art, it has to happen)
- b) The importance of energy in getting the right take
- c) Directing the vocalist like an actor (different emotions for different takes)
- d) Choosing the right mics for your vocalist

**In Studio:** By now the students should have the beds of the songs completed. Here, we can have a listening class to make sure the tracks are ready for vocals. Also, a discussion of vocals harmonies and overdubs should be covered. How are the vocals going to 'sound' on the whole recording? What techniques are we going to use to achieve the desired effect? Begin recording vocals.



## WEEK NINE

### *Lecture #9: "Recording Vocals: Advanced Techniques PART 2"*

- a) The singer's diet: what restricts vocal, what foods, liquids help good vocals
- b) Time of day, lighting, water, head-set monitoring, etc.
- c) Backing vocals: How to construct depth with vocals in a recording

**In Studio:** Students continue recording vocals on the songs. During this week they can also play with doing different, preliminary mixes of the songs where vocals have been completed. Rough mixes should be done individually in order to get a varied range of mixing styles out of the group.

## WEEK TEN

### *Lecture #10 "Advanced Mixing Techniques"*

- a) The mix as the establishment of emotion
- b) Finding the focal point of the mix: What should we notice at the focal point of each song?
- c) Exercise: 'Speed-Mixing' (mix a song in 1 minute) to discover biases in listening
- d) The delicacy of effects, compression, EQ, etc.

**In Studio:** The students will pool together their rough mixes from last week and show their work. We will discuss the strengths of the mixes in order to establish a group consensus of the direction we wish to take the mixes in.

## WEEK ELEVEN

### *Lecture #11: "Analog Stereo Summing & Mastering"*

- a) 'The Mysterious Art of Mastering': What is Mastering for exactly?
- b) The origins of Mastering for Vinyl Records
- c) Analog stereo summing to help the depth and width of a mix
- d) Analog mastering, DA converters, tube preamps: to help presence of sound
- e) EQ Matching: finding the core sound of the mixes
- f) Compression, limiting to achieve loudness
- g) Listening to the master on different systems

\*Special Guest Lecture – Field Trip: Joao Carvalho Mastering Studio

**In Studio:** After going to a mastering studio and listening to different masters in class, the students will try out some mastering techniques with comparison made to other professional products. Mastering will be done in Studio A.

## WEEK TWELVE (3 lectures)

### *Lecture #12: "Artwork, Duplication & Getting the Product Out There"*

- a) The basics of artwork for CDs (300dpi, CMYK, Fonts, Vector Graphics, etc.)
- b) The Cover Art as reflective of the music: Image Branding
- c) CD Manufacturing: Costs, duplication minimums, bar codes, logos, etc..

### *Lecture #13: "Birthing the Record"*

- a) The Basics of pre-release marketing: posters, myspace, etc.
- b) Getting the Record Reviewed
- c) CD Release Parties: sending the record off with a bang!
- d) Basic Distribution, Consignment in stores, etc



- e) The Basics of post-release marketing

*Lecture #14: "The Growth of an Empire: Starting a Record Label"*

- a) How to register a business
- b) Deciding on your focus, writing a business mandate
- c) Contracts: Publishing, song ownership for a Label
- d) Band Management, and supporting a release
- e) 'How does a record label get paid?': Basic Accounting for a Label
- f) Funding the Next Release

**In Studio:** As the record is being duplicated at this point, the band and the students will work together to put on a CD release party for the record. The students, along with the head producer will seek out reviews, guest lists & contacts, and do advertising for the CD release party. We will also discuss particulars of the course and anything they feel they need clarification on before graduating and implementing what they learned this year in the 'real world'.

**For more information or to apply,  
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