
Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [Aaron Allen](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 03:15:44 GMT

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One could definitely overkill the listener with loudness/compression and the amount of tracks these days. I've found that generally great tracks recorded well/performed well have a whole lot more to do with vibe than a slew of crap flung into the sonic shelf. Pink Floyd is a great example of this IMHO, or acoustic dudes like Junior Brown. The Beatles. Mr Mister were masters of understanding the process and how to best use it, though hardly anyone knew it on their last official release *Go On*.

The hardest part, for me anyway, is knowing that the track is slamming, EQ'd right, played for the proper spacing from the start and literally hearing the end product before you get there. So much is dependant on the artist and knowing them and where they want to go. In the old days there was development time, and getting to know each other. We don't so much get that anymore, and it's visible to me at least the suffering it can cause to the end product.

That all in account, space is the most left out aspect of modern recording that shouldn't have been left behind and I squarely blame green engineers, auto tune/quantizing and product mentality. I do have to say samples have come a long long way and can now be played like a real instrument with the understanding that they are in and unto themselves and not necessarily what they are emulating. There's little to no art in assembly line thinking and anyone in the process can screw the whole thing up by making production-minded moves and not caressing the muse properly.

Just one dude's opinion.

AA

"Shane M" <shanem@nospam.com> wrote in message news:495ed0e6\$1@linux...

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Subject: Why audio quality matters - recording density
Posted by [Shane M](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 03:43:50 GMT
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Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [John \[1\]](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 14:43:40 GMT

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This is a very interesting video. Well worth watching some serious heavy hitters talk about sound.

Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [Ted Gerber](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 16:34:46 GMT

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I don't have time to watch the video in the next while, but I know from my days as a Graphic Designer, that space in the design was key. I believe that aural and visual principles equate, and therefore agree that space in the audio pallette

goes a long way to communicating the message. (This assumes that the message would be compromised by increased density; in some cases a more dense design/mix could be part of the point.)

Track count, including mono vs stereo recording, would play a huge role, but so would other factors, like quality of gear, AD conversion and summing techniques. Aaron's comments about performance are bang on too.

Ted

"Shane M" <shanem@nospam.com> wrote:

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Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density
Posted by [xpam_mark](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 18:49:04 GMT
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My god, I thought I was the only one who realized this until today. That record is a benchmark for me despite the fact that it went "plywood" rather than gold. And the songs/writing are just primo. Glad to find someone out there who, 20 years later, gets it. Bravo Aaron... you got it right bro.

MWW (formerly known as WMW)..... thanks Thadius B!

"Aaron Allen" <know-spam@not_here.dude> wrote in message
news:495edbed\$1@linux...

Mr Mister were masters of understanding the process and how to best use it, though hardly anyone knew it on their last official release *Go On*.

Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [Wayne](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 19:32:41 GMT

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This is making me rethink all about every keyboard being stereo, stereo guitar pedal boards, acoustics being mic'd and piezo'd, drums being mix'd in the entire stereo field and direct bass and cabinet mic'ng. And the overdub's are stereo too. Then there is the doubling of all vox's. Granted, it makes each instrument sound huge, and individually are a marvel to listen to. Today's tones have built in depth, but I guess after multiple tracks things can get awfully crowded. Not to forget that it also doubles the mix's workload.

No wonder after listening to a single CD in headphones I have ear fatigue.

Wayne

Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [John \[1\]](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 21:16:37 GMT

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I like them in stereo but you can control the pan controls and have a keyboard span L 10'oclock position to R at 11 o'clock for a narrow positioned stereo image.

Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [Bill L](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 21:57:48 GMT

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One cunning trick that allows density of arrangement without over-cluttering the mix is EQing so that each instrument sits in it's own frequency as much as possible. Of course this should first be managed by the arranger or musicians in the parts they play and the sounds of their instruments.

One problem I have with EQing like this is that it tends to force the guitar (my instrument), which is naturally rather midrangey into a high frequency range which I hate as a player. Oh well.

The key is to EQ "in situ", rather than soloing each track to EQ it. Soloing tends to make one want to fill out every instrument which completely defeats a clean, uncluttered mix.

Shane M wrote:

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Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [Shane M](#) on Sat, 03 Jan 2009 23:14:41 GMT

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Wayne, that was exactly my thought listening to some of the samples. Individually it sounds cool but does it hurt the aggregate?

I'm a hobbyist (definitely non-pro), but my tendency - largely unquestioned - has always been to thicken it up, record more mics/sources if it sounded better that way - without consideration of what it did for the total mix.

Because of my lack of skill I've noticed minimalism on drums works in my favor, but hadn't questioned elsewhere.

My personal favorite recording/performance is Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Little Wing" - I don't know how it was recorded but it's notably different in that most of SRV's recordings don't approach that level of intimacy

"Wayne Carson" <waynecarson@cox.net> wrote:

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>guitar pedal boards, acoustics being mic'd and piezo'd, drums being mix'd
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Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density

Posted by [John Macy](#) on Sun, 04 Jan 2009 05:39:18 GMT

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We call it wide mono around here...

Bill L <bill@billlorentzen.com> wrote:

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Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density
Posted by [chuck duffy](#) on Sun, 04 Jan 2009 16:26:34 GMT
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AKA The Van Gelder treatment :-)

Chuck
"John Macy" <john@nospamjohnmacy.com> wrote:
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Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density
Posted by [Tom Bruhl](#) on Mon, 05 Jan 2009 17:12:26 GMT
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Gantt,

You are so right. The quality of the talent has everything to do with the quality of the finished product. No production tools or techniques can hide inability on the talent side. I find myself dealing with that more often than I'd like.

I'll have to check out the recordings you suggested here!

Tom

"Gantt Kushner" <ganttmann@comcast.net> wrote in message
news:496238af\$1@linux...

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> Lately I've been re-visiting a couple of my favorite recordings - "Me and
> My Guitar" and "Manzanita" by Tony Rice. Apart from the great playing
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Posted by [Gantt Kushner](#) on Mon, 05 Jan 2009 17:43:27 GMT
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Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density
Posted by [Shane M](#) on Tue, 06 Jan 2009 03:56:45 GMT
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"Gantt Kushner" <ganttmann@comcast.net> wrote:
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thanks Gantt, I appreciate the comments and observations - esp re stereo
micing.

Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density
Posted by [Gantt Kushner](#) on Tue, 06 Jan 2009 04:20:49 GMT
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>>>matters"
>>> (this is about 2 1/2 hrs in total) where characteristics of favorite

>>> recordings
>>>are discussed.
>>>
>>> http://philoctetes.org/Past_Programs/Deep_Listening_Why_Audio_Quality_Matters
>>>
>>>and 3 themes of some favorite listenable recordings kept popping out at
>> me.
>>>1) space in the mix (density)
>>>2) simplicity of signal chain
>>>3) quiet (overall levels had a lot of true quiet - not just overcompressed
>>>quiet - loudness wars)
>>>
>>>obviously capturing a great performance is key, but it stood out to me

>>>that
>>>tracks identified as great recordings seemed to have lower audio density.
>>> (granted alot of the recordings seemed to be single takes in a the same
>>>room too - maybe that's more of it).
>>>
>>>I realize many of the older tracks were this way because of physical track
>>>and time limitations that prohibited filling up of every sonic niche,
but
>>>it got me to wondering whether the current practice of stereo recording
>> sources
>>>may be contributing also once certain track thresholds are reached.
>>>
>>>... and along with that thought - have any of you purposefully attempted
>>>to track more sources in mono to reduce the sonic footprint? Do you
>>>intentionally
>>>force yourself to work with fewer tracks?
>>>
>>>I guess at base I'm wondering if tracking multiple sources in stereo vs.
>>>mono can contribute to mixes that in aggregate are harder to listen to.
>>>
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>
>

Subject: Re: Why audio quality matters - recording density
Posted by [Gantt Kushner](#) on Tue, 06 Jan 2009 04:29:16 GMT
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Oops. Posted a non-message.

One of the things that I think a lot about these days is that my job as a recording engineer seems to have become that of polishing turds. Many of my clients fall into the category of "maybe you should go home and practice for a year or two and come back and try again" but, because the technology allows us to compensate for so many musical short-comings (and because I need the \$\$\$!!!), we are expected to perform miracles. The problem is that someone who can't play good, consistent and in-tune bass or guitar parts also probably doesn't know how to get a good sound out of the instrument. Drums take a certain touch. Generating great tone with your voice requires skills that can take years to hone to even a semi-professional level, let alone the level of a Tony Rice or Allison Kraus or Diana Krall. So, if the ingredients for a truly great sounding recording are tone, tuning, performance and arrangement (oh yeah - composition!) then what are those of us who troll around at the bottom of the musical barrel left to work with? I count my blessings every time I get to work with a really talented group or artist. It sure makes my job easier!

Gantt

"Gantt Kushner" <ganttmann@comcast.net> wrote:

>

>"Tom Bruhl" <arpeggio@comcast.net> wrote:

>>Gantt,

>>

>>You are so right. The quality of the talent has everything
>>to do with the quality of the finished product. No production
>>tools or techniques can hide inability on the talent side. I find
>>myself dealing with that more often than I'd like.

>>

>>I'll have to check out the recordings you suggested here!

>>

>>Tom

>>

>>

>>"Gantt Kushner" <ganttmann@comcast.net> wrote in message

>>news:496238af\$1@linux...

>>>

>>> Lately I've been re-visiting a couple of my favorite recordings - "Me

>and

>>> My Guitar" and "Manzanita" by Tony Rice. Apart from the great playing

>

>>> (and

>>> singing!) the sound of those albums is amazing. Clear, deep, wide and

>
>>> natural.
>>> Bill Wolf, the guy who recorded and mixed that stuff is now a mastering
>>> engineer in Arlington, VA and I've asked him lots of questions about

>>> recording
>>> that stuff. He says that he almost always used two mics on each
>>> instrument
>>> but when I listen to the CD's I hear a great localization of each
>>> individual
>>> instrument. One of the things that he's always said about the sound
of
>
>>> the
>>> instruments (Rice's guitar in particular) is that the guys all just made
>>> them sound great. To me that kind of sums up the "density" issue. Great
>>> players make their instruments sound good and create great arrangements
>
>>> that
>>> allow the whole recording to open up and breath. Makes mixing a lot

>>> easier!
>>> One of my favorite recent projects was a tune that was 2 guitars (elec
>+
>>> acoustic), bass, drums, lead vocal and 3 or 4 female harmonies. Came
>out
>>> sounding great!
>>>
>>> Gantt
>>>
>>> "Shane M" <shanem@nospam.com> wrote:
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