

2014

RECORDING STUDIO SURVEY



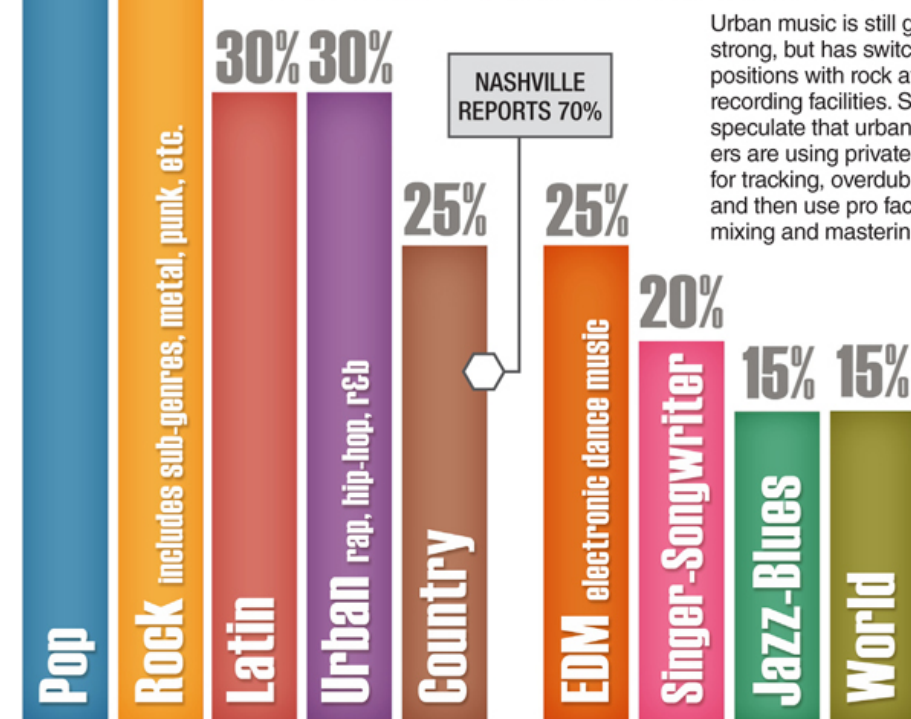
60%

POP STILL POPULAR – BUT ROCK'S ON A ROLL

ALTHOUGH IT IS COMMON for various areas of the country to produce different styles of music, this year we discovered a consistency we have not seen before. Though the mainstream commercial market may not yet reflect it, according to our survey respondents, pop music (which retained its lead for the sixth year in a row) is being closely followed by rock. In fact, this is the first time in many years that rock has surpassed urban music in popularity. Even Nashville, where 70% of all clients are country artists, reports that rock is challenging country and pop genres for supremacy.

We also confirmed, for the second year, that EDM producers/artists are using professional studios to create and mix their work. Rather than working in their own home studios, EDM artists apparently like the high-end equipment, gear and monitors pro studios provide.

Urban music is still going strong, but has switched positions with rock at most recording facilities. Some speculate that urban producers are using private studios for tracking, overdubs, etc., and then use pro facilities for mixing and mastering.



NOTE: Aggregate percentage exceeds 100% - some studios "specialize" in specific genres



STUDIO BUSINESS IS THRIVING IN 2014

After years of struggle—especially during the economic downturn of 2008 and 2009—the recording studio business started to pick up a couple years ago. Now, in 2014, it appears to have completely weathered the storm and is actually thriving.

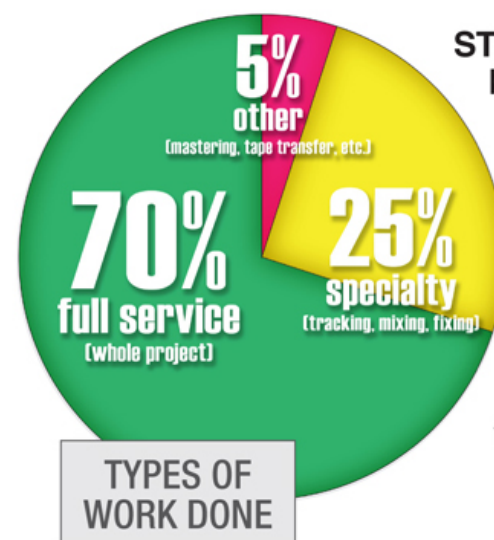
Although recording budgets are nowhere near what they used to be during the glory days of the '80s, '90s and early 2000s, they've stopped shrinking and have remained consistent in recent years. That's good news for studios that rely on label work. Studios that cater to independent projects often offer a different rate structure, but even they report that rates for DIY projects have remained steady.

The reason appears to be the need for professional and polished productions due to increased competition in the marketplace. It seems that only Jack White and Third Man Records can get away with lo-fi recordings. Artists, producers and managers discovered that high-quality productions tend to get the deals, and the way to get that type of quality is in a pro setting.

Evidence of better days is that many studios are once again offering unique services and amenities that were curtailed in the past. Clients of top-end facilities get the VIP treatment. Studio at The Palms in Las Vegas, NV (which hosted Jay Z and Beyonce recordings) is a prime example. It not only has great rooms and top-of-the-line equipment, studio personnel will also book your hotel room, secure restaurant reservations and even get you tickets to popular Vegas shows.

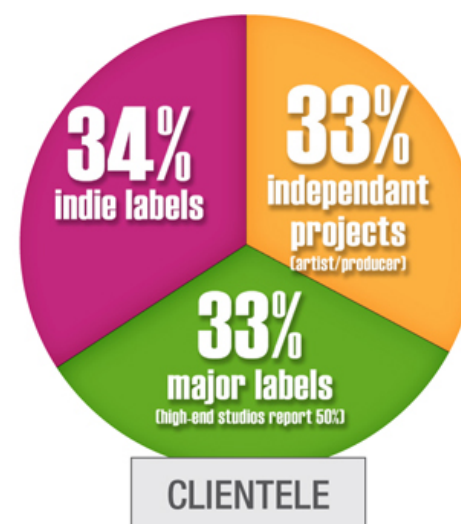
For several years now studios have been operating as multi-purpose facilities. They're not just used for making records anymore. Most rent their rooms out for a variety of uses, and the additional revenue generated by these activities can exceed recording budgets.

This year's survey provides a definite exclamation point for the turn-around in studio business—a change that began two years ago and has now become reality. In fact, no studio reported a downturn in business. Even small, home-pro studios had good things to say this year. And that bodes well for the industry.



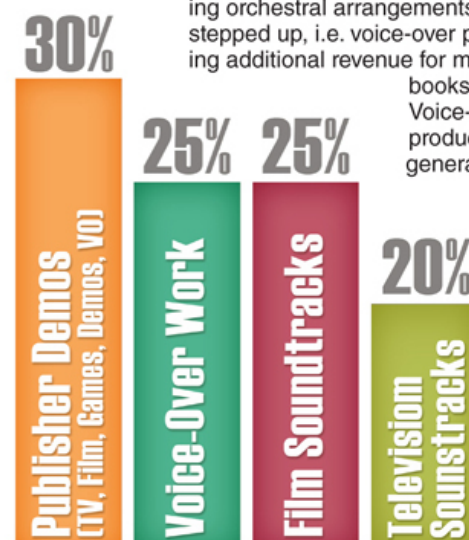
STUDIOS CONTINUE TO BE MULTI-PURPOSE

For years now, pro studios have served multiple purposes. Indeed, multi-use is the name of the game today. Some, like Blackbird Studio in Nashville, are also engineering schools (Blackbird Academy) that prepare students for careers in the recording arts. Many studios also provide rooms for corporate events, video shoots, cable TV shows, radio broadcasts, indie film productions and listening parties (for finished projects). And sometimes the rates for these activities exceed recording budgets.



VOICE-OVERS PROVIDE NEW REVENUE

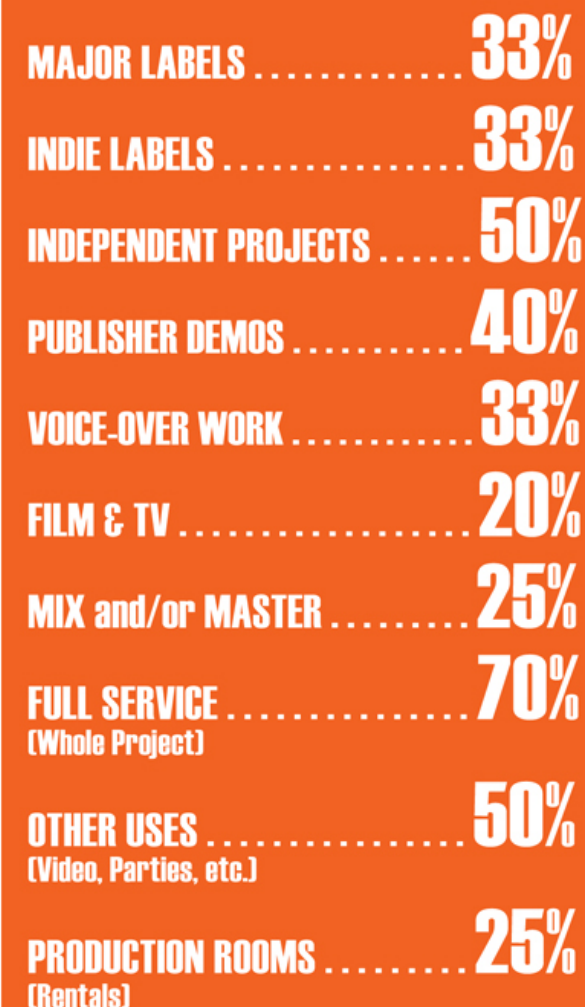
Two years ago we reported a new area of opportunity, i.e. song demos continued via publishers and publishing companies. That trend has continued, especially at studios with large live rooms for recording orchestral arrangements. Today, another area has stepped up, i.e. voice-over projects. They are providing additional revenue for many studios—with audio books, commercials and games. Voice-overs are not only easy to produce and record, they also generate repeat business.



Post-Production (TV and Film)

5% up
95% same
0% down

OVERALL ACTIVITY



MAJOR AND INDIE LABELS ARE booking studio time at a steady pace. Meanwhile independent (DIY) projects are on the rise. Most noteworthy is that most studios (70%) report that they are servicing the entire project, start to finish. Quite a few studios also noted an increase in "voice-over" work (for commercials, audio books, games, TV shows etc). "Other uses" continue to account for a good portion of business as studios are utilized for special events, TV shows, films, video shoots, parties and more. All in all, based on the first six months of 2014, it looks as if the recording studio business could enjoy one of its best years in a long time.

NOTE: Aggregate percentage exceeds 100% because the categories often overlap.

MUSIC CONNECTION'S RECORDING STUDIO SURVEY collects data regarding trends and activities at commercial studios in the United States. We survey studio owners and managers across the nation, including those from major music towns. This year we received responses from almost 100 studios, with most reporting great prospects for 2014. Indeed, it appears that the recording business has finally settled down, and is actually thriving. **BY BERNARD BAUR**