HOW TO PRODUCE VOCALS
By Dave Heffner

- Microphone placement
    - 6 to 8 inches from the mouth.
    - Have a screen for plosives.
    - Head looking up slightly.
    - Full breaths.
    - A fiberglass isolation shield is useful.
- Use headphones. Turn off the speakers.
- Calibrate microphone with audio interface gain knob. Not the DAW fader.
    - Signal should leave at least 10db headroom on average (slight appearance of yellow.
- Consider making a vocal lead track for a planned melody the singer can follow.
- Freeze the virtual instrument tracks to prevent latency effects when recording the singer.
- Learn recording shortcuts to make the session efficient.
    - Pro Tools: Num keypad 3 - records, Z - redo, space bar - start and stop.
- Use Markers to move quickly around the song.
- Use the "Playlist" function for multiple takes and making a COMP track.
- Vocal chain inserts: De-Esser, EQ, Compressor (avoid adjustments more than 3db. Don't activate the vocal chain inserts until after getting a dry vocal recording. Use "Sends" for reverb and delay to keep the vocal dry.
- EQ mapping by vocal range. Boost vocal track or preferably reduce music tracks.
- HPF (High pass filter) all tracks including vocal to clarify what is important.
- Add a high shelf to the EQ to increase presence.
- Keep the reverb on vocals less than the supporting music tracks to help it stand forward. Instead use Slapback delay for a reverb effect but acts differently.
- Try Saturation as a Send to add more grit.
- Experiment with parallel tracks to control vocal effects. Automate the parallel track fader. Consider adding Formant and Pitch shifting.
- Use the Nudge commands for assisting with vocal timing. Backup vocals should follow the lead.
- Try double and triple tracking. Don't copy and paste due to phase cancellation.
- Use Melodyne for tuning after doing audio editing and most mixing is finished.
- Create separate sends for the vocals and keep everything under one Routing Folder.
- Consider a mix track in order to raise or lower the supporting music, such as between verses or phrases.
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