

MAKING A GOOD QUALITY JAZZ AUDITION RECORDING

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As one who listens to many audition recordings every year, I can tell you that frequently, there is a big quality difference between recordings. Some sound as though they were made in a professional recording studio and others sound like they were done in an airplane hanger (or a band room at lunch time!). As the old saying goes: **“you only get one chance to make a first impression...”**. In fact, many producers listen to about 30 seconds of recording in order to make up their minds. When making an audition recording, be sure to consider the importance of the **RECORDING PROCESS**.

1. Use good quality equipment. There are a few inexpensive, portable, small (hand held size), devices that record onto a hard drive or a memory card. Zoom, M- Audio and Roland are three to be recommended. The Zoom H4 (and succeeding models) are especially good as they allow the player to play right through the unit into a computer (Garage Band on the Mac is a good program to work with).
2. No matter how good the equipment used, your **recording process** should include the following aspects:
 - a) Plan to critique your overall product before you send it.
 - b) Make sure the recording mic(s) is close to your sound source (bell of wind instruments or speaker of your amp).
 - c) Try to accompany yourself with at least a trio (pno/gt, bass, drs).
 - d) The Play - Along recordings like Abersold and Hal Leonard are great for accompaniment. Avoid the ‘auto-pilot’ and ‘plastic’-sounding online pre-recorded bass & drum tracks.
 - e) Be sure to have variety of literature i.e. one swing, one latin/rock or ballad.
 - f) Bass players: one tune acoustic, one tune electric.
 - g) Plan to have the time to do more than one take (try). Listen back – be critical – don’t settle for anything but your best playing effort and the best sound quality from the equipment. Ensure there is no distortion and that the sound level(s) (balance) has your solo sound above the accompaniment. Also be critical of your musical balance – each instrument in the recording should be in an appropriate balance.
 - h) Avoid including other soloists in your recording unless you are doing something like trading 4’s. This recording needs to feature YOU.
 - i) Avoid using recordings done during overly reverberant gymnasium concerts. The excessive reverberation and background noise take so much away from the quality of your audition product and presentation. It is definitely a ‘quick and dirty’ solution but the poor sound and lack of appropriate arrangement rarely puts you in a good light.
 - j) Be sure to have the acoustic piano tuned!
 - k) Above all, give your playing “everything you’ve got” – play with a “go-for-it” attitude and style – that way, you sound like you are putting your heart and soul into your music and that is a very important attribute in a musician!