

REHEARSING EFFECTIVELY

Q: What's the difference between a jam session and a rehearsal?

A: A rehearsal is organized and goal-orientated.

The biggest factor affecting the successfulness of any rehearsal session is *time management*. How well do you use the time you have? In most situations (unless you have your own studio) rehearsals are something we cannot do everyday because of the time and money constraints it places on band members. Listed below are a few ideas for making your rehearsals more effective.

SET GOALS FOR THE REHEARSAL

Such as completing the last section of that new song you've been working on. Don't let distractions get in the way, but be realistic – If, for example, you have members in your band who smoke, take a break every hour or so, so that they can have their nicotine fix and you can go and have a drink, etc. Being in the rehearsal room for long periods of time can make things very stagnant. It makes it very hard to think. In fact, I rarely use the rehearsal room as a place to think up new material.

HAVE A REASON TO REHEARSE

A lot of the time, rehearsing because "We need to" is not enough to motivate everybody and makes it difficult to make clear cut goals for the evening. The ultimate situation would be to have a time set aside for rehearsing your material, and a separate night for writing new material. The homework from your writing session could then be used as a goal for your rehearsal session. For example, If I wrote a beginning to a new song I would want to practice it at full volume at the rehearsal night afterwards.

USE YOUR REHEARSAL AS A PRACTICAL WAY OF DEVELOPING THE BAND

Because everyone is usually more enthusiastic at a rehearsal room than at home bashing away, it's important to use the time to practice the specifics of your material. Don't get too caught up on impressing everyone in the room – they've heard your stuff a million times! Instead, try to *listen* to what the other players are doing, and concentrate on your band togetherness, or perhaps concentrate on hitting the correct notes or remembering changes. Share your thoughts about parts that don't quite sound right and aim to perfect them before you leave. One idea I tried was to slow all our songs down to half speed and play through them, concentrating on every single note... It's a lot harder than it sounds. These ideas are all very important once you get out onto the live scene.

DON'T PLAY TOO LOUD

If you need to stop during a song to work on a part or communicate with each other while you're playing, you need to either have an excellent set of hand signals... or you have to HEAR one another! Remember, if you are just in there too be loud and have fun, its merely a 'jam session', NOT a rehearsal.

RECORD YOURSELF

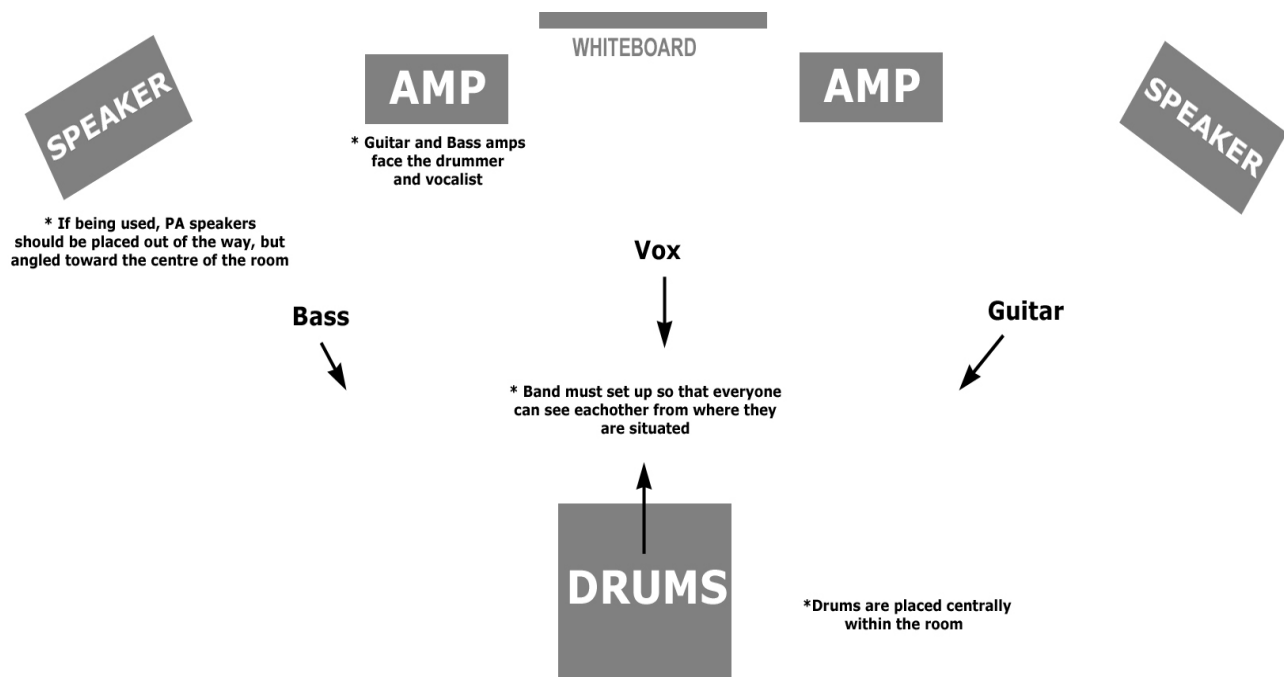
The single most important thing for any band to do in a studio. I cant stress this enough, you learn SO much from hearing yourself and your band play. I try to record every rehearsal and performance that I do. The benefits are endless. It shows how together/un-together the band is. Over time, recording of the same material can help you gauge the bands improvement. Also by recording yourself, you can take the parts home and learn your particular parts within the song without having to burn up valuable rehearsal time.

KEEP THE SAME REHEARSAL TIME AND PLACE

This is where and when the band will get 'built'. Choose a room that is comfortable but not too cosy! I advise against very large rooms, as it can drastically alter the sound characteristics of your band and generally makes it too hard to communicate when everyone's five metres away from each other. On the same token though, small cramped up rooms have a negative impact on your state of mind, and make some people more than a little anxious. A good sized room about 5mx5m should be sufficient. At the end of the day, its not about the room anyway, as rehearsals should be treated like work. The two main purposes of most rehearsals are to develop new material and to go over older material – Not for ordering pizzas and beers, perhaps smoking something illicit (take note bass players) and seeing how much your music can 'freak you out'. You should aim for at least one night a week in which you can rehearse in the same place for at least four hrs. at a time. The rehearsal day should also be set, and never altered if possible. People outside of your band will not see your rehearsal as important as you do, so make sure they know the days and times you rehearse and that you will not be available during those periods. Look at it this way, you cannot cancel work just because you have been asked to go down the beach, and the same should apply to a rehearsal – its WORK.

SETTING UP

Inside the rehearsal room don't just place yourself anywhere you feel happy – focus on how you will be onstage. Put the amps facing the drummer in an arced setup as shown below. This method not only distributes the sound better within the room, but puts everybody in view of each other. Get used to where everyone is placed, and importantly how everyone sounds from where you are. That way, if something sounds 'off' during a show, you'll know who to kill afterwards... Keep in mind that the setup for playing onstage is often quite different to a rehearsal room. When practicing for a live show, you may opt to setup like you will be onstage for greater realism.



EVERYBODY MUST KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON!

Sometimes when there's a lot to do or think about during a rehearsal, I cannot remember everything we do! Therefore, I bring in a whiteboard so that we can write down important information that we can ALL SEE during a song. This is particularly useful when trying to remember where the changes are or where different parts fall within your newer songs, which you may not be totally familiar with yet.

BAND MEETINGS

These are something you should also organize on a regular basis, particularly once the band is out on the playing field and has extra things that need discussion - such as promotion for the band, which we will discuss later...