mac
Midlands Arts Centre

Recording Studio FAQs

2026 - 2027

macbirmingham.co.uk/hire
0121 446 3250

FAQs
Bands and Ensembles

Can we arrive early to set-up?
You are welcome to arrive early at MAC to get your bearings and begin the load-in. Access to the studio spaces will be available from the start of the booking, once our engineer is on hand.

Is there level access load-in?
For bands with heavy equipment, access via the service yard and lift is available. You will find the service yard on the river side of the centre, off Queens Ride car park — after passing the red bridge leading to the main entrance, look out for a set of gates on your left.

How long does it take to set-up and start recording?
This all depends on the size of the band, and how much time is given to fine-tuning mic placements, drum tuning and guitar sounds etc. For an average band setup, e.g. drums, bass, guitar, keyboards and a vocal, allow about 2 hours for set-up, warming up and some fine-tuning.

Which live room should we hire for our session?
The smaller of the two rooms, Live Room A, will accommodate small groups up to a three-piece band (e.g. drums/bass/guitar). However we encourage all groups/ensembles, regardless of size, to record in Live Room B to benefit from its spaciousness and acoustic. Please note that the house drum kit is only available for use in Live Room B.

We would like to record drums in isolation to allow for more control at the mixing stage - is this possible?
By D.I.ing the bass/guitars (using digital amp models for headphone foldback), and re-amping once the basic tracks have been recorded, it is possible for a band to record together live, whilst achieving a fully isolated drum sound.

Is it possible to record using both live rooms simultaneously?
Yes, you can hire both live rooms and split recording between Live Room A, Control Room and Live Room B. For example rhythm section in one room, strings in the other and a vocalist in the Control Room - or drums in one room, guitars in another and vocals in the control room.

How many channels can be recorded simultaneously?
Our current rig allows for 16 channels to be recorded live, all through the great sounding Audient console pre-amps/EQs (with two channels of Focusrite ISA transformer-based preamps). This will cover most band setups, for example 7-12 mics on the drums and 4-9 mics/lines for everything else.

How many discrete headphone mixes are available?
There are 4 discrete headphone mixes available.

We are a jazz quartet with sax, piano, drums and upright bass – can we record live with acoustic piano?
Absolutely, Live Room B is a great space for live recordings, featuring a Yamaha U3 upright piano and customisable acoustic treatment. We have several acoustic screens, which can be wheeled in for isolation between instruments.

Will the piano be tuned before our session?
Our pianos are tuned twice a year which keeps them in good shape. It is possible to arrange for the piano be tuned specially for your session for an additional fee of £90.

What level of support is given by the engineer?
Our recording engineer will take care of all aspects of setting up and running the session, capturing the best possible sounds at source and, where required, delivery of a final mix.

Is mixing included in the price?
The studio and engineer are hired out on an hourly basis, regardless of whether tracking or post-production/mixing is being undertaken. It is possible to book just the control room for a mixing session.

How long does it take to mix a track?
Naturally, this varies from track to track, depending on the number of instruments, complexity of the production and the final production style desired. It is up to you to decide how much time to designate for mixing – we are happy to discuss this prior to your booking.

Will our tracks be mastered, ready for release?
We advise that where possible, finished mixes are sent to a specialist mastering house for mastering. However, we understand that this depends on your available budget; as an option our engineer can master/finalise your tracks as part of the mixing process, ready for upload to streaming platforms, CD and/or TV/Film sync.

How will I receive my tracks at the end of the session?
Please bring a hard-drive/memory stick with ample free space to the session in order to transfer finished tracks/project files/multi-tracks. This is often quicker and more direct than a cloud transfer.

Can we take away our project to be mixed at a later date?
Our engineer can provide the Logic Pro project file, an AAF (standardised, multi-platform AV format) and/or consolidated multi-tracks, which will import into any DAW. Please allow time for 'bouncing out' and file management at the end of the session.

We are recording an album over 3 consecutive weekends – how will our project be stored?
The project files will be backed-up and securely stored on multiple drives throughout the sessions. Ideally, the client would also take a project backup off-site at the end of each day – please bring a large hard-drive to the sessions.

I have lost our masters/multi-tracks – can I get another copy?
The studio will keep hold of project files for 2 weeks from the last day of the recording session to allow for any transfer issues – it is your responsibility to ensure that all files have transferred correctly and backups are made within this time.

Is the studio available for dry-hire?
Live Rooms A and B are both available for dry hire (i.e. without an engineer) and you are welcome to bring your own equipment to use the spaces for recording, including use of the pianos and drum kit. Use of the control room and MAC's recording equipment/microphones is limited to full studio bookings with an engineer. If you are looking to engineer your own session, or bring in an outside recording engineer, our in-house engineer is happy to step into an assisting role.

FAQs
Vocalists and Solo Artists

Can I arrive early to set-up?
You are welcome to arrive early at MAC to get your bearings load in any equipment. Access to the studio will be available from the start of the booking, once our engineer is on hand.

Do I need to hire a live room to record vocals?
Vocal sessions can be accommodated in our spacious control room which provides a great dead/flat room response for a polished vocal capture. If you would prefer to be in your own space separate to the engineer, we can track vocals in either live room.

What is your standard vocal chain?
Our tried and tested vocal chain is a Neumann TLM102 into a Focusrite ISA pre, followed by a DBX560 compressor where appropriate. Foldback is handled in the analogue domain eliminating all latency—with foldback reverb/delay provided by a hardware effects processor.

I would like to record vocals and acoustic guitar—which is the best space for me?
For a 'dead' studio sound, the control room works well. Where more of a room response is desired, tracking in one of the live rooms is recommended.

What level of support is given by the engineer?
Our recording engineer will take care of all aspects of setting up and running the session, capturing the best possible sounds at source, and where required, delivery of a final mix.

I am a solo artist - can the engineer help with making a beat/backing track?
Our engineer will be happy to set-up Logic Pro for you to make your own beat/backing track - however they do not generally get involved with creative/production duties such as beat-making.

Is mixing included in the price?
The studio and engineer are hired out on an hourly basis, regardless of whether tracking or post-production/mixing is being undertaken.

How long does it take to mix a track?
Naturally, this varies from track to track, depending on the number of instruments, complexity of the production and the final production style desired. Mixing a vocal to a pre-made backing track is much less time consuming than mixing a full band from scratch. We are happy to discuss time-scales for this in advance of your session.

Will our tracks be mastered, ready for release?
We advise that where possible, finished mixes are sent to a specialist mastering house for mastering. However, we understand that this depends on your available budget; as an option our engineer can master your tracks as part of the mixing process, ready for streaming platforms, CD and/or TV/Film sync.

How will I receive my tracks at the end of the session?
Please bring a hard-drive/memory stick with ample free space to the session in order to transfer finished tracks/project files/multi-tracks. This is often quicker and more direct than a cloud transfer.

Can we take away our project to be mixed at a later date?
Our engineer can provide the Logic Pro project file, an AAF (standardised, multi-platform AV format) and/ or consolidated multi-tracks, which will import into any DAW. Please allow time for 'bouncing out' and file management at the end of the session.

I have lost our masters/multi-tracks – can I get another copy?
The studio will keep hold of project files for 2 weeks from the last day of the recording session to allow for any transfer issues – it is your responsibility to ensure that all files have transferred correctly and backups are made within this time.

Is the studio available for dry-hire?
Live Rooms A and B are both available for dry hire (i.e. without an engineer) and you are welcome to bring your own equipment to use the spaces for recording. Use of the control room and MAC's recording equipment/microphones is limited to studio bookings with an engineer. If you are looking to engineer your own session, or bring an outside engineer, our in-house engineer is happy to step into an assisting role.

FAQs
Podcast and Spoken Word

Is the Recording Studio available for podcast recording?
It is an ideal space for recording podcasts. With three spaces to choose from and a selection of furniture available, we are able to accommodate podcast recording sessions of up to 10 guests.

Which space should I book for my podcast session?
Small sessions with up to 3 people can be accommodated in the Control Room. For sessions with additional guests, or where space is required for filming, Live Room B is recommended.

Is it possible to record voice-overs for TV and film at MAC?
Yes, we are well-equipped to record voice-overs and have previously undertaken work for network television productions.

Can you guarantee complete silence for my recording session?
Located in a quiet corner of the building, all 3 spaces are acoustically treated and are very well isolated. The spaces are not, however, 100% soundproof. For this reason, sessions that require an extremely low ambient noise, will be carefully planned at times where there is nothing taking place in the art studios above.

Will the engineer be able to assist me with editing/post-production?
Yes, our engineer will be able to undertake any editing and audio post-production that may be required. You will need to factor time into your session for this.

What type of file will I take away at the end of my session?
We can provide you with either a project file (e.g. AAF or Logic Pro project), consolidated multi-tracks (WAVs), or—if you choose to do post-production at MAC, a finalised stereo WAV ready for upload to streaming platforms. Please bring a USB-thumb-drive or HDD for easy transfer of files.

I have my own podcast recording equipment, can I hire the studio without an engineer?
Yes, it is possible to hire either Live Room A or B for a recording session using your own mics/equipment. Please specify any furniture requirements at the time of booking.

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Get in touch

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