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CRMT120 PRACTICE (30%) {ID1} Practical Studio Assessment


Studio submission - link for feedback only.

Submission status

Submission status	No attempt
Grading status	Released
Due date	Friday, 4 November 2022, 5:00 PM
Time remaining	<div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 1.2em;"></div>
Last modified	-

Submission comments [▶ Comments \(0\)](#)

Feedback

Grade	54 / 100
Graded on	Sunday, 11 December 2022, 5:49 PM
Graded by	 Antti Saario

Feedback comments

CRMT120 Practical Studio Assessment (2022-23) Group Feedback

In general, always aim to prep in advance everything that can be done before the actual session and without being in the studio itself, so that you can use the studio time for actual 'studio stuff' (e.g. learn the mics in advance, make a DAW template, have all channels routings and numbering worked out, plan the console layout, placement of instrument and amplifiers...). The same principle applies to all studio sessions (e.g. pre-mix, mix, mastering) in that all pre-session prep that can be done in advance will help you remain focus on the key tasks at hand.



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Beyond helping you focus during the session, being prepared will speed up your workflow and enable you to achieve more in the session. Hence any strategies that gives us that edge are worth exploring. For example, plan your signal routing, wallbox, patchbay, console & DAW channel order and numbering, and setup your DAW preferences and layout (i.e. optimise your DAW) for recording purposes, in advance. This way you can simply patch all microphones immediately on arrival. Note that you can label the SSL channels using the digital 'scribble strip' as this is helpful in ensuring that you are working on the correct channel when you have a high track count and stops you 'looking for' channels. You can do this either in the session or in advance (by storing your 'preset' on the AWS remote software that is available on the desktop computer). You can develop your own DAW recording template (which might be Control Room specific) to help establish a 'structure' to your workflow (which you can obviously modify and tweak when you progress).

Setup headphones, talkback and control room monitoring first (or in parallel when positioning microphones if working in a team) to ensure that all works and one can immediately communicate with both the team and artist(s). Do test headphones before handing them over to the artist and remember to start quiet with the talkback/headphone mix and bring up as much as needed. This is to mitigate the risk of sending dangerously loud signals to headphones in advertently. Even if you are not sure where the microphones go exactly (e.g. you are waiting on details of the room layout or a drummer is still setting up) you should get all mics on stands (potentially with cables – setup dependent) and to be ready to be placed in desired positions as soon as possible.

The importance of DAW setup and working knowledge of DAW features in recording cannot be overstated (i.e. familiarise yourself with how to optimise your DAW for recording and overdubbing and ensure that you can manage multiple takes, have a clear file naming protocol, and know the operational difference between different available recording modes, such as non-destructive, destructive, loop, punch-in...). Audio editing skills are crucial (e.g. for comping multiple vocal takes) in speeding up the recording (and subsequent pre-mix and mix sessions/work stages).

Similarly, do familiarise yourself with the given piece of music, if known, as well as any notes/guidance/correspondence from the artists (or other stakeholders). In the case of an assessment session like this, it is of paramount importance to have read and to be clear about any session parameters.

Always, meet-n-greet the artist (and any other personnel involved with a studio session). This helps to establish good communication from the start. Work to COMMUNICATE in a systematic and timely manner with all relevant parties throughout a session. We want to create and ensure an effective creative working environment in the studio that feels open and safe. Do familiarise yourself with the

Cactus City studio charter. You can find general information and link to related stats at: <https://www.cactuscity.org/charter> and the actual 'charter pledges' here: <https://www.cactuscity.org/the-pledges>

KEEP the artist in the loop of what is going on throughout the session providing a clear timeline of what is happening (e.g. provide a heads-up of being about commence recording, or that it will take 15 min to alter the set) but without unnecessary details (i.e. consider what they really need to know). This way the artist can focus on managing their attention and readiness to do their 'craft' and not be distracted or get frustrated if waiting without information. Likewise, you will want to ensure clear and timely communication with the production team. This is only possible if you have considered what are all the tasks and steps that need taking and in what order, and who does what (i.e. clear roles and task allocation). It is important to track both time and progress against a plan, so that you can make informed decisions on how to adapt your setup, workflow and/or session aims, if and when needed. Also, it is of paramount importance to keep notes throughout the session, to ensure that all key comments and opinions are noted down, together with your setup notes, details of which takes or parts of takes to keep, etc. All of this will notably help any subsequent follow-up recording sessions as well your edit and mixdown stage.

It is important to familiarise ourselves with (a) our specific AMATA 'microphone locker', (b) with the typical models that one finds in a recording studio, (c) any microphones – or indeed other recording equipment – that we know will be present in a session. When faced with a microphone that we are not familiar with,

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we must not assume a microphone type based on 'looks' (e.g. Beyer Dynamic M201 is not a SDC (small diaphragm condenser) despite having a similar look to a (rather large) 'pencil condenser' OR Sennheiser MD421 is not a side-address microphone) or other 'signifiers' (e.g. Beyer Dynamic microphones can be dynamic, ribbon or condenser).

See Week 8 Seminar slides for examples of some potential microphone 'sets' for use in the given jazz drum recording (e.g. the idea of matching 'tom' microphones in jazz (Tom, Floor Tom, Kick) miking), as well as for charts of which microphones the various groups used.

TROUBLESHOOT systematically (i.e. step-by-step testing each stage of the chain one at a time) and where relevant, following the signal chain from one end to the other (e.g. from source to DAW or DAW to headphones).

Similarly, DECIDE your workflow and then the work from that (e.g. decide if you are using REC and/or MIX bus, and how you want to utilise them in relation to your session. You can then consider how will you want (or need) to make the HP mix? (e.g. using CUE, MIX, REC,...)). It is important to note that we have many ways to build headphone mixes (i.e. there is not a single approach) and we want to become familiar with the available options to be able to adapt to any given session needs. Do revisit materials pertaining to headphone mixes, as found on the Learning Space, if needed.

Ensure that you do LISTEN IN STEREO for all stereo sources. To facilitate this we must remember to PAN to each (non-mono) BUS in your chain. Otherwise you will end up monitoring in mono – something that is easy to do if not listening carefully and/or considering the overall signal flow and the various mixes 'at play'. See Week 9 Seminar notes for an in-depth coverage of the mix/bus relationship.

Remember to ASSIGN a master fader to the relevant SSL BUS that you are using and select CONTROL ROOM MONITORING source and turn-up the speaker PLAYBACK LEVEL as otherwise you will not hear anything even if you 'see' signal on the console's meters.

CHECK that the RME A/D and D/A convertors' and your DAW are set to the same sample rate and bit depth settings. If set incorrectly, you will encounter a range of issues (e.g. clicking, popping, distortion, missing audio channels, duplication of audio channels). Also ACTIVATE the analogue limiter on the RME unit if at all in doubt of your gain staging to the A/D.

When setting the SSL channel input gain, remember to listen to the sound source (channel) that you are recording and consider it in the context of all sounds sources. Do not just look at recording (or playback levels) as otherwise we can make notable errors (e.g. "those look quiet" when looking at tom mic channel signals when toms were not being played and then erroneously apply more gain on the channel, thus risking clipping when the toms are actually played). It is also very important to set the input gain (and any subsequent gain stages) in relation to the actual music that the artist will play, as opposed to just ask them to "play anything".

When working on your drum mic signals, I recommend that you TEST all toms together (and ideally as part of a beat that utilises the toms. This relates to the wider question of how to test and what to test and listen out for and how to listen to (i.e. the aforementioned importance of context). Consider the issues that can arise when doing gain staging out of context and/or considering single mics out of musical context. Albeit, inherent in drum 'kit' recording, this further 'complexifies' when doing multiple instruments/sound sources at once (e.g. with live band recording) where we have to consider the cumulative effect (and affect) of each microphone (say, the impact of your guitar mic to the overhead sound).

To cover all bases, when gain staging your drum microphones and listening to your initial microphone positions, listen to both the individual drum and then in the context of the whole kit (or sub-section of the kits as with toms in the above example).

As discussed in earlier Studio Workshops, the proposed starting workflow for recording in CR1 is to have the SSL channel direct outputs 'feed' the DAW (A/D) inputs as per-fader sends. So, remember to ENGAGE the DIRECT OUT PRE FADER switch and NOTE the there are multiple 'PRE' switches on the console (i.e. remember to consider what you are looking to achieve with the action as opposed to rote learning).

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In relation to the above point, if you look at the CR1 patchbay handout (or the patchbay itself) you will see that the SSL channel direct outputs are normalised to the equivalent number RME A/D input (labelled 'DAW Inputs') (e.g. SSL channel 7 direct output is normalised to RME A/D input 7 and thus will be the input 7 in your chosen DAW).

Before committing to an actual take, we must CHECK our audio (recording signal) both PRE- and POST-DAW (i.e. we want to listen to the signal(s) before it reaches the A/D conversion and then again after the D/A conversion – but not at the same time as otherwise you will get an phasing effect between the pre- and post-DAW signal due to the time delay caused by the converters).

PRACTICE the use of microphone stands (and other 'accessories') in order to be comfortable in their use during a (busy) session. In general, it is important to CONSIDER the role and function of stands as they can become affordances and/or constraints, particularly when working with a 'cumbersome' (i.e. large) sound source that has number of protruding (and potentially 'moving') parts, like the acoustic drum kit.

Note the difference between the artists talkback mic and the console talkback mic. Multiple groups were confused about the channel routing of the artist's 'talkback' microphone from Comp/Live to the SSL. Do note that the microphone does not have to be routed to SSL channels 9-10. I believe that this confusion has emerged due to the 'shared' term of *talkback* and the Foldback A signal routing out of CR1. (i.e. the built-in talkback microphone in the SSL console, which we can route to Foldback A and/or B, with Foldback A being normalised to Central Patchbay inputs (aka CR1 outputs) 9-10).

Whilst on the topic, want to remind everyone of the importance of being able to create 'independent' CR (control room) and HP (headphone) monitor mixes. Ensure that you know how to do this and then you can build on how to make multiple 'custom' HP mixes for the artist.

It is important not to lose focus once we start to record. Avoid unnecessary conversation ('chatting') which is not related to the given recording project and spend the time listening to the individual mix elements and the mix as a whole and start making a rough (DAW) mix that you can playback to the artist after the take. The mixing 'work' can also be helpful in identifying issues that you might have missed and depending on 'where' we are with the session process, could still be 'rectified' this side of the mix (e.g. to re-adjust a microphone position or an amplifier setting if the given take is not one for keeping from performance perspective).

At the end of the session, remember to 'null' the console (i.e. return all console pots, faders and switches to their default positions), and to check that all equipment is backed safely to their respective correct storage cases and returned to TRS.
