

Tip of the Month by Deb Munro

I hear this lament all the time: "I have no room to spare as it is, so how can I build a studio?" After 1-1/2 years of renting in small, busy, noisy locations, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to accommodate a proper recording space. Thankfully, prices for the technology that we use to record have dropped substantially over the past few years. So, all that's really needed is an acoustically insulated space about the size of a small closet or phone booth. And even if you don't have a spare closet in your home, there are several workable options for you.

At first I connected sections of ABS pipe obtained from the plumbing department of Home Depot to create a booth frame, an excellent tip contributed by 11-time Emmy winner James Alburger. I then covered the frame with heavy quilting fabric and arranged it into four walls and a roof. I sewed Velcro strips to each section of fabric and attached the adhesive on the other side of the Velcro directly to the pipes. This setup performed quite well and allowed me to keep my income stream coming in.

Then I found another place that was great and roomy, but with no room for storage or studio. So I did what I had to: I shared the closet in my bedroom with my daughter and used the other one (hers!) for my recording booth. Tough times in tight quarters, but worth it to be able to keep working. Though not as spacious or flexible as a professional studio, the sound quality of the recordings that I made in that closet was really excellent. I removed all the hardware from the closet and covered the walls and ceiling with the same fabric I had used before on my ABS pipe frame.

The key to a good studio is less about sound proofing (although being sound proof is a huge benefit) than about creating a space that absorbs enough sound to prevent excessive reverberation. There are two fabulous books available that can teach you virtually everything you need to know.

First, visit voiceacting.com/products/munro for James Alburger's terrific e-book on designing and building home studios. This is an economical resource that will give you much of the information you need. I also highly recommend *The Voice Actor's Guide to Home Recording*, written by voice talent Harlan Hogan and his engineer Jeffery Fisher – it's the perfect compliment to James Alburger's e-book. You can find it online at amazon.com and samuelfrench.com, or at Samuel French bookstores in New York, Hollywood, Toronto and London.

For those even more pressed for space, an innovation called the Voice Box offers a possible solution. These

Home Studio Design Made Simple

are commercially available in various forms from music stores and recording suppliers. For example, musiciansfriend.com offers the sE Reflexion, pictured below right, for an investment of US \$299. Or you could build one for under \$100.

I recently bought a rolling storage box with a telescoping handle at Costco for only \$25. The box is the perfect size to line with high end acoustic foam (also available from musiciansfriend.com) – which is a bit costly, but you won't need very much. Line the entire box with the foam, except for the lid, which you will leave open to voice into. The result will be an acoustically correct miniature recording booth that's just big enough for your microphone and your head. You can then place your mic on a desk stand (musiciansfriend.com sells one for \$5.99 or you can get one at your local music store) as far back into the box as it can go. This will be just about the perfect distance from your mouth to the mic. Place the box on a table high enough for you to get the mic to your nose/mouth level, and then speak into into the box.

You could also add a Velcro strip to the open end for a piece of quilt fabric that you can place over and around your head while you record, like photographers used to do with old fashioned cameras. This will prevent sound from coming in behind you, and keep you in a nice acoustically dead space.

As an added bonus, this setup functions as an excellent carrying case to take your recording equipment on the road, giving you a fully functioning portable recording studio in a box!

Until next month, do what you love best ... the rest will follow!

All our best,
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