

MASS PRODUCTION OF CDs

You've decided to go it alone as an independent record label and get the CDs made yourself, so where do you start, and what do you need?

Money. No CD manufacturer will give you credit, they'll want payment (cash, credit card, banker's draft) up front. Some even require payment with the order, although most will accept payment when the goods are ready for collection. The bigger your budget, the more CDs you can buy as the unit cost goes down as the quantity goes up; if 500 CDs cost, for example, EUR 1,400 you may find that 1,000 CDs will only cost another EUR 300!

ISRC Codes. Before you do the final Mastering, get onto PPI for these. Without these embedded in your PQ Master, royalty payments - which should be paid to you on every radio play - may not be paid.

A Registered Barcode. How would you feel if your CD was selling better than U2, but does not show up on the charts? It can happen. You need a registered barcode printed onto your CD packaging. Make sure your CD plant can supply this to you.

Master CD or DAT. Ideally this should be "Mastered" and contain PQ and ISRC codes, as many CD plants require all materials "ready to go". Some plants, such as Trend Studios, offer a full Mastering service. Most recording studios also claim to offer this service but, while their recording facilities may be superb, the Mastering process is a very specialised art, a marriage of human skill and technology, and it may be best to go to a specialist house.

Packaging. Have you decided how you want your CDs packaged? Look at your own CD collection, see what's in the shops, decide what you want and give a sample to your designer (we'll get to him/her next.) Bear in mind that the more sophisticated packaging options may be costly, especially if you only have a budget to produce one thousand CDs, or less.

A Designer. It's no good giving a CD plant a worn photograph of the band and a handwritten list of the songs, they will require finished artwork. This means a professional design produced in QuarkXpress or similar - and doing something on your home computer in Word or a cheap "design programme" does not count as finished artwork. If you do, this will lead to - at best - delays, at worst, your lovely colour pictures coming out in black and white.

BAND TIPS: CD Duplication



Delivery and Storage. Consider how you will get your finished CDs home, to your distributor or to the shops. The driver of the 51 bus may object to letting you on with 10 large boxes, and your mum's Ka or Clio may not be big enough to carry 1,000 CDs; your bedroom might get a bit crowded if you try to store them there.

Talk to your chosen CD plant ahead of the project and get as much advice and information as possible from them. Do NOT book the venue for the launch before you have a solid commitment from the CD plant on a completion date; they will not give this to you until your masters and artwork are ready.

CD Plants in Ireland:

MPO 01-8221363

Sonopress 01-8409000

Trend Studios 01-6160600

Zomax 01-4056200

Note that there are numerous brokers or agents who claim to be manufacturers, but who simply take your materials and forward them to a third party (possibly in a foreign country). If in doubt, ask if they'll show you around their plant!

Paul Waldron

General Manager

Trend Studios

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