
Subject: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 02:07:48 GMT
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One of the first major projects I did when I was hired at the hit factory in 1999 was a typical fullblown album project.
That meant roughly 20 hrs studio time (it was a hip hop album)
Main,clean,tv tracks etc
5 1630 cd masters
2 1630 cassette masters
Countless DAT and CD refs.
Lacquers for singles and full album.
The record company didn't even know who I was in particular they just wanted this project mastered at the hit factory.
Lord only knows what the final tally was (\$25-45K ?)
I was being paid a salary and a small commission at the time.
God I miss those days.
I could spend a whole day just cutting parts and bill \$8k.
I still love what I do.
I'm hundred times better at what I do now than then.
Just won two Grammy's.(mastering)
Barely making ends meet. I guess I needed to get that off my chest.
My name is Joe, I'm a mastering addict. thanks for listening.

Joe Yannece
Classic Sound

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Jerry Tubb](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 02:45:17 GMT

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joeaudio wrote on Sun, 12 February 2006 20:07 Just won two Grammy's.(mastering)

Congrats Joe ! which records?

FWIW sometimes success comes in golden statuesque forms, rather than long green.

Cheers & Props

p.s. I had one nominee this year that didn't win ... oh well.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living

Posted by [TotalSonic](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 03:04:16 GMT

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Nostalgia for salad days of past does NOTHING to aide one to adapt to a changing business environment. I could also go on about the fun I had in my recent past job cutting DMM's or about working as a vinyl press production manager in the late 90's and getting sushi lunches paid for by the company every week - but what good does that do? Instead, assessing how to place ones skills in the context of the new environment is a better use of energy. In a brutally capitalistic society such as the one we live in no one is given entitlement to make their living by doing something they love and are passionate about - instead we are required to fight tooth and nail for this priviledge.

Once upon a time a few high priced mastering houses would get paid big bucks to do even flat transfers. Now any time a niche business shows success - then others will follow - causing greater competition - and lowering billable rates.

And technology evolved so that a large bulk of that work can easily be done by consumers for pennies (i.e. burn a CD-R). As I am not only an engineer but also a musician working as an independent artist I whole heartedly welcome this change as it has enable a democritization of the recording process that I have directly benefited from - as it allowed me to produce recordings that truly reflected my vision even within limited financial means. Of course with democritization often comes mediocritization - but those who are passionate about their art will do it regardless of whether there is a financial reward or not.

As far as the business future of being a mastering engineer: there are more people doing it than ever, meaning that average rates will continue to decrease. So we need to either find and establish ourselves in a rewarding niche, or diversify, or find ways to lower overhead, or leave the business. My choice is to do a combination of the first 3 options.

Best regards,
Steve Berson

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [TotalSonic](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 03:08:00 GMT
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Jerry Tubb wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 02:45joeaudio wrote on Sun, 12 February 2006 20:07Just won two Grammy's.(mastering)

Congrats Joe ! which records?

FWIW sometimes success comes in golden statuesque forms, rather than long green.

Cheers & Props

p.s. I had one nominee this year that didn't win ... oh well.

To change my stream of thought from my previous post -
let me also say Congratulations!

and Jerry is right - sometimes the rewards come in different ways at different times.

Best regards,
Steve Berson

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living

Unfortunately lately the whole music business seems to be adopting the Wal-Mart mentality.

Recently I have had three potential clients call me and ask for estimates. When they were given the estimates (based on what they were telling me over the phone and not on listening to the material) they said it was "too expensive" and could we do it for less? When pushed they came up with figures like \$200 for 24 songs or \$15.00 per hour.

One client even went so far as to tell me that he was getting estimates from three other "mastering" facilities and was going to do his mastering with the lowest bidder. I asked him what the experience was of the other mastering houses and what they were going to use to master his material. He replied "I really don't care it is mastering and it is all the same anyway" I tried to explain that it was not but he already had his mind made up and was not interested in learning anything.

If I look on the web I see more and more \$9.95 per song mastering rates or your whole album done for \$119.95 and I am wondering how they can afford to do it for so little and still afford to stay in business?

If you figure the amount of money that I have invested in my room and equipment I could not afford to do mastering for those rates and still be here next month. The average project for me takes me about 30 minutes per song so the mastering studio that advertises on the web is doing mastering for \$19.90 per hour if they also take 30 minutes per song.

If you have, say an average, of \$200,000 dollars invested in your equipment and your room and you amortize that over 5 years it would come out to be \$19.23 per hour just to pay off the equipment and the room. If you also figure in your time and heat lights and water for the bathroom you will find that \$19.95 is barely covering their costs leaving no money for upgrades or for a living wage.

I think what is more likely is that it that many of these budget mastering operations are based in their bedrooms, attics or basements with a computer a couple plugins and two "monitor" speakers and this is done in the evenings and on weekends when they are not working at their day job.

It is getting harder and harder to compete against the budget mastering operations but I guess I will just have to work harder and smarter in this "new age" of mastering.

I agree with what Steve said about the changing face of mastering and the good old days really are a thing of the past. I guess it is time to look for other revenue streams and other business models if I am going to stay doing what I love.

Joe - Congrats on the Grammys.....

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 14:25:54 GMT
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joeaudio wrote on Sun, 12 February 2006 21:07
Lord only knows what the final tally was (\$25-45K ?)
God I miss those days.
I could spend a whole day just cutting parts and bill \$8k.

Congrats on the Grammy's.

Now for my rant.

Get over it. Those days are gone. Thank God. Charging that much for what was likely a simple service is just as pathetically stupid as labels paying idiots like Mariah Carey and Michael Jackson 30+ Million to do albums. I could go on for hours about the insanely stupid antics of the "record industry." It's exactly this kind of severe over-charging that causes high CD prices. No matter what they say the industry is making money hand over fist. They are still increasing sales in the wake of what they thought was their killer - Napster. It's the best advertising they ever had. I certainly don't advocate illegal downloading but, come on, get a freakin' clue... it's crap like this that destroys the value of what we all do.

I charge a lower amount than several people here. On top of that I have a wife and 3 daughters under the age of 4. You don't hear me crying about how bad it is. I've dug in deep and embraced the independent market. I am a graphic designer - a damn good one at that. I know audio - very well. I'm also very good with people. Put all of these together and add a bit of initiative and you have a privately owned business that is growing bigger every year with a steady return client base. I don't advertise other than word of mouth. This is potential suicide considering that Tom and I are in the same area with the same client base finding \$9.95/song mastering services.

However, I added many additional services to my roster and I now have the ability to grow my business more than ever. On top of it all - I love what I do. I get to master some music - design CD covers - broker for replication houses - run a duplication facility - print promotional materials - and listen to good music while doing it all.

It's time you look at your business and create a new model. Forget making thousands and thousands on each little service. It ain't gonna happen anymore. If you still need to make that much then you need to consider changing your way of living and adapt to a slower economy and more educated clients.

It's not your fault that the studio you worked for charged that much. It is definitely your fault for thinking it's still ok to do so.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Bob Olhsson](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 15:58:21 GMT
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Making thousands and thousands?

and just who was this making thousands and thousands?

I'd strongly suggest that people learn the difference between gross income and net profit.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [cerberus](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 17:18:36 GMT
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first, congrats to joe yannece.

and jeff from waveworks.. how can you cover your costs at 9.95 before taxes?
exactly what bob o. said.

jeff dinces

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 17:28:08 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

cerberus wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 12:18first, congrats to joe yannece.

and jeff from waveworks.. how can you cover your costs at 9.95 before taxes?

jeff dinces

It's Wave Werks (not waveworks).

I suggest you re-read and see that I referenced people in my area that are charging \$9.95. That's not me - it's what I'm up against.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 17:39:01 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Bob Olhsson wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 10:58Making thousands and thousands?

and just who was this making thousands and thousands?

I'd strongly suggest that people learn the difference between gross income and net profit.

The making thousands and thousands remark was in reference to Joe's statement of charging \$25 - \$45K at the Hit Factory. Joe also mentioned "I could spend a whole day just cutting parts and bill \$8k."

Now where did I claim anyone is currently making that sum of \$\$\$\$. That said, some are making a considerable amount some aren't. If they are not, and were used to doing so in a previous job, then they should make some adjustments instead of shouting out complaints and looking for pity.

BTW - I do know the difference between gross income and net profit. I keep my overhead low by not getting in debt by piling up too much gear. I don't have the fanciest place in the world but it sounds pretty damn good. I make an honest living and support my family. I drive a used car - not

a new one. These are all things that I've learned to do to keep my family fed and my feet on the ground. At the end of each month I estimate my taxes and I take my cut. I'm a business man and I do understand exactly what is involved every step of the way.

Bob Ohlsson - I greatly respect your comments and opinions. I'm glad you post what you do on this forum. Unfortunately this time you may have misread and interpreted things a bit different than they were meant. No harm done. I'll still look forward to your posts and take something with me from each and every one. :)

edited for use of wrong smiley!

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Thomas W. Bethel](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 18:08:58 GMT
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When I was doing some interning (learning mastering) in Nashville years ago it was a completely different world than now. We can't go back and we have to live in the world we are in at the present. We also cannot change things to suit us so we have to adapt if we are to survive.

We are presently doing video restoration and audio laybacks, we are also doing restoration and reclamation where our insurance client brings us bags full of water with tape and records swimming about and we have to clean them up and transfer them to contemporary media. These are tapes and records that are flood or fire damaged. We are also doing more and more on location recording work and radio show production.

I have to pay the bills some how and just doing mastering is not paying them anymore.

I hear others on this forum talking about how good they are doing and I am always pleased to know that there are still places were someone can make a decent living just doing mastering.

Here in the wilds of Northern Ohio there are too many budget mastering operations and more and more recording studios are adding mastering as a income producer.

Most recording studios that do mastering are doing it because their recording business is off due to the home studio boom and they too are trying to make a living for their families. I cannot fault them for doing this but I am wondering how much longer it is going to be before the home studio also takes on mastering so there will be nothing left for the professional audio engineers to do.

One studio near here is doing video taped walk through of homes for a Realtor and is adding music and graphics to the video to make it more "commercial" Another studio near here is specializing on doing mixdowns for client since that seems to be a very big sticking point in the home studio revolution. Both of these places are trying new things and trying to find their niche.

One problem I am running into is when you are in a bidding war with someone who really does not care about how low he goes, since this is not his primary job, you will never win the bid.

FWIW.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [EP](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 18:39:53 GMT
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Touchy subject, so it would seem....

Perhaps clients were getting overcharged in the glory days. Those major mastering houses had to have full time dedicated tech support crews to keep all those lathes runnin', engineers re-cut sides if the test pressings disappointed, cutterheads to blow up, blah blah. They still did very well financially, I'm sure.

Now things are streamlined a bit. You can listen to your master before sending it off [one advantage of digital]! And a lot of the mystery surrounding mastering has dissipated.

I had a client try and talk me into mastering a 12" single for \$50 bucks. I simply told him that would not even buy the lacquers.

Dunno. There is talk of adapting to the new paradigm. But what is that really? Is it not the automating, accelerating, and cheapening the mastering process to meet the new [low cost] music model? And do not most posters here rail against the new breed of bedroom, plug-in, automated, we-do-it-all or one-size-fits-all mastering houses? What is the new model that still retains traditional standards of quality?

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living

Posted by [giraffe](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 18:56:56 GMT
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slightly unrelated

there is a recording studio here, nice place, good equipment.... competent engineer even.
want to know what he charges?
nothing.
independently wealthy, and works for points, but takes any body.
even people likely to not sell any cd's.
does it for fun.

how do you compete with that?

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 19:01:21 GMT
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Congratulations!

Must be nice to get an award for something other than being promoted as a whore!

M

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [jfrigo](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 19:07:12 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Wave Werks wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 09:39Bob Olhsson wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 10:58Making thousands and thousands?

and just who was this making thousands and thousands?

I'd strongly suggest that people learn the difference between gross income and net profit.

The making thousands and thousands remark was in reference to Joe's statement of charging \$25 - \$45K at the Hit Factory. Joe also mentioned "I could spend a whole day just cutting parts and bill \$8k."

Now where did I claim anyone is currently making that sum of \$\$\$.

(SNIP)

Unfortunately this time you may have misread and interpreted things a bit different than they were meant.!

I think, perhaps, you misread Bob. The question: "who WAS making thousands," not the "IS currently making that sum" that you state.

His point was that even if the company billed \$8k on that day, the net profit was considerably less than the large gross income number. Once you figure all the overhead of running the Hit Factory, Manhattan real estate, salaries off all the support staff, maintenance, equipment, insurance etc, the profit was considerably smaller, and what made its way to the engineer was smaller still.

This point goes to the people charging a few bucks to play with their computer in their bedroom after school as opposed to a truly professional operation that can't possibly function at anywhere near that rate. Each has its place, but they are not equal.

Clearly, you don't need the excesses of the Hit Factory that influenced their charging such rates. That model is clearly from the past and won't work today (as we see from their demise), but there is still a difference between the \$9.95 guys and a facility with a real room, real gear, and an experienced engineer. We must educate potential consumers as to the difference, and a certain number if them will understand and opt for the professional services. Some won't care, and that's fine too. There's room for all.

I think Bob brings up a good point about business in general, and many people in the music industry don't actually pay attention to the numbers and to sound business practices. It's too easy to get caught in the gear lust, ego, or glamour of the industry and forget that it's a business. This is the impression Bob's comment left with me.

We all work hard for our money these days, but I wouldn't trade what I do for some other boring job. All of February (including the weekends) and most of March is already taken, and I'm booking April right now, so even though the rates aren't what they used to be, it seems plenty of people still appreciate professional services. We may not get rich doing this, but it's certainly possible to make a living.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [chrisj](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 19:19:28 GMT
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giraffe wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 13:56slightly unrelated
there is a recording studio here, nice place, good equipment.... competent engineer even.
want to know what he charges?
nothing.
independently wealthy, and works for points, but takes any body.
even people likely to not sell any cd's.
does it for fun.
how do you compete with that?

By kicking his *ss. Be way better than 'competent'.

Crude, but I don't see any other way.

I'm under no misconceptions that I can automatically do that to anyone who comes along, but I do think that there are a lot of people out there- particularly the \$9.95 guys, but also at higher price points- who I can beat the hell out of. In other words, with both of us trying very hard to knock the client's socks off, I can go louder and richer and deeper and clearer, all at once.

Have you heard some of the crap out there masquerading as mastering?

You don't have to convince everybody- just enough people that you can break even.

The rest is just controlling cash flow so you aren't going broke. Spend wisely.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 20:01:47 GMT
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jfrigo wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 14:07
We all work hard for our money these days, but I wouldn't trade what I do for some other boring job.

And this is what it's all really about, isn't it?

Glad to hear you are booked so far in advance. I'm running about 3-4 weeks booked, too. This year is looking better than any of the past several. 2005 ended well for me and seems to be a sign of the way things are going to be for a while.

... If I go back and take Bob's comment the way you did I still have to look at some of the guys out there in those days with high rates just for the sake of high rates. There were, and always will be, those that manage little overhead - even with the best gear in the world - and charge because of who they are or where they are. Maybe they are the lucky ones. Who knows? I like what I do and enjoy doing it every day. Any time I can come home to my kids with a smile on my face instead of a headache and a bad attitude delivered to me by an angry boss is a good day for me. Running my own business allows me this luxury.

I hope only the best for Joe Yannece. I may have been a bit harsh with my initial comments. However - I stand by them. Before complaining to the public I always look at myself and figure out what I can do to fix/create an opportunity to make things better. I don't know Joe but I'd bet he's a pretty smart guy. One who could likely add a few services to his roster to make ends meet in the fashion he needs or to which he is accustomed.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 21:04:15 GMT
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Jerry Tubb wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 02:45joeaudio wrote on Sun, 12 February 2006 20:07Just won two Grammy's.(mastering)

Congrats Joe ! which records?

FWIW sometimes success comes in golden statuesque forms, rather than long green.

Cheers & Props

p.s. I had one nominee this year that didn't win ... oh well.

Thank You Jerry.

They were for the work on the Kelly Clarkson Album.

To everyone else, just blowing off steam is all.

People have forgotten that this is an art that requires skill and experience to be done well.

I am saddened that our (mastering) role is so easily cheapened.

Joe

Classic Sound NYC

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living

Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 21:16:22 GMT

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WAveWorks wrote "I'm also very good with people."

I'd work on this one WAve Works

Joe

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living

Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Mon, 13 Feb 2006 21:30:19 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

joeaudio wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 16:16 I'm also very good with people.

I'd work on this one WAve Works

Joe

Thanks for the constructive criticism, Joe. I'm very good with people. Anyone who knows me will back me on this. It's something I'm quite proud of and a large part of how I keep my clients.

I know you were just blowing off some steam. It just so happens that I was doing the same. I just can't stand the way some people get hung on the old days. Those days are gone. I was part of them, too. I was once able to make more on each and every job I did - not to the extremes of

some out there - but more than I am able to make now. When income went dry in one area I found another way to make it up. In this day and age if you cannot adapt then you ought to simply move over and let someone else do it.

Take my comments as you will. I meant no harm. My apologies if you were offended. That's certainly not my intention.

... Wave Werks (it's Werks with an "e" not an "o")

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [giraffe](#) on Tue, 14 Feb 2006 01:44:32 GMT
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chrisj wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 14:19
Have you heard some of the crap out there masquerading as mastering?

know a guy that just sent a cd to mastering, came back with, for what i can tell, was the exact same treatment across the entire CD. (incoherent cd too, like 4 distinct styles of music, and 3 different drum kits..... don't ask)
i.e. sounded like a single pass to me
a 1500\$ single pass.
didn't say anything, cause i can't be sure.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Tue, 14 Feb 2006 04:13:42 GMT
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joeaudio wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 16:04
They were for the work on the Kelly Clarkson Album.
Joe,
Nice work on this album. It's very listenable. Quite a different sound than so much of the other stuff out these days.

I'm curious... how much went into it? Was the mix presented to you close to the final outcome of the mastering session or was there a lot of work to be done to get it to what we hear on the CD?

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [jfrigo](#) on Tue, 14 Feb 2006 05:43:55 GMT
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joeaudio wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 13:04
To everyone else, just blowing off steam is all.
People have forgotten that this is an art that requires skill and experience to be done well.
I am saddened that our (mastering) role is so easily cheapened.

This is the right place to blow off steam. We're all swimming against the same current, and certainly I can identify with what you say. Skill and experience seem harder to come by these days and too many people believe the advertising that says a single box in your bedroom can replace a whole studio. Musicianship is similarly underappreciated in some circles. Add to that the fact that sometimes we are asked to make it sound not as good as it could (crush!). It's understandable how it can get us down every now and again. But I think we'll hang in there and hope the pendulum swings back into better territory.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [David Glasser](#) on Tue, 14 Feb 2006 06:23:55 GMT
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joeaudio wrote on Sun, 12 February 2006 20:07 Just won two Grammy's.(mastering)

Congrats Joe. We had one this year also (out of 5 nominees). Not trying to diminish the rare distinction at all, but the only ones who 'win' a Grammy - and receive a nifty statue - are those whose names are listed as nominees (with a few exceptions - are your categories one of those?). Otherwise, it's more correct to say we worked on a Grammy-winning record.

Grammys are awarded to Mastering Engineers in the Album of the Year, Surround, and Historical categories. Either way, it's a real rush, and it's one of the things that make the job rewarding.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Thomas W. Bethel](#) on Tue, 14 Feb 2006 16:05:23 GMT
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What concerns me is that a lot of people get really burned by someone calling themselves a "mastering" engineer. Then the person getting burned has nothing but bad things to say about mastering and vows never again to let someone else touch their music.

I can site example after example of musicians I know trying to get their material "mastered" (and many going for the low ball approach) either finding someone for 10 dollars an hour with a computer and a host of plugins or doing it themselves with not too professional results.

The latest wrinkle around here is that the recording studios are 1) either doing the mastering themselves ("we really know the music" or "why would you want to ruin your music by going to someone who does not understand what you are trying to accomplish") using the same equipment they did the recording on or 2) telling the musicians that they "really don't need mastering as I have already done everything to the music that can be done". (boy is the a correct statement in a very negative way).

There will always be the big guys doing mastering for \$400 per hour and booked 4 months in advance but I am afraid that just like the home recording explosion the same will be the wave of the future for mastering as we know it today. There use to be a lot of really good professional recording studios in this area but now you can count the really good ones on the fingers of one hand.

I am not good a predicting the future but from where I am sitting it seems like the whole music business is going nowhere very fast.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Tue, 14 Feb 2006 18:07:59 GMT
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David Glasser wrote on Tue, 14 February 2006 06:23joeaudio wrote on Sun, 12 February 2006 20:07Just won two Grammy's.(mastering)

Congrats Joe. We had one this year also (out of 5 nominees). Not trying to diminish the rare distinction at all, but the only ones who 'win' a Grammy - and receive a nifty statue - are those

whose names are listed as nominees (with a few exceptions - are your categories one of those?). Otherwise, it's more correct to say we worked on a Grammy-winning record.

Grammys are awarded to Mastering Engineers in the Album of the Year, Surround, and Historical categories. Either way, it's a real rush, and it's one of the things that make the job rewarding.

Right !

I get to pay (I think \$50 each) for two lovely unframed certificates that say I participated as mastering engineer which I will then proudly nail to the wall outside my room.

Joe
Classic Sound

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [GTRBass](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 00:58:45 GMT
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Hi guys,

I'm a "long time listener, first time caller" I guess. Thought I'd chime in. I'm a mastering guy too, although I've yet to hang out the official shingle. I've been doing masters based on word of mouth alone on and off for the past 9 years. I've been a musician and engineer for a very long time. I probably have similar credentials to many of you. I've been a performer in signed bands. I was a session player back in the days when players had to play in time and in tune. I learned the art of engineering through internships at places like Paramount, Universal and A&M.

The reason I became a mastering engineer is because I once paid for "the world's most expensive DAT to CDR transfer" perpetrated by a very highly regarded name mastering guy (And shame on you Dave...) As luck would have it, I have the pedigree and talent for this like all of you.

The way I see it, "Johnny Chucklehead" buys into the hype and goes to Costco, uhh, I mean Guitar Center, and buys an M Box thinking he's gonna make the next Dark Side of the Moon in his spare room. He picks up an MXL mic or two, a box with a toob that says it's a preamp, a pair of monitors and he's off to the races tracking his masterpiece. After a while he shells out for some

plug-in's thinking that a bunch of one's and zero's are gonna beat names like Neve, Pultec, and Fairchild.

He spends a year tracking and mixing this epic. In the end he's easily spent \$5K minimum, and learned a helluva lot about recording. When he investigates mastering he finds it's gonna cost him say \$1,500, so instead he goes to GC and picks up the "Sunami Masters Bundle". He then proceeds to author an error filled "PMCD" that is the loudest blob of noise with a beat (to quote Bob Speer) anyone has heard to date.

Johnny happily races off to the puppy mill uhh, I mean discmakers, and presses a 1000 copies. The first 100 coasters go to family and friends. The next 25 go to "radio and press". The next 25 go to labels and various distributors. 10 go to CD Baby to meet the massive public demand. He sells 40 copies either at gigs or out of his van down by the river. The remaining 800 copies sit in a closet where they take up space for years until his future wife makes he toss them out to make room for his golf clubs.

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Just a thought.

GT Richards

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [giraffe](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 01:42:10 GMT
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hey, i don't appreciate the way you seem to berate the vaunted "triple plywood" status.

i had to work hard for that. :p

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [TurtleTone](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 02:55:48 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

GTRBass wrote on Tue, 14 February 2006 19:58Hi guys,

I'm a "long time listener, first time caller" I guess. Thought I'd chime in. I'm a mastering guy too, although I've yet to hang out the official shingle. I've been doing masters based on word of mouth alone on and off for the past 9 years. I've been a musician and engineer for a very long time. I probably have similar credentials to many of you. I've been a performer in signed bands. I was a session player back in the days when players had to play in time and in tune. I learned the art of engineering through internships at places like Paramount, Universal and A&M.

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Just a thought.

GT Richards

Amen!

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 03:45:39 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

GTRBass wrote on Tue, 14 February 2006 19:58 Today's mastering business needs to be diversified and have multiple revenue streams. Maybe an option is to generate revenue from consulting services to the client in his bedroom record plant. He/she needs expertise more than any hi end gear. A mixing coach who knows how to get results is going to be in demand. Best Buy has Geek Squad. Project studios need a Tweak squad, who can show them what that article in EQ about Eddie Kramer, or Glyn Johns meant to their mix at a reasonable rate. Plus you've just built a relationship of trust that puts you in the forefront for landing the gig to matser the record. Right on. This is why I do what I do. You've nailed it on the head.

I spent 12 years on the sales floor of a retail music store while building my own business. I saw the jokers come in and buy digi001's and mboxes and m-audio stuff every single day. I sold so much of that stuff it made my head spin. Luck for me I was around when they all wanted to know how to use it. Now I do my own thing and still have the majority of these people coming to me for advice. Many never come to me to get a CD mastered but they come to me with cash in hand to help them on their way to better recordings. Those that do come back for my mastering services have more polished mixes than most others in the area because they were willing to sit down for a while and learn from someone who knows what's going on. The cool part of all of this is that I can teach and get paid. I can master a CD and get paid. Then I can offer my services as a broker for CD replication and I still get paid. Throw in some of my graphic design talents and they even get a cool looking cover to show off to their friends on the website I built for them - for a fee of course.

Relationships are worth more than taking all of someones money at a single high-priced service. Unless, of course, that's how you want to try to make a go of it. Unfortunately it leaves most people trying to figure out why they aren't making any money. Sound familiar?

hmmm...

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [jfrigo](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 04:33:54 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

joeaudio wrote on Tue, 14 February 2006 10:07
I get to pay (I think \$50 each) for two lovely
unframed certificates that say I participated as mastering engineer which I will then proudly nail to
the wall outside
my room.

That's indeed what it costs, which is considerably less than I paid for the gold plaque for the same record! David actually has a little statue too from a historical album Grammy several years ago, so he's cooler than both of us... ;) Congrats to both of you, and all the other lucky certificate earners this year. Who from our ranks actually got the statues this year? I didn't pay much attention, what with the new baby and a busy schedule and all.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Arf! Mastering](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 04:50:02 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

jfrigo wrote on Tue, 14 February 2006 23:33 Who from our ranks actually got the statues this year? I didn't pay much attention, what with the new baby and a busy schedule and all.

Bebo de Cuba took Best Tropical Latin Album 8)

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 13:07:45 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

GTRBass wrote on Wed, 15 February 2006 00:58Hi guys,

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reasonable rate. Plus you've just built a relationship of trust that puts you in the forefront for landing the gig to master the record.

Just a thought.

GT Richards

That's all good. I guess I'm a little hard core.
The only thing I give a flying shit about in this industry is mastering.
May I be put in the ground with an SX-74 clutched in my cold dead fingers.

Joe
Classic Sound

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Gold](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 15:22:16 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

joeaudio wrote on Wed, 15 February 2006 08:07
May I be put in the ground with an SX-74 clutched in my cold dead fingers.

I wonder if the resonance point changes six feet under?

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [TurtleTone](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 15:33:25 GMT
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At least it's big enough to be buried in it if you want to save a few bucks on a coffin.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Ronny](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 19:47:05 GMT
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Beats getting buried in a piano crate.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 20:31:50 GMT
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TurtleTone wrote on Wed, 15 February 2006 15:33At least it's big enough to be buried in it if you want to save a few bucks on a coffin.

You would have to be about the size of a cockroach to be put to your final rest in an SX-74 cutter head

Joe

Classic

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [TotalSonic](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 20:56:04 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

joeaudio wrote on Wed, 15 February 2006 20:31TurtleTone wrote on Wed, 15 February 2006 15:33At least it's big enough to be buried in it if you want to save a few bucks on a coffin.

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Joe

Classic

Guess we've been reading too much Kafka then.

I think maybe an SP-79 would be more in line with an appropriate coffin size if you were tucked

into a fetal position under it. I think I'd ask to be buried with my finger pushing the "fast" button. :)

Best regards,
Steve Berson

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [GTRBass](#) on Wed, 15 Feb 2006 21:09:51 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Just don't bury yourself with a Scully lathe, 'cause they are real hard to find.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [jfrigo](#) on Thu, 16 Feb 2006 06:08:34 GMT
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AlanS wrote on Tue, 14 February 2006 20:50jfrigo wrote on Tue, 14 February 2006 23:33 Who from our ranks actually got the statues this year? I didn't pay much attention, what with the new baby and a busy schedule and all.

Bebo de Cuba took Best Tropical Latin Album 8)

Congrats indeed, but different from the question, that's another certificate. David's comment got me wondering which mastering engineers got actual statues this year for album of the year, surround album of the year, and best historical album?

I just went and searched a bit and found that mastering engineers Arnie Acosta, Bob Ludwig, Adam Ayan, and Steve Rosenthal all got actual statues this year. Curiosity satisfied.

However, I'm much happier to congratulate all the group members here who worked on Grammy winners this year.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 02:13:27 GMT
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Wave Werks wrote on Mon, 13 February 2006 14:25joeaudio wrote on Sun, 12 February 2006 21:07

Lord only knows what the final tally was (\$25-45K ?)

God I miss those days.

I could spend a whole day just cutting parts and bill \$8k.

Congrats on the Grammy's.

Now for my rant.

Get over it. Those days are gone. Thank God. Charging that much for what was likely a simple service is just as pathetically stupid as labels paying idiots like Mariah Carey and Michael Jackson 30+ Million to do albums. I could go on for hours about the insanely stupid antics of the "record industry." It's exactly this kind of severe over-charging that causes high CD prices. No matter what they say the industry is making money hand over fist. They are still increasing sales in the wake of what they thought was their killer - Napster. It's the best advertising they ever had. I certainly don't advocate illegal downloading but, come on, get a freakin' clue... it's crap like this that destroys the value of what we all do.

I charge a lower amount than several people here. On top of that I have a wife and 3 daughters under the age of 4. You don't hear me crying about how bad it is. I've dug in deep and embraced the independent market. I am a graphic designer - a damn good one at that. I know audio - very well. I'm also very good with people. Put all of these together and add a bit of initiative and you have a privately owned business that is growing bigger every year with a steady return client base. I don't advertise other than word of mouth. This is potential suicide considering that Tom and I are in the same area with the same client base finding \$9.95/song mastering services. However, I added many additional services to my roster and I now have the ability to grow my business more than ever. On top of it all - I love what I do. I get to master some music - design CD covers - broker for replication houses - run a duplication facility - print promotional materials - and listen to good music while doing it all.

It's time you look at your business and create a new model. Forget making thousands and thousands on each little service. It ain't gonna happen anymore. If you still need to make that much then you need to consider changing your way of living and adapt to a slower economy and

more educated clients.

It's not your fault that the studio you worked for charged that much. It is definitely your fault for thinking it's still ok to do so.

To answer your question about what processing I used on the Kelly Clarkson CD, as I recall I threw everything at it but the kitchen sink. I believe it was multiple studios engineers, producers, and formats.

Had a look at your site.

How do you like those 802's.

Interesting placement. Nothing in 1999 was simple.

It was all 1630's (if you know what those are)

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My suggestion to you Wormworks is get some experience

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Joe Yannece

Classic Sound NYC

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living

Posted by [bigaudioblomhard](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 09:24:36 GMT

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So Joe, can I ask you a coupla questions here on topic?

Why do you want to pay \$50 for a coupla stupid Grammy Certificates? Or were you just joking? I hope you dont think that impresses clients. But let me tell you what I think does, RIAA GOLD AND PLATINUM RECORD AWARDS, but they cost around \$200. So save you money for a 'real' marketing investment. Although I would like to get one of those 'horn' statue like things some day.

How much do they cost?

Now about "trying to make a freakin living". Is it that the business is slowing down, the phone isn't ringing? Or is it that the clients are trying to beat you up on the price and you're not budging off the card rate? Just curious here. Sometimes I wonder if the REAL reasons our industry is changing are exactly the ones we're told.

I'm deffinatly feeling the effects of the Wal-Martification of our industry and for that matter our country. For those who don't know, there's a new book out called "The Wal-Mart Effect" by Charles Fishman which attempts to explain this. According to him we're fucked! China's trade surplus jumped 47% this year. How long do you think its gonna take them to figure out how to use an L2, and charge \$99 to master a record? With FTP there wont even be a Fedex charge.

Best luck in the future, and as Peter Fonda said in Easy Rider "Hang in there, baby."

bab

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [bblackwood](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 12:24:53 GMT
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bigaudioblowhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 03:24 I'm deffinatly feeling the effects of the Wal-Martification of our industry and for that matter our country. For those who don't know, there's a new book out called "The Wal-Mart Effect" by Charles Fishman which attempts to explain this. According to him we're fucked! China's trade surplus jumped 47% this year. How long do you think its gonna take them to figure out how to use an L2, and charge \$99 to master a record? With FTP there wont even be a Fedex charge.
Those people already exist - maybe not in China but they are out there. Luckily there are plenty of people that still understand you get what you pay for (to a point).

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 13:29:10 GMT

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bigaudioblowlhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 09:24
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The platimun albums that I worked on over the last year or two were designed by a company here in NJ. They were very fancy. The record companies used to give one to the mastering house (or engineeer) back in the "salad days" These were something like \$275 each. Although I'm proud of them I can't justify laying out \$1000 to decorate the wall right now. A Grammy is a Grammy they're cheap and look like all those little Doctor credentials you see while waiting

for your digital exam.

My original post was not whining, just my little bit of crap that's going on in my world right now.

The transition from the world renowned hit factory to the relatively unknown Classic Sound was rougher than I thought it would be.

It's unfortunate but the bigs love the flash and noone did flash better than Eddie Germano.

Joe
Classic

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Bob Olhsson](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 13:33:44 GMT
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bigaudioblowhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 03:24...let me tell you what I think does, RIAA GOLD AND PLATINUM RECORD AWARDS, but they cost around \$200.Last I checked it was more like \$350. Is that a recent price?

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Thomas W. Bethel](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 14:05:16 GMT
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Quote:To answer your question about what processing I used on the Kelly Clarkson CD, as I recall I threw everything at it but the kitchen sink. I believe it was multiple studios engineers, engineers, and formats.

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My suggestion to you Wormworks is get some experience
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Joe Yannece
Classic Sound NYC

Not to put too fine a point on this but Jeff is a very professional mastering engineer who has certainly paid his dues over and over again and is regarded by many as one of the best mastering engineers in this area. I have had the pleasure of knowing him as a professional for a number of years and he is one of the "good guys" Not only is he an excellent mastering engineer he is also a GREAT father and an accomplished musician. I think you owe him an apology. By the way the name of his company is WAVEWERKS not "wormworks".

I too worked in mastering as an intern in Nashville at a mastering facility in the era of the 1630 and know how hard the work was. I was working on the "afternoon" shift which was suppose to be from 4:30 to midnight but most of the days (make that mornings) we were lucky to get out of their at 2:30 or 3:30 am. It was no picnic and the 1630 was a constant source of amazement and a source of problems. Couple that with the U-Matic video decks and you had a recipe for disaster.

I also know that at that time we were charging what the traffic would bear but we never got 8K a day for simple transfers. The facility I worked in had all the bells and whistles one would expect to find in a New York mastering house but we were charging lower Mid West rates.

Now that I am on my own with my own two studio setup I have to compete not with other professional mastering operations like Jeff's but with people down the street and across town who have a couple of plugins, a computer and a couple of computer monitor speakers and is doing mastering for \$10.00 per hour. What these people have failed to master is the whole concept of mastering and all they know how to do is squash the music. They have flashy handouts but nothing to back up their claims and certainly no experience to be able to offer mastering to their potential client base.

Our rates are very reasonable considering the amount of money we have invested in our facility and the experience I have accumulated over a career spanning 40 years in the business. Their rates are stupidly low but more than they should be for what they are really offering their clients.

It is not fun watching a musician get screwed by these rip off artists and then that musician damning the whole profession of mastering just because of a bad experience with someone who would have trouble doing a strait transfer let alone a mastering session.

So this is my RANT. FWIW....

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [Wave Werks](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 16:18:53 GMT
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joeaudio wrote on Thu, 16 February 2006 21:13
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Joe Yannece
Classic Sound NYC

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802's - I like them a lot. They are going to fit in just right in my new room. I can't wait 'till it's done.

802 placement - it's a freakin' picture on a website. Duh!

1999 - I remember that year quite well. I can't speak for you but I really enjoyed that year. Certainly was different than now, though.

1630 - I know exactly what a 1630 is. I chose to go the Exabyte and DDP on CD-R route instead.

PQ sheet - Yup, heard of that too. Even created a couple myself. How 'bout that!

Ok, I admit... my business is probably not at the same level as yours was back in 1999 but - it's not 1999 anymore. It's 2006 and I'm cranking out more business now than any year in the past. I've adapted to today's mentality and moved on.

Wormworks - Cute. Is that the best you've got? I could have come up with much better. I've paid my dues. I have experience. Maybe not as much as you. But I have experience and plenty of it. Maybe it's not good to have the experience you have, huh? It's turned you into quite the grumpy person. Say what you will, you don't know me from the next guy. I really don't know you either. Now that names have been called and you've made fun of me on a public forum I will withdraw from this shouting match. I have no interest in continuing on with this conversation. I'm going back to work now to put a smile on another client's face. That's what it's all about isn't it? Loving what you do and making people happy - and making a decent living doing it?

Too bad you had to take a spirited conversation and turn it into such a joke. Gonna steal my milk money next? Look in the mirror buddy, maybe that's why you have a hard time making ends meet.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 16:19:37 GMT
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Bob Olhsson wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 13:33bigaudioblowlhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 03:24...let me tell you what I think does, RIAA GOLD AND PLATINUM RECORD AWARDS, but they cost around \$200.Last I checked it was more like \$350. Is that a recent price?

You can get a nice little framed situation from as little as \$125 to who knows ? Herb Powers had one for a Nelly Album (11 Million) that was the size of a barn.

Joe
Classic

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [joeaudio](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 16:39:43 GMT
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Wave Werks wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 16:18joeaudio wrote on Thu, 16 February 2006 21:13

Had a look at your site.

How do you like those 802's.

Interesting placement. Nothing in 1999 was simple.

It was all 1630's (if you know what those are)

sometimes hand written pq sheets(if you know what that is)

or even editing on a Sony 3000 if Sonic crapped out.

Rerunning a 60 minute master because of a mute in the last 30 seconds of program.

while the UPS guy is standing in the hall.

This my little friend does not even begin to

describe what a busy mastering house was like.

My suggestion to you Wormworks is get some experience

pay some dues before you write another rant like this one.

Joe Yannece
Classic Sound NYC

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Sorry Dude, you had it coming.
Starting a post with "get over it"
will tend to make a man bare his teeth.
And with that I bid you well.

Joe Yannece
Classic Sound NYC
www.classicsound.com

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [bigaudioblomhard](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 17:08:32 GMT
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Bob Olhsson wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 06:33bigaudioblowhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 03:24...let me tell you what I think does, RIAA GOLD AND PLATINUM RECORD AWARDS, but they cost around \$200.Last I checked it was more like \$350. Is that a recent price?

Yikes! Is that what I paid for that gaudy plastic montage on my wall? I don't even remember, just threw it on my credit card and pay like \$150 a month against the \$50 million parked there. I gotta raise my rates.

bab

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [rnicklaus](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 17:33:13 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Bob Olhsson wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 05:33bigaudioblowhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 03:24...let me tell you what I think does, RIAA GOLD AND PLATINUM RECORD AWARDS, but they cost around \$200.Last I checked it was more like \$350. Is that a recent price?

The "custom" ones (bigger plaque, printing on glass, etc) about 225 to 250.

Stock awards around 185.

Subject: Re: Trying To Make A Freaking Living
Posted by [jfrigo](#) on Fri, 17 Feb 2006 17:39:18 GMT
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bigaudioblowhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 09:08Bob Olhsson wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 06:33bigaudioblowhard wrote on Fri, 17 February 2006 03:24...let me tell you what I think does, RIAA GOLD AND PLATINUM RECORD AWARDS, but they cost around \$200.Last I checked it was more like \$350. Is that a recent price?

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The prices are all over the map depending on which RIAA approved company makes it, which style you pick, if it's custom design or just one of the standard setups, etc. You can definitely get a basic setup for \$200, entry level with CD only for a little less, the multiplatinums with multiple records are more like the \$350 Bob mentioned, and the sky's the limit as far as the custom jobs go.

It's hard to justify throwing lots of money at them, but getting at least a few of them to hang on the wall certainly looks nice and gives the clients something to talk about. I think the cheap investment for a Grammy plaque also is a nice addition to the wall. Clients seem to enjoy that as well.

What I didn't understand was all those tape company awards that people put up back in the day. Great, you buy a lot of tape from us so we'll give you a silly little thing mounted on a little piece of particle board. That impresses clients how?