

The Hanger Production House and TheAviator Presents...

CAPTAIN KWAM'S SECRETS FOR FLY VOCAL RECORDING

A Momaki Publication Series to better assist Artist & Engineers in great vocal recordings.

Introduction

Hello friends, my name is Mo Makinde, aka TheAviator of The Hanger House. I'm an audio engineer turn musician by night and some other not so important titles. This book was formulated to inform and assist artists and recording/mix engineers in studio sessions. These are techniques I have personally used as an artist, and have also suggested to artists that I had the pleasure of engineering for. These session techniques and approach have been gathered over a period of time from my personal, and commissioned studio sessions in Antigua, Jamaica, Dominica, Nigeria, Oslo, USA and all the fun exciting countries with amazing people I've had the privilege of working with. Also, some sections contain knowledge I acquired from my audio studies at the Conservatory of Recording Arts & Science, AZ and friends i made while interning at Premier Studios, NYC.

The book is not intended to force my philosophy upon you, but to simply provide you with a basic format of what a full vocal session should contain but you can always deviate to get YOUR desired outcome. So enjoy this and please EXPERIMENT... These instructions, can have a great impact/influence on the sound and integrity of your studio vocal recordings and can often make your unmixed vocals sound better than those that has already been processed by a tonne of signal processing gear and plugins. Also feel free to drop us a line here at The Hanger on any topic you are eager to learn about. This is the first edition of many studio guidelines to come.

All the best in your recordings and we hope this book is helpful to you... Talk soon.

Special Thanks to God for life, Richard A. for the huge motivation behind this project, Graffin Graffix for the flawless illustration and all TheAviator's fellowship.

Send your questions to: the.mayflower.music@gmail.com

Yours Sincerely,
TheAviator

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Getting Prepared

MICROPHONE CHOICES

I wise man once told me, When aiming for something!!! “It’s not the gun you use, it’s the shooter”. That might be true if you are John Wayne, but until he’s pinned down behind enemy lines with his revolver, and the only shot to freedom is half a mile away, then he too would wish he had a sniper rifle instead. What i’m trying to say is that there’s always the right tool for the right job.

To best translat your vocal performance, it’s advisable to use a microphone with the most suitable transient response for the vibe and feel you are seeking on the track.

Listed below are examples of genres and best suiting microphones.
Please bear in mind that these are just suggestions and your are well more than qualified to experiment.

Rock Song Vocal Performance: SM7B / SM57 / RE20

Hip Hop / Rap Vocal Performance: Neumann U87 / AKG C414 / AT 4060

R&B Vocal Performance: Sony C800G / Blue Baby Bottle / Neumann U46/47

NOTE: Always remember to keep microphone away from flat reflective surfaces because it can greatly impact the characteristic of your recording, and can even cause serious phase issues.

HEADPHONES

Headphone comfort “volume and clarity” is the most important aspect of any recording, Why? A COMFORTABLE SINGER IS A HAPPY & WILLING SINGER. I know this, trust me “Arabian salesman accent inserted here”.

NOTE: If possible, input the microphone signal and instrumental signal independently into a 2 channel mixer, so vocalist/performer can have flexibility and control, they can even apply an isolated reverb or delay into their headphone for more convenience, without interfering with the main mix in the control room.

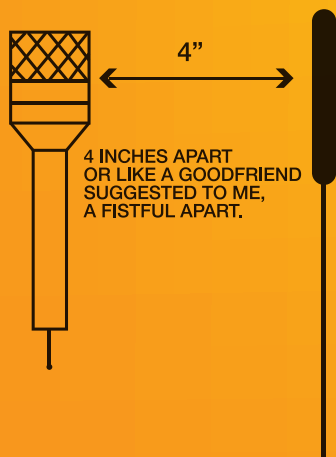
POP FILTER

Why a pop filter? I kid..I kid... Well we all know the importance of a pop filter, not only does it minimize darn plosives caused by p's and t's, but it also protects your microphones diaphragm from getting moisturized with saliva!!!

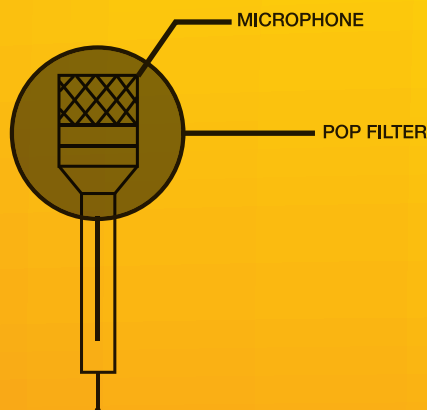
NOTE: Pop filter should be about couple inches or a fist away from microphone..

DISTANCE BETWEEN MICROPHONE AND POP FILTER

MICROPHONE POP FILTER



Microphone Position: Side View



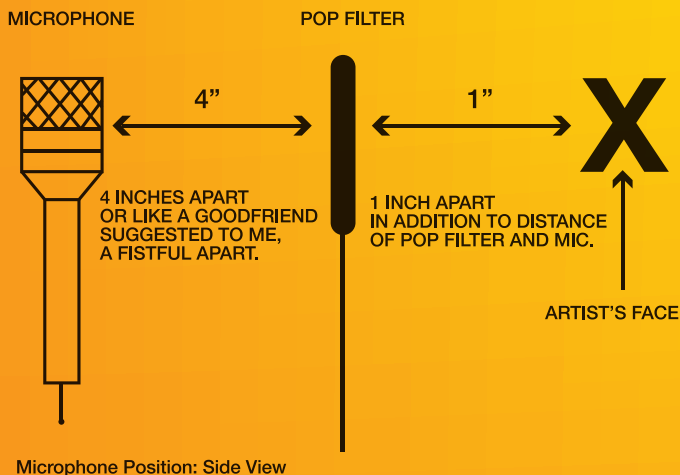
Microphone Position: Front View

STANCE

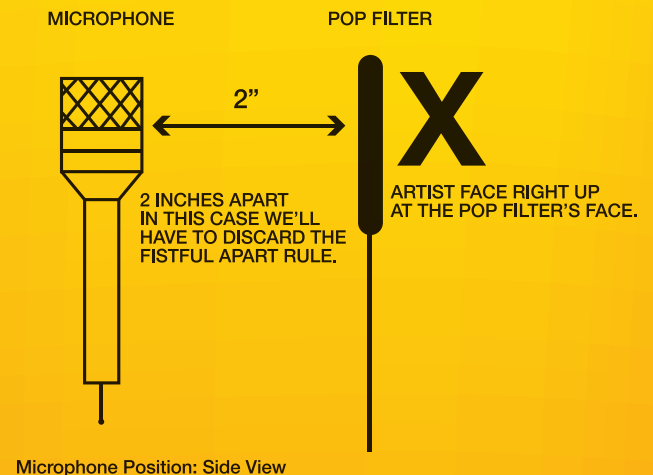
It's advisable to have a little distance between performer and microphone, not to be all over the mics personal space, lol. This is actually a good logic because just as tension builds between two people standing directly in each others faces, so does tension build between a mic and human, this is called proximity effect. In several cases this can be bad because it will be a nasty build up of mid/low frequency. So to eliviate this, stand about 5" (inches) away from microphone and you should immediately notice an instant sheen sounding vocal track.

On the contrary, if performer has a different vibe in mind, let us say a "Barry White" kind of swag, that intimate vibe, i'll suggest vocalist to stand closer, about 2 inches from microphone.

DISTANCE BETWEEN VOCALIST AND MICROPHONE: NORMAL



DISTANCE BETWEEN VOCALIST AND MICROPHONE: BARRY WHITE



NOTE: Here's a tip I recommend, but not set in stone.

Hi Pass Filter: -5db to -3db @ 80Hertz (/ 80Hz)

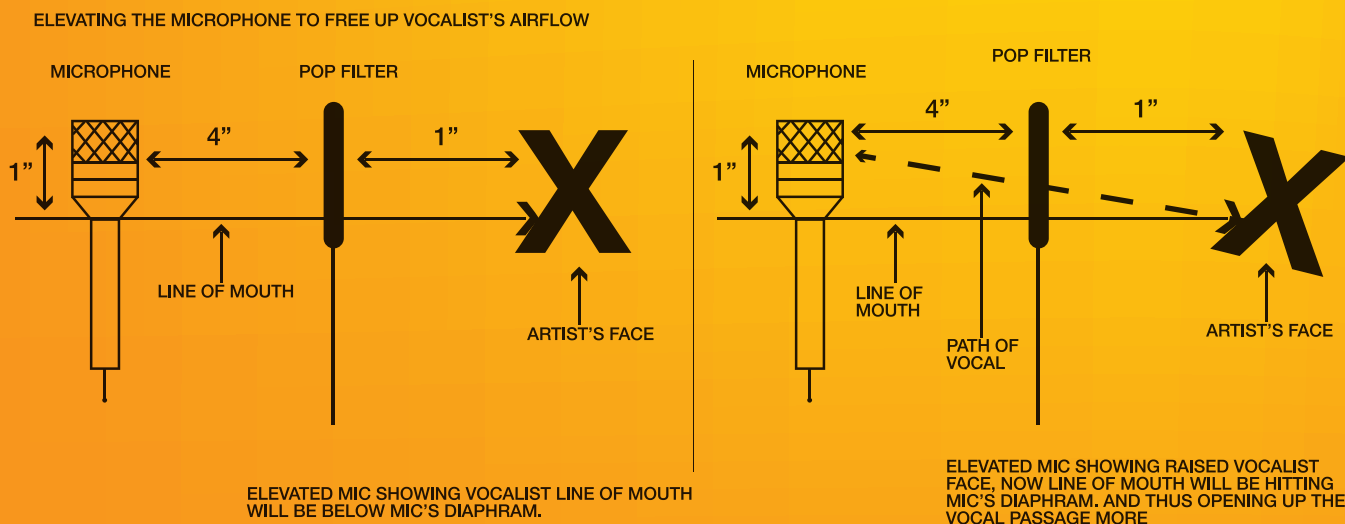
Depending on vocalist's frequency range and vibe of track.

Vocal Recording

LEAD VOCALS

For that full and luscious vocal, “Product placement here”!!! Drink a little honey and maybe a sip of some liquid courage!!! Maybe!!! lol. Seriously, although we all have different vices and ethics, a little prep to get into your zone goes a long way, so relax, calm your mind however suits you best. Visualize your performance and you will better execute it, “like i said tho, different strokes for different folks”.

It’s advisable to set the microphone higher than performer’s line of mouth, probably 1 inch higher than performer’s mouth. The reason behind this madness is to torture the vocalist, well that’s how i felt at first, but it’s simply to make the performer raise his/her face slightly while performing. This little trick really helps because now the better flow of air to/from the lungs help to project a stronger and more audible performance. Remember that wise man’s law about electricity, well, almost everything flows better on a path of least resistance.



DOUBLE

These should be identical to lead vocals; Performer should try to match the lead vocal pattern and emphasis as close as possible so not to cause a phase issue. If this technique is done properly, you should have a more dynamically enhanced vocal performance, while maintaining headroom, Wow, such louder non-distorting vocal tracks!!!

NOTE: Sometimes a double is not needed in the song's verses, depending on the vibe of the track and genre of music being recorded.
but its strongly recommended on most choruses / hooks.

CHORUS

"And then the angels sang to the LORD in a majestic chorus". Amen. This technique rarely rids people of their sins, but atleast your chorus will sound heavenly. Here's what you'll need: A priest, 2 Nuns...joking. But you'll need several takes, so it can be well stacked and luscious sounding.

1st Take: Perform this as distinct as possible, this is your foundation before you start layering the cake.

2nd Take: This should be identical or almost, so that the combined layers now give a more dynamic sound. **SEE "DOUBLE" SECTION.**

3rd Take: This take does not need to be like the previous two (2). You emphasize certain words more, so that the three (3) layers combined will give a perceived chorusy effect without real phase issues.

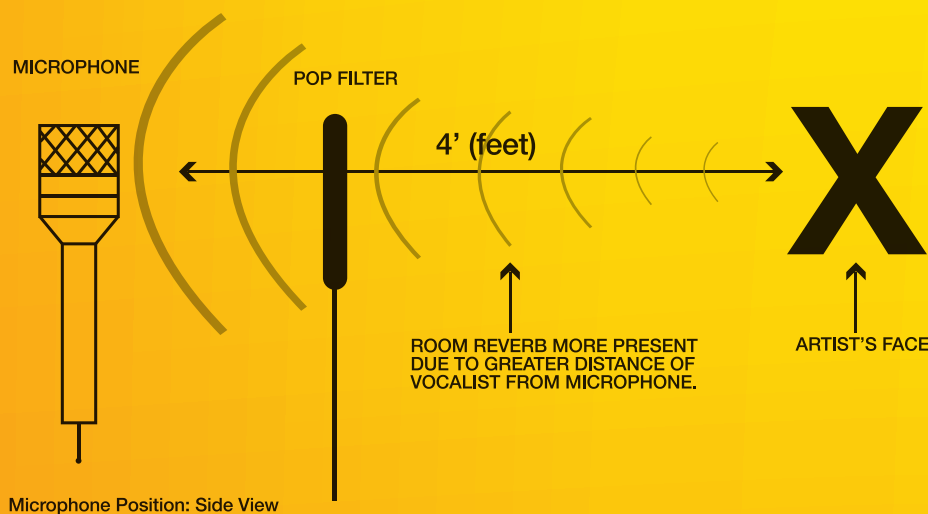
4th Take: Now you can apply what we call a schwagg vocal..or like my my homies say, swagged out ... This is when you fake it, not like when women do!!! i mean you fake your vocal in this performance to give a perception of the vibe the song requires.

CHORUS *Cont'd*

Example: Adding that foreign accent you always practice. This will add perception of a different individual being on the performance.

* Also for a natural sounding depth perception, try standing further back from microphone about 4 feet, this will enable more of the room sound/reverb to get captured in the performance.

GETTING MORE SENSE OF DEPTH PERCEPTION



* Optional: If chorus/hook requires the highly underrated skills of backup singers, this will be a great time for the fat lady to sing..no disrespect intended.

NOTE: For best results, test run from different positions in the room, until you find the sweet spot that best compliment the vibe of your song.

Now that performances are layered, there should be enough tracks to experiment with. Go wild with panning to enhance the depth perception and chorusy effect of the songs chorus/hook.

BACK UP VOCALS

In rap and hip/hop genre: This technique can be classed as overdubs emphasizing every last words. The purpose of this, is to emphasize some key words or go crazy and emphasize every other word.

In R&B or Pop and Soul: This technique should be mainly applied in the hook of the song, to really emphasize the emotions in the chorus/hook. It gives a majestic feel.

HARMONIES

The sugar in every musical coffee, the butter on that soft croissant, the sunshine in my... ok you get the point!!! Harmonies play an intimate role in a lot of recordings; rap/r&b/country, even instrumentals sound more soothing with some harmonizing accents every here and there. You can utilize harmonies in any section of a song ranging from intro, verse, bridge, chorus or even after song is finished. The trick is to emphasize the words or parts of the song in at least 2 different octaves; higher and lower than the initial note. You can even decide to go all out and employ an acapella group consisting of alto, tenor, soprano, bass and Boyz II Men... lol. Whatever you decide, have fun with it but also make sure you pay keen attention to the pitch of each harmony part and that they are in unison, or should we say in harmony.

ADLIBS

The trick behind this bad puppy, is not to use it if not necessary. See my friends, some music sound better when they have space to breath. Dont apply adlibs to conjest every space it has to take a refreshing breath. On the contrary especially genres like hip/hop and rap, adlibs emphasizes the words being said, kinda like having your hype man on track... literally. So please think before using this wild beast because it can easily beautify or destroy your work of art.

In a NutShell

BYE BYE

We are finally at the end of this long conversation...I know right, FINALLLLLLLY.
We should now have an impressive looking session if nothing else...lol, we should now actually have a full sounding recording.

ALWAYS REMEBER: IT'S BETTER TO HAVE MORE MATERIALS TO WORK WITH.

SESSION LAYOUT

Here's what your session should look like after recording and panning. This should give you a great reference track to give to the artist or record label before main mix.

		L	LC	C	RC	R
		LEFT	LC	CENTER	RC	RIGHT
		100%	50/75%	0%	50/75%	100%
Lead	_____			L		
Double	_____			D		
Chorus	_____	C	C	C	C	C
Back Up DIFFERENT OPTIONS	_____		B		B	
	_____	B				B
Harmony DIFFERENT OPTIONS	_____		H		H	
	_____	H	H		H	H
	_____		H			H
	_____	H			H	
	_____	H	H	H	H	H
Adlib DIFFERENT OPTIONS	_____		A	A	A	