

How to archive your valuable recordings

So far millions of songs have been recorded, with many of them never released in any form and stored (or tossed) in all kinds of places.

Although most recordings ended up in an official archive, occasionally so called “lost recordings” are found back.

In many cases these recordings were lost, because the reel was stored in the wrong box or elementary information wasn't included with the recorded tape.

If you record music – anybody's music – please make sure to include, as much information as you can, with these recordings!

Best practice is at least to start with the technical info – “2-, 4-, 8-, 16-, or 24-track, 15 or 30 ips, (no) NR, 370 or 510 nWb/m, AES EQ, tails out” or “48 kHz/16-bit AIFF stereo” and the like are quite handy.

And the calibration tones? No tones? Make a note of this after you slap yourself.

We recommend that the following information is included with every recording:

1. Artist – plus all musicians or session players.
2. Date – and don't forget the year!
3. Location – studio, city/state/country, address, URL and phone number.
4. Engineer and producer names – no jokes or nicknames please!
5. Unique numbering for every tape/reel/folder/session – can be date-based.
6. If tracks were sub mixed or backed up from elsewhere, write down where from.
7. Does this item sync to something? Note the details of this.
8. Was this session for a specific project? Tell us “second solo album” or such.
9. Song Titles – even if it's some made-up-on-the-spot temporary name, anything helps!
10. Song Times – many times songs were listed out of order on the back of a reel. Times from the head of a tape can help sort this out.
11. Album Takes – indicate if a multitrack master was used to mix from, or if a mix was mastered from.
12. Source origins – for live recordings or stereo mixes: Soundboard? Audience mics? Mixed from what multitrack? Live in the studio?

By taken a moment to organize and label your work will make the difference between a recording accidentally getting tossed or saved for the future. And that's the scariest thing one can imagine – unique material lost that will never be recovered.

So please label your work!