



When you plunk down your hard-earned cash for Linda Ronstadt's latest album, you're not paying for a piece of pressed vinyl inside a cardboard jacket. You're paying for the time and talent of everyone from the engineer who recorded it to the artist who designed the cover to the truck driver who delivered it to your local record store. What goes into the making of a hit record? More than you might imagine. Answered here are 11 of the questions most commonly asked about this billion-dollar industry.

Q. Say a group decides to make an album. How long will they have to spend in the recording studio and how much will it cost?

Recording an album can take anywhere from a week to a few months. "The average time spent in the studio is about a month, but it can be less if the group has organized its songs, arrangements and roster of musicians beforehand," says Ed Cobb, owner of Producer's Workshop in Hollywood. His studio has spawned Steely Dan's *Aja* and Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*, as well as 13 other gold records in the last two years. "Steely Dan rushed through two albums in two months in 1977," Cobb says. "*Rumours* took over a year to complete, with four months solid in the studio at one point, and breaks for a concert tour. Fleetwood Mac is very picky about what it records, and the group oversees everything from pro-

ducing to engineering to mixing the final product."

Since acquiring and maintaining top-quality sound equipment is a costly proposition, hourly studio rental alone costs \$100-\$150. Most groups are thus forced to keep jamming and experimentation to a minimum. "It just costs too much," says Cobb. "Figure eight hours a day at \$100 an hour, multiply that by 30 days—that's \$24,000 right there, and that doesn't include pressing, packaging, promotional costs and musicians."

Use of an engineer is usually included in studio rental, and some studios offer "extras" like well-stocked bars, video games, free lodging and Jacuzzi baths to keep the creative juices flowing during long sessions. Santa Monica's Brother Studios, built by the Beach Boys, lures artists with a large screen video lounge, free use of the organ played on Beach Boys' classics and a location near the beach.

Q. I've heard backup musicians can make or break a record. Are there many of these musicians? How much do they get paid?

A good sessions musician can play on a disco record in the morning and jam with a progressive rock group in the afternoon. The best ones are in constant demand; they may play as many as four or five three-hour sessions a day. The musicians' union sets a base pay rate of \$121 for each session or fraction thereof, but the more experienced can get double that or more. It's not unusual for a good sessions musician to take home \$50,000 to \$70,000 per year or up.

Thousands of musicians play on an occasional record, but most producers prefer to stick to a pool of a few hundred well-known musicians who they know can get the job done without wasting precious studio time. Popular music stars like Glen Campbell, Charlie Daniels and Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page were studio musicians before they moved into the spotlight.

Q. Do recording studios keep stables of musicians who give their records a distinctive sound?

Once there were "house" bands attached to studios. Today, the trend is toward studios used by a stream of artists and record producers who bring different musicians in for sessions or use members of their own group exclusively. But house bands or clusters of musicians with their own sound are still found in recording centers like Miami, Philadelphia and Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

Thelma Houston, the Rolling Stones and Rod Stewart are among hundreds who have traveled to Muscle Shoals for the chance to record with the area's