

The Myth of the Booth

To booth or not to booth; that is the question...

We have been bombarded by photos and videos of the 'stars' singing in booths with foam on the walls. Often these are very small booths and most often these are video/movie 'sets'. Many new artists, unfamiliar with recording techniques, copy these ideas and record their vocals in coat closets adapted with foam wedge panels or foam mattress pads. The results vary.

I have always said, "There is more than one way to skin a cat..." and this is indeed true. But the success or failure of a performance or song often has nothing to do with the quality of the recording. I have seen great performances enhanced by a great recording. A poor performance/song can also benefit from a great recording.

Booths in large commercial facilities are used to record vocals at the same time as tracking other instruments and are usually large by comparison. Unless you are tracking a band in your control room, it is unlikely that you need a booth. A gobo is usually all that is needed. Notice I said, 'gobo' or portable absorption panel – not Reflexion Filter. ← These I do **not** recommend – see my [VooDoo page](#).

Many recordings from home studios, pro and amateur alike are done one track at a time. Only 'old guys', like myself, tend to record bands together and track a scratch vocal in a booth. But even when the tracks are done, I'll bring the vocalist into the control room & we'll all put on headphones and work the vocals together. The job gets done quicker and the artist doesn't feel trapped in a box. 🤖

Besides, due to the wave mechanics inside the small enclosure, the vocals would be boxy sounding with resonances as high as 400Hz without massive bass trapping. Blankets and/or foam will not work at these low frequencies. And often, proper trapping for such small enclosures would not leave any space for a performer. The treatment required for small enclosures is inversely proportional to the volume of the enclosure. This is a fact of physics and not my subjective opinion.

Bottom line; A booth does not make the vocal recording sound better. It is a tool used for isolation during a full band recording. – And you probably **don't** need one. If the reason for building a booth is because the client *thinks* it is better, then I suggest that you educate your client if possible.

Another good article about vocal booths written by Ethan Winer [is here](#).

Questions, comments, need help? Contact me here john@jhbrandt.net
-- John H. Brandt