

Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):

The relocation of a studio

Since the end of August I have a new working place. My mastering studio has moved to the other side of the street (literally). Relocating a (mastering) studio is quite a challenge so I was facing an intense yet exciting period.

First there's the new room. How does it sound? I could hardly knock on the door of the former habitants and ask them if I could carry in my speakers to check out my new room.

So on the same day we got the keys to our new house (I work at home) I immediately moved my Amphion speakers into the room that's supposed to be the new studio. I made a small setup to test the acoustics. An exciting moment because I had no idea how the room would sound. Any empty room with only a set of speakers will not sound excellent but I did this solely to get a rough idea how the new studio would sound.

The only thing that's acoustically really important to me is whether the low end of the sound spectrum is able to leak away from the room. If that doesn't happen it will be necessary to place some *bass traps* in the room to absorb those high energy low notes. A well-constructed bass trap acts as a vacuum cleaner for the low end. The excessive low end is somewhat shaved off to obtain a well-balanced presentation of the entire spectrum of sound.

I'm not a measuring kind of guy. I'm not really interested in numbers. My measurement tools are located at the sides of my head. My ears told me that the low end of my new room is remarkably even sounding. I was presented a well-balanced low end without those nasty frequency bumps found in so many rooms. The acoustics of an old house built in 1928 never cease to amaze me. Leaky as a sieve, perfect!

Anyway, after my listening session the real work started. The ceiling of the studio was plastered and I painted the walls. The existing floor is made of solid oak wood, excellent! After plastering and painting the acoustic treatment started. This is an ongoing process taking a couple of weeks, depending on the progression. I had some panels coming from the previous studio that I could reuse. I started with some absorption panels between the speakers and on the ceiling, followed by some diffusion on the ceiling right above the listening position.

Listening is key. Without listening you wouldn't be able to properly evaluate any acoustic changes made to the room. Every time I placed a panel I listened carefully to the change it made in sound and presentation. And yes, it is indeed possible to *overtreat* a room, resulting in a somewhat half dead room which to me is far from ideal. Especially for mastering I like my room to be as live as possible to represent a real life situation.

My approach to acoustics is actually not very complicated. I listen (a lot) to music I really know well. No mp3's or other lossy formats. Only wav's at full resolution. I focus on stereo imaging, the low end and last but not least: does it sound great? After that it's time to get a drink to celebrate the steps made that day. The next day I follow the exact same steps until the room is sounding great. This way it takes about a week to build an acoustically treated room.

At this moment the studio sounds even better than expected and I couldn't be happier! The relocation has been quite a challenging journey but since I started preparing the relocation over six

months ago, I didn't stumble upon insurmountable problems. It's been a lot of work but with better focus and above all better presentation of the low end it was all worth it.

Actually, let's do another relocation next year! (no, just kidding)

Renzo

Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. As the owner of premium mastering studio Masterenzo Mastering he has worked for many independent artists like Voncken, Black Nazareth and Hédi Carlee (Charlie Dée).

More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on [the web](#).