

# Music is making itself at home

More people building, buying houses with recording studios to unleash their creative sides

By Zoe Alexander  
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Speakers as tall as NBA players are thumping, the floors are shaking, and the walls are pounding. Hunkered over a mixing console the length of a Mini-Cooper are music producers Paul "DJ Paul" Beauford and Jordan "Juicy J" Houston, also known as the Oscar-winning rap group Three 6 Mafia. Seemingly unaware that the heavy bass vibrations are giving everyone a free foot massage, they're nodding to the beat and grinning proudly as they play a song from their upcoming album, "Last 2 Walk," due later this year.

No, the Memphis duo isn't holed up in an industrial recording complex that's charging by the hour. Just a few steps past the tempting gourmet cheese platter and the soundproof door is the astounding silent hallway of their multimillion-dollar, seven-bedroom, six-and-a-half-bath Bel-Air estate.

The modern manse, which they own, doubles as the set of Three 6 Mafia's reality show "Adventures in Hollywood" (MTV, 10 p.m. Thursdays) and was decorated with modern art suggested by Demi Moore, whose husband, Ashton Kutcher, is one of the show's producers.

"I'm a night owl, so having a studio at the house is real convenient," Houston says, leaning back in a leather chair behind the console. "Last night, I had an argument with someone and couldn't sleep, so I went into the studio and worked on a track. If the studio wasn't here, I might have just gone to bed mad, but instead I was productive."

Beauford, 30, and Houston, 32, are part of a growing trend in music-making — the move from outside recording facilities to home studios. Making a professional-sounding album used to mean booking time in a rented space with expensive engineers. Now, it can be a matter of rolling out of bed and entering a few keystrokes on a computer.

"Hip-hop and rap music started out with two turntables and a microphone," Beauford says. "So, for the most part, we can fit everything we need to produce a track right here."

Besides convenient, it's also economical. When the Mafia guys aren't filming their reality show at the house, they let the artists signed to their label Hypnotize Minds stay there.

## Full-service facility ... at budget prices

"This house is like a college dorm," Beauford explains. "You can record, sleep over, get something to eat in the kitchen. When you need a break, you can go out to the pool or wander somewhere in the house and write songs. For us, it's cheaper to have our artists stay here than at a hotel. This way, we don't get those big room-service bills."

Whether it's Three 6 Mafia's rap songs, the music scores of your favorite TV shows or the work of an unknown garage band, more and more music is emerging from recording setups built into spare rooms, garages or programmed on laptops from kitchen counters.

"The number of home-buyers requesting recording studios as an amenity is definitely higher than ever before," says Christine Lloyd-Maddocks, a real-estate agent for the Paramount Properties Division of Rodco Realty who specializes in homes with recording studios. Lloyd-Maddocks' Web site, [www.homeswithstudios.com](http://www.homeswithstudios.com), focuses exclusively on homes that meet this specific need.

"Many of the major recording studios have closed, and the recording process is at the point where you can do it all at home, and when you listen to the finished product, you can't tell the difference," she says.



Jordan "Juicy J" Houston, left, and Paul "DJ Paul" Beauford of rap group Three 6 Mafia live in a home with a state-of-the-art recording studio. The spread overlooks the San Fernando Valley.

Indeed, the nuts and bolts of studio engineering — the recording console, special effects and instrumental sounds — are all bundled into software such as Pro Tools, introduced by Digidesign in 1991, and a newer program called Logic. They both simulate a multitrack studio capable of recording, overdubbing, mixing, editing, even tuning up sub-par singing or placing a sound on the beat.

"A lot of us who have been in the music industry for decades wonder if all the new technology and the ability for nearly everyone to have a recording studio at home makes it too easy to make music regardless of musical training and if that is detrimental to music as an art form," says music producer Jeff Worrell, owner of Burbank-based Worrell Music Productions.

Worrell, 52, has produced music for many classic acts, including the '70s folk band America and Natalie Cole.

"I've come to the conclusion that there may not be as many virtuosos, but some modern musicians who have mastered using the new technology are expanding the way we create music," he says.

Worrell and his wife, Jane, run a full-service commercial studio in their garage called Stories in the Wood. The say it cost about \$50,000 to convert their garage and that it is worth every penny.

"Having our studio nestled in our garden, here we're surrounded by natural beauty and our dog can come in and lay at our feet ... it all helps create a magical vibe for us, and it's important because recording hit songs is about creating magic," he says.

"Another benefit to a home studio is that you can have it appointed to suit your personal needs," Worrell says.

Three 6 Mafia have their own personal chef and wine consultant, Barrie Lynn Krich, aka "The Cheese Impresario" ([www.cheeseimpresario.com](http://www.cheeseimpresario.com)), who comes to their home and creates gourmet snacks while they record.

## The drawbacks

So, are there any limitations to home recording studios?

"If you want to record with an orchestra, you have lots of live musi-

cians at once, you still have to rent a studio," explains Stewart Levin, an Emmy-nominated composer who does post-production music for TV and film.

Also, when a musician has a studio at home, the family has to adapt. "Ideally, you want to have your studio in a soundproof building on your property but one that is structurally separate from your house, like a garage or a pool house, because otherwise it can be a burden on your family," admits Levin. "You can't have drums thumping while your baby is trying to sleep, or guys in your crew walking through your house in the middle of the night."

Still, for musicians who record at home, the studio has also become what living rooms were for centuries — a place to entertain guests.

"One of the greatest luxuries is having a permanent creative space," Worrell says. "It's here when inspiration strikes, and it's here when we have friends over so we can all get together and jam. It definitely promotes bonding, and it's more entertaining than gathering around a TV set."



Jane and Jeff Worrell, above, have converted the garage of their Burbank home into a recording studio where he can produce an entire album. At left, guitars stand ready for use. Below, the garage studio has all the necessary production equipment.



John McCoy/Staff Photographer



DJ Paul, right, and Juicy J, also pictured on the cover, enjoy the view from the balcony of their Bel-Air estate/recording studio combo.