



Five great recording studios in Chicago

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Behind every amazing record is an equally amazing recording studio.

Even the most talented musicians can fall victim to shoddy recordings, so a band's decision on where to lay down, mix and master their material can make a world of difference to how they're perceived by listeners.

It's no surprise that Chicago - with a music scene so notable and diverse - is home to a host of top-notch studios geared to both indie and major acts. If you're looking to record in the Windy City, here, in no particular order, are five of the Chicagoland's best recording studios:

- **[Gravity Studios \(2250 W. North Ave., Chicago\)](#)** – Wicker Park's Gravity Studios has developed a reputation as one of the best studios in Chicagoland, and for good reason. Since 1993, artists such as The Smashing Pumpkins, Umphrey's McGee, The Walkmen, Veruca Salt, The Sounds, Ben Kweller and Silversun Pickups have produced noteworthy recordings with the studio's help. The studio is not only a viable option for widely-known bands, though. Up-and-coming local acts such as [My My My](#) and [Mr. Russia](#) have also turned to Gravity and have achieved excellent results. To learn more, visit the studio's site for an in-depth look at its [history](#) and capabilities.



Gravity Studios (gravitystudios.com)

- **[Rax Trax Recording \(3126 N. Greenview Ave, Chicago\)](#)** – With a roster of clients boasting the likes of The Smashing Pumpkins, OK GO, Plain White T's and Lucky Boys Confusion, Lakeview's Rax Trax has recorded artists in both the local and national spotlight. Chicago-based singer-songwriter [Matt Ryd](#) had this to say about his experience recording at the studio: "Rax Trax sticks out in my mind as having the perfect combination of laid-back professionalism, skilled engineers and very affordable rates. There are certainly cheaper places to record in Chicago, but even if you pay less per hour elsewhere, you won't get the same bang for your buck as you will at Rax Trax. The extra \$10 to \$15 per hour will buy you a remarkably improved quality of sound."

- **[Soma Electronic Music Studios \(2001 W Division St., Chicago\)](#)** – Scan the client list of Soma Studios - owned and operated by engineer John McEntire - and you'll find an impressive list of bands, including Spoon, Bright Eyes, Stereolab, Chin Up Chin Up, Tortoise, Wilco, Fiery Furnaces, The Sea and the Cake and many more. Visit them online for detailed information on rates as well as the studio's noteworthy recording equipment, which includes a newly refurbished Trident A-Range console - one of only 13 in the world.

- **[Gallery of Carpet Recording \(Villa Park\)](#)** – Villa Park's Gallery of Carpet was established in 2002 by producer Brian Zieske and has consistently helped up-and-coming indie bands produce outstanding, professional quality recordings. Local acts such [The Academy Is](#), [The Hush Sound](#), [Pet Lions](#), [the Rijkers](#) and [Bailiff](#) are just a few examples. In a 2007 Illinois Entertainer article, GOC client and The Long Gone Lonesome Boys leader John Milne described Zieske as a "wunderkind." "In terms of being an in-studio genius Brian's right there," Milne said in the article. "But he's not smug or arrogant. I suggested some really unusual ways of working, and although he expressed doubts, he was willing to try things and recognized what worked." The studio's Web site offers a hefty amount of information on its capabilities, gear and rates, and [this](#) recent Gapers Block interview with Zieske sheds light on GOC's history and its owner's approach to recording.

- **[Kingsize Sound Labs \(3441 W. Grand Ave., Chicago\)](#)** – Owned by tracking, mastering and mixing engineers Mike Hagler and Jeff Boyd, Kingsize can claim major acts such as Wilco, Neko Case and the New Pornographers as past clients. "The space is really cool, and Mike is a magician," said John Darragh of Chicago band and Kingsize clients [The Blisters](#). "I'm always amazed by the things he can hear in the mix and his uncanny understanding of what we're looking for. I personally love how the studio itself is this warm and comforting place tucked away in an odd warehouse on a strange block. It makes me feel ready to

create, and when you're there you feel like you're just tucked away with your band, your music and your guru.”

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