Laws For Audio Engineers

Years ago, Mickey Knight, Diacoustic Lab, purveyor of styli, lacquer blanks, and Gear created this list of laws applicable to Audio Engineers[1]. The list was then distributed at an AES convention in the 1970s when many of the persons on this list were the goto guys in their respective games. The list was too good to let it fade into obscurity…..
Rick Chinn , Uneeda Audio, AES PNW Webmaster

Name	Law	Claim to Fame
Grundman's Law	Under the most carefully controlled conditions of presure, temperature, humidity and other variables, the system will perform as it damn well pleases.	Bernie Grundman, Mastering Engineer & Educator
Knight's Law	A pat on the back is only a few centimeters from a kick in the pants.	Mickey Knight, creator of this list.
Hidley's Law	Nothing is impossible for a man who doesn't have to do the work.	Tom Hidley, Studio designer, Westlake Audio
Duncan's Law	When in doubt, mumble.	Kent Duncan, Kendun Recorders. Recording and Mastering Facility
Evan's Law	Every man has a scheme that will not work.	
Hulko's Law	A theory is better than its explanation.	Lee Hulko, mastering engineer, Sterling Sound, one of the original owners.
Storyk's Law	The amount of work done varies inversely with the amount of time spent in the office.	John Storyk, Studio Designer.
Woram's Law	Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.	John Woram, Engineer and Author Propounded by Sci-Fi writer, Arthur C. Clarke, 1962.
Nordahl's Law	Everything goes wrong at once.	Tore Nordahl, Studer & Neve. Now a consultant.
Emmerman's Law	In a crisis that forces a choice to be made among alternative courses of action, people tend to choose the worst possible course.	Mack Emmerman, Criteria Studios, Miami FL.
Tarsia's Law	The obvious answer is always overlooked.	Joe Tarsia, Sigma Sound, Philadelphia.
Tarsia's 2nd Law	When booking recording studios, pick any two out of three: Fast | Cheap | Good • You can get your product fast and cheap... but it isn't going to sound good. • You can get it cheap and good... but it won't be	Mike Tarsia, Sigma Sound, Philadelphia. (2009)

	• You can get it cheap and good... but it won't be done fast. • You can get it good and fast... but it won't be cheap.	
Snoddy's Law	It works better if you plug it in.	Glenn Snoddy, recording engineer. Discoverer of Fuzz as an effect. Fuzztone Origin
Harrison's Law	There is always an easy answer to every problem - neat, plausible and wrong.	Dave Harrison, Harrison consoles, inventor of inline console topology.
Meadow's Law	It won't work.	Glenn Meadows, Masterfonics
Westlake's Law	The first 90 percent of the project takes 90 percent of the time, and the last 10 percent takes the other 90 percent.	Westlake Audio, purveyor of Gear and studio systems.
Harned's Law	Once you open a can of worms, the only way to recan them is to use a bigger can.	Jeep Harned, founder, MCI
Schnee's Law	Anything that begins well will end badly. (note: the converse of this law is not true.)	Bill Schnee, Engineer and Producer
Stone's Law	Necessity is the mother of strange bedfellows.	Chris Stone, founder and owner of the Record Plant. aka Farber's Fourth Law.
Golden's Law	A man with one watch knows what time it is. A man with two watches is never sure. aka Segall's Law.	John Golden, mastering engineer: Artisan Sound Recorders, Kendun, K-Disc, and John Golden Mastering.
Perry's Law	If the facts do not conform to the theory, they must be disposed of.	Ken Perry, Mastering Engineer. (2009)
Garay's Law	An object will fall so as to do the most damage.	Val Garay, Engineer and Producer
Kelsey's Law	Make three correct guesses consecutively and you will establish yourself as an expert.	
Lightner's Law	If it happens, it must be possible.	Bill Lightner: mastering engineer @ K-Disc. (2009)
Steele's Law	Social innovations tend to the level of minimum well being.	
Guy's Law	The probabillity of a given event occurring is inversely proportional to its desirability	Richard Guy?

Moyssiadis' Law	As soon as you mention somethng, if it's good, it goes away; if it's bad, it happens.	Dave Moyssiadis, mastering and recording engineer (2009) ??
Capps' Law	If it can find a way to wear out faster, it will.	Capps makes disc recording styli.
Lippell's Law	If a research project is not worth doing, it is not worth doing well.	
Neumann's Law	Whoever has the gold makes the rules. (see also: Temmer's Law)	Georg Neumann, microphone God.
Calbi's Law	Nothing is as easy as it looks.	Greg Calbi, mastering engineer: The Cutting Room @ Record Plant NYC, Sterling Sound, Masterdisc. (2009)
Marino's Law	Everything takes longer than you think it will.	George Marino, mastering engineer: The Cutting Room @ Record Plant NYC, Sterling Sound.
Todrank's Law	There are two types of people: those who divide people into two types, and those who do not.	Bob Todrank, purveyor of Gear.
Brosious' Law	The components you have will expand to fill the available space.	Ham Brosious, then with Audiotechniques
Ingoldsby's Law	You cannot determine beforehand which side of the bread to butter.	Brian Inglodsby, MCA.
Merten's Law	The more time you spend in reporting on what you are doing, the less time you have to do anything. Stability is achieved when you spend all your itme reporting on the nothing you are doing.	
Sax's Law	All laws are basically false.	Doug Sax, The Mastering Lab
Zentz's Law	Inside every large problem is a small problem struggling to get out.	Alan Zentz, Mastering Engineer and studio owner.
Ludwig's Law	The other line moves faster	Bob Ludwig, Mastering Engineer
Dozier's Law	Negative expectations yield negative results. Positive expectations yield negative results.	LaMont Dozier, Producer & Songwriter.
Rettinger's Law	Nothing is ever a complete failure. It can always serve as a bad example	Michael Rettinger, Acoustician.

Ricker's Law	Experiments should be reproducible. They should all fail the same way.	Stan Ricker, Mastering Engineer, half-speed mastering God.
Boden's Law	If an experiment works, you must be using the wrong experiment.	
Hansch's Law	Work expands to fill the time available for its completion.	Jo Hansch, mastering engineer: Festival Records-Australia, Kendun, Artisan Sound Recorders, K-Disc, Dinkum.
Eberle's Laws	1. Once a job is fouled up, anything done to improve it makes it worse. 2. No matter what results are expected, someone is always willing to take it. 3. No matter what occurs, someone believes it happened according to his pet theory. 4. No matter what the result, someone is always eager to misinterpret it.	Appears to be part of Murphy's Laws.
Fulginiti's Law	In a heirarchical organization, the higher the level, the greater the confusion.	Greg Fulginiti, mastering engineer, Sterling Sound, Artisan Sound Recorders, Masterdisk
Reese's Law	There are two sides to every argument, unless a person is personally involved, in which case there is only one.	Mike Reese, mastering engineer: The Mastering Lab (2009)
Leek's Law	An experiment may be considered if no more than half your data must be discarded to obtain correspondence with your theory.	
Cato's Law	The merchandise you need the quickest will be shipped the slowest way.	I hope this isn't OJ's pal, Cato!
Gray's Law	In any collection of data, the figures that are obviously correct beyond all need of checking contain the errors. Corrollary 1: No one you ask for help will see the error either. Corrollary 2: Any nagging intruder who stops by with unsought advice will spot it immediately	Kevin Gray, mastering engineer. (2009)
Simpson's Law	There is a quantity which, when multiplied by, divided by, added to or subtracted from the answer you get, gives you the answer you should have gotten.	
Berrra's Law **Mark's Law**	In theory, there's no difference between theory and practice, but in practice, there is.	Yogi Berra Contributed by Jay Mark, 2009. Attributed to Yogi Berra, 2009.
Anderson's Law	Nothing takes 5 minutes.	Jim Anderson (2009) AES Past President

Karl's Law	When time is of the essence, all fixes have failed, and the show must go, then: one man's buzz is another man's line noise.	Karl Johnson, (2009) Audio Engineer
Hufker's Law	If at first you don't succeed, you're using the wrong hammer.	Eugene Hufker Hufker Recording St. Louis, MO
Stamler's First Law	80% of the problems in audio are caused by a bad connection someplace.	Contributed by Paul Stamler, (2009)
Stuart's Law	The worse they are, the more verses they know.	John Stuart, recordist of more folksingers than you can shake a stick at, (2009)
Temmer's Law	If I don't make or sell it, it isn't any good.	Stephen Temmer, Gotham Audio, importer of Neumann Microphones.
Wilcox' Law	In any endeavor, two thirds of the work is done by one-third of the participants.	Peter Wilcox Wannabe dobro player (by his own admission) (2009)
Blasingame's First Law	When operating in the vacuum of a studio, time moves faster than anywhere else in the Universe.	Joe Blasingame, (2009) Blasingame Audio Productions St. Louis, MO
Blasingame's Second Law	No matter how fast and effective an audio engineer works, to the paying client it's like molasses.	Joe Blasingame 2009
Simpson's Law	When you reach for the knob, the _____ player will stop playing.	Keith Simpson (2010)
Jaeger's Law	The evaluation sample is always in the 99th percentile of the performance range.	Rene Jaeger (2010) Analog Design Engineer Loud Technologies
Welti's Law	If you've worked through the problem forwards and backwards, checked your math, consulted your intellectual superiors, and made invocations to the Gods, and still your hardware setup is giving the wrong result, you will find that it's a bad cable.	Todd Welti (2009) Staff Scientist Harman International
von Recklinghausen's Law	If it measures good and sounds bad, it is bad. If it Measures bad and sounds good, you've measured the wrong thing.	Daniel von Recklinghausen (1925-2011) Technical Director, H.H. Scott and many other companies.
Molberg's Law	If it sounds good, it is good!	Keith Molberg M. Mus. Professor of Recording Arts @ Briercrest College and Seminary Submitted by Brendan Clace

		Submitted by Brendan Clace (2011)
Boden's Law of ProTools	Everything's easy, all the time.	Mike Boden (2011) Recording Engineer
Pfaffle's Law	Digital audio does not exist unless it has been backed up 3 separate times on 3 separate drives	Tom Pfaeffle Late owner of The Tank Studios (murdered in a bizarre incident)
Olmstead's Law	After all is said and done, a hell of a lot more is said than done!	Frederick Law Olmstead (1822-1903) Journalist and Landscape Designer (did Central Park in NYC)
Trimble's Law	Anytime there is a button somewhere, some idiot will try to mess with it.	Tom Trimble Director of Student Unions, University of Toledo
Gaston's Law	If you can't figure out why you're not hearing anything, it's because one (and only ONE) button needs to be pushed. The angrier you become, the more obvious button."	Leslie Gaston (2010) Assistant Professor of Recording Arts, University of Colorado
Chinn's Corollary to Gaston's Law	In any DAW or digital mixing surface, the button you can't find is on the menu you just visited.	Rick Chinn (2011) Uneeda Audio (and keeper of this list).
Murphy's Monitor Law	The monitor levels decrease as soon as the show starts	Ralph Kaiser (2012) TD, University of Guadalajara