

Mastering preparation and delivery

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This document is made to help you to make the right decisions when delivering your mixes for mastering. This document contains some practical tips and tricks to make things just a little bit easier for the both of us.

Delivery of mixes, what to do and what NOT to do

File format



I prefer 24bit or 32bit float files, 16bit is also acceptable. Print/bounce/render your project in the sample-rate that you worked in. Let's say you did your whole project in 48khz, print in 48khz. If necessary, I will take care of the Sample Rate Conversion (SRC). File formats should be mixed down stereo WAV or AIF.

File formats should be WAV or AIF. **MP3's or other lossy formats are NOT suitable for mastering.** Also saving an mp3 as a wav file doesn't make it a wav file, it's still a lossy mp3 file.



Filenames



Please make filenames as short as possible without becoming confusing. The most desirable filename is simply the song number, title and mixversion (if applicable).

This is not the way your filenames should look like.

Bounce FINAL MIX.wav
Bounce FINAL FINAL mix.wav
Bounce FINAL FINAL mix (really).wav
Bounce FINAL FINAL mix (now for real).wav
Untitled Bounce FINAL Mix (please use this version).wav
Untitled Bounce FINAL Mix (please use this FINALversion).wav

What also happens is this, the mix in 3 revisions.

Bounce.wav
Bounce.wav
Bounce.wav

Correct filenames should look something like this:

01 song 1 v1.2.wav
01 song 1 v1.3.wav
01 song 1 v2.0.wav
02 another song v1.1.wav
02 another song v2.1.wav

In case of an (CD) album with ISRC codes, CD text, UPC/barcode etc, please use [this excell sheet](#) to give me all the information I need. To learn more about ISRC and UPC/EAN codes [please click here](#).

Levels



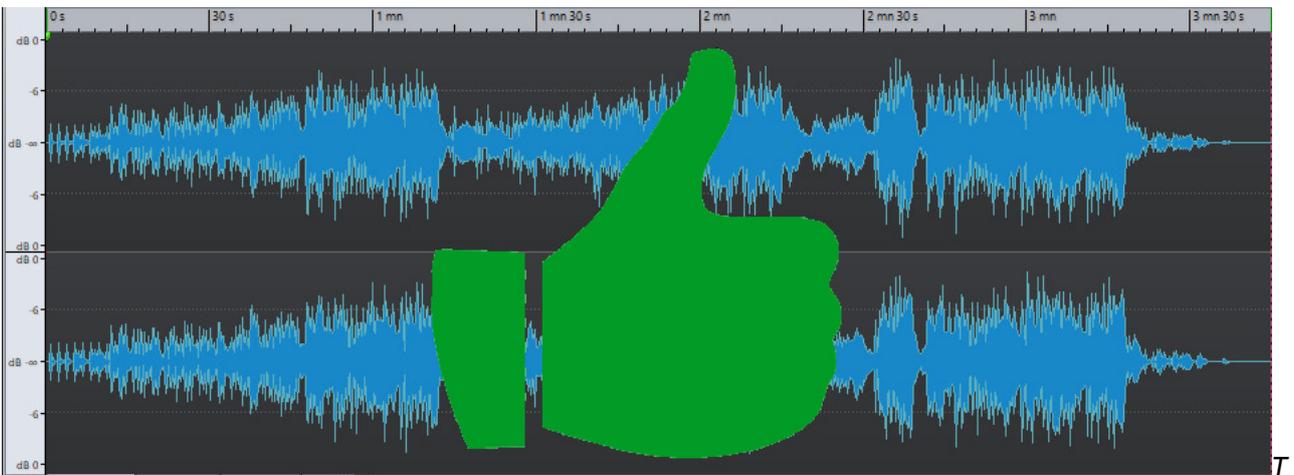
Your mixes should have a decent level **without reaching or exceeding 0 dBfs (digital clipping)**. Digital clipping can NOT be undone during mastering. When the damage is done, there is no way back.. Don't be afraid to print your mixes 'not loud enough', in the digital world there is plenty of headroom and it doesn't really matter whether the highest peak is at -1 or -50 dBfs (*and please forget about the unwritten -6dB rule, it's a hoax*). I will take care of the final loudness.



This is what a clipped/limited file looks like. NOT suitable for mastering.



Max peak is at -6dBfs , it is still limited/clipped and NOT suitable for mastering.

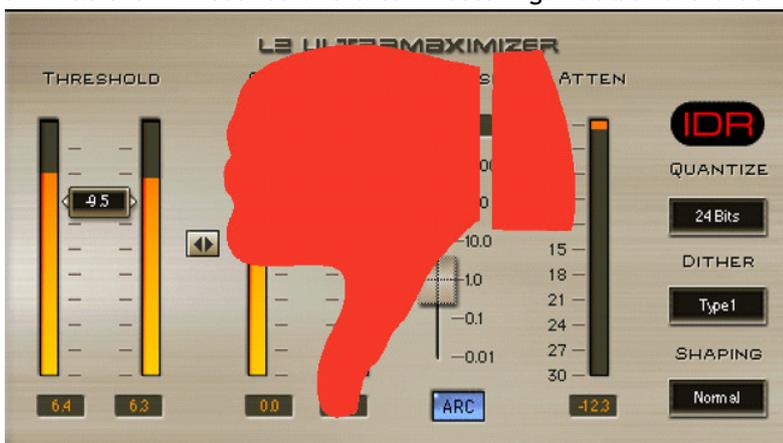


This is what a proper level mix looks like, no clipping and enough headroom.

Master/Mix Bus processing



A lot of people use masterbus processing nowadays, which could come in handy to get a rough idea of what the mix sounds like after mastering. But beware that for mastering, masterbus processing is not always the way to go.



When it comes to some buss compression, tape/tube sound or EQ that adds something to the sound, don't worry too much, that could/will be fine. **limiting/clipping on the masterbus is far from fine and it will be really hard or even impossible to make a decent master.**

A general rule for processing on the master bus is: if you use it to make things louder, remove it!

Starts and ends of your music



Most DAW's let you have 0 offset at the start of a track when printing. This can sometimes lead into the problem that, for instance, the attack of the first bass-drum is missing.

It's best to print/bounce with some silence in front and at the end of the track. That's a lot better than missing the first attack of the downbeat or that really important reverb-tail at the end. Starts and ends will be taken care of during mastering.

Dithering

Send me the files in the bit- and sample-rate you recorded, **don't up or down-sample and don't use dithering**. Dithering is something that I will take care of during/after mastering in the correct way.

Quality Check



After you printed your mixdown with all the tips I just gave you, it's time to double check before sending it out! **Do this check by actually LISTENING to the complete mixdown from start to end**, preferably on a decent set of headphones. Check for mix/edit mistakes, muted stems, glitches, noise, distortion and everything else. It won't be the first time that after printing there are 'hiccups' in the audio or you hear things that only show up after doing the final mixdown. **If you are 100% sure that everything is OK it's time to send.** But before doing so, make sure you listen to it again..

Don't just print your mix and consider it done.

Realtime is not always the same as offline..

Keep in mind that YOU are the only one responsible for problems in the mixes you send. If you found a mistake in your mixdown after the initial mastering I will have to charge you for that.

Master types

In the digital era it's no exception that I deliver 4 or 5 types of masters for one project. The list below will give you an idea of file formats that could be delivered.

- 24bit 96khz hi-res
- 16bit 44.1khz
- Mastered For iTunes (*we are a certified MFiT provider*)
- Vinyl masters
- CD/DDP
- MP3/AAC/FLAC

Please tell me before we start mastering what formats you will need so that I know what to do. Some formats will be free of charge, some other formats I will charge. Check my [rates page](#) for more info. If I didn't hear what file formats you want, you will receive masters in 16bit 44.1khz and in the original file-format. For instance if you delivered 24bit 96khz, you will receive a 2496 file next to the 1644 file.

Some things to consider

- Releasing an album? Track-order, pauses, fades etc are really important for the overall flow of an album
- ISRC codes? [Get your codes before the mastering takes place](#)
- Think about the fact [if you want to participate in the loudness war or not.](#) *The war is over, nobody won.*

Others

I have a lot of other helpful information on the [FAQ page](#).

If you read this PDF and the FAQ page and you are still not sure if what you are doing is the right thing, please contact me and ask. I am here to help you!

With kind regards,

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