MASTERING MATERIAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. Reference

Be sure to reference how your mix sounds on a few different sound systems. Listen to the mix on phones, car stereos, laptop speakers, ear-buds and any other listening environments you may be used to. This will help you decide if your mix is truly finished and you've made it sound as good as it possibly can, before it is mastered.

While listening to your song on different sound systems, be sure to also listen to commercially released mixes to compare. Hearing how it compares to commercial released material will provide important information about what you need to change to reach a "professional" sounding mix, prior to mastering.

2. Headroom

When mixing and exporting from your DAW, try to keep the peaks of your sound hitting not too much above -6 dBFS. This measurement should be done in dBTP / True Peak. The RMS average of your waveform should be somewhere around -18 dBFS or so.   Remember, you can mix with bus compression to hear its effects, but leave the final dynamics off when exporting.

3. Quality Check / Cleanup

Listen to each of the tracks in your song in isolation from start to finish, in order to identify and remove any leftover noise, such as edits, breaths, room noise, etc.

Delete any empty regions. Often times, visually empty still clips contain low level sound. If not removed, this sound will increases the overall noise floor of your mix, making the master less articulate.

Certain plugins emulate the analog noise of the vintage hardware they imitate. Make sure those noise settings are all turned off unless you absolutely want them in there.

Apply very short (5-10 millisecond) fades to the start and end all the clips in your session to make sure any transitions to and from silence are smooth.

Using headphones, solo and listen to each individual track in your song to make sure there are no pops or clicks.

4. Master Output

If you choose to use some light compression and EQ on your master bus, be sure to do it very gently. Do not use limiting or heavy compression.

Too much mix processing on your DAW's master stereo output will limit what can be accomplished during the mastering processes. It prevents making your mix sound the best that it can.

When submitting material for mastering, it is best practice to stay away from the following processes on your master stereo bus:

Stereo wideners

Limiters

Harmonic Distortion / Saturation

EQ or Compression changing the signal by more than 2 dB

5. Sibilance

Sibilance refers to the high frequency components of certain vocal sounds, particularly audible with "S" "Sh" and "T". Be sure to address any sibilance issues on your vocal tracks with a de-esser, prior to submitting your material for mastering, as it will make the resulting mix sound a lot better.

6. Export

When exporting from your DAW, choose the appropriate high quality export formats. This will help to ensure creation of the appropriate file, from which we create a high definition master.

In order to accomplish this, there are 3 parameters to be aware of:

Sample Rate - Export your mix at the same sample rate at which you began your project/recorded your tracks. If you began your project at a sample rate of 44.1k, export your mix at 44.1k. You can export at a higher sample rate (48, 88.2) if you want. Never less than 44.1 kHz

Bit Depth - Use "32 bit floating point" resolution (if your DAW

supports) or "24 bit" as your bit depth, if that's the highest available bit resolution.

File Type - Export your mix in .WAV, .AIFF or .SD2. Do not use MP3 files or files created from the conversion of MP3 files. Attempting to master from MP3 sources will result in sonically inferior masters.

7. Metadata (bonus)

Find out from record label or aggregator as to whether you need ISRC Codes, CD-Text, or ID3 metadata

Metadata example :

- Artist Name(s)

- Album or EP Name

- Track Names

- Track Order (if an Album or EP)

- Artwork