

Delivery Specification, Recommendations and Other Information

To help assure the integrity and quality of your files and provide the necessary information before mastering your work, it is important to read the following.

- Please provide the files in a lossless format such as .wav. The desired spec is 32 or 64 bit floating point at the original samplerate of your mix, without applying any dither or conversions. If a lower bit depth has been used prior in the process, still render your mix at this bit depth. Analog prints to a second and separately clocked system don't require this.
- Leave some space before and after your mix, as this allows for more options in sequencing EP's/albums. If you have specific wishes for fades, seamless transitions or pauses between tracks, these can be difficult to communicate. An audio guide can be helpful in those cases.
- Has undesired noise remained in your mix and is it also audible before or after the actual track length? Please let me know, leave this intact and provide some seconds which only/mostly contain this noise. In some cases this will allow for precise noise suppression that doesn't compromise your mix. Careful judgment will be used concerning artifacts.
- If you have used bus processing at the end of your chain, please provide the mix without any final bus processing as well. Although some bus processes can be useful in mixing, more often than not they can lead you to stray from focussing on your *relative* balance, which is what mixing is about. Because this is a controversial topic, you can learn more about why in the appendix.
- Singles will be treated as singles. The best albums have cohesion and relationships between songs, they need the right sequencing, starts, stops and pauses. If singles are to be mastered before the rest of an upcoming album, most of this context can not be taken into account. Please keep in mind that for this reason, singles will be treated as such in the mastering process. In the case of an album or EP, for the best results, I recommend having it mastered in its entirety and deriving singles from that.
- If you would like to have a mastered single changed for an album release, there will be a custom additional fee. For example, creating transitions that weren't there in the single or revising the master in other ways. In certain cases doing so will essentially create an album version of the track which may require a new ISRC code.

- Deliver your material using a transfer service that doesn't alter your data. Services like messaging apps are not always suitable options, because they can alter the files in various ways. WeTransfer is an example of a suitable method. Zip your files before uploading them, even if it's just one file. This will help ensure what I receive is an exact copy and reduces the amount of data in the cloud.
- You will receive the mastered material as a WeTransfer link in 24 bit, at the same samplerate as your mix. These files are suitable for all streaming services.
- Please let me know what formats you will be releasing on:

Are you releasing on CD? You will also receive 16 bit 44.1 KHz files. If your CD's will be produced by a professional manufacturer you will also receive a DDP.

Are you releasing on vinyl? I do not offer vinyl cutting services. Therefore the responsibility of transfer to vinyl is with your cutting engineer/vinyl manufacturer. Please send me the desired delivery format of your cutting engineer and any other wishes.

- It's your responsibility to provide ISRC codes in a timely manner if you're releasing on CD. I will need these to embed onto the DDP for your CD manufacturer. It's recommended to do this to protect your rights as a music maker. These codes are supposed to remain the same on all platforms, such that each track has a unique code, which is the same for that track no matter the release format.

If you're with a label, you can refer to them for ISRC codes. If you're an independent artist the following may be useful:

Do you get your codes from an online distributor like DistroKid? Then you probably get your codes after uploading your masters, which means you will have to do this in time to coincide with a CD release.

Because the production of a CD usually has to be planned in advance, it is recommended to acquire ISRC codes separately before uploading. You can get ISRC codes in The Netherlands at SENA. You will have to choose a distributor (and perhaps a certain subscription/service) which allows using your own ISRC codes. This will guarantee that the codes are the same on all platforms and all your official releases can be traced to the rightful owner.

For more information about ISRC codes and how to acquire them please visit:

<https://www.sena.nl/en/music-creators/right-holders/isrc>

- Have you already sent me your mix and do you have a new version? Maybe something went wrong in the export or you changed your mind about something. Of course this can always happen. Just let me know what changed in the new version. In case this happens again or a new version is essentially a remix, this requires me to make a new master, which will be charged as such.
- When sending new versions, if possible, make your export region the same in samples. This helps keep timing events in the mastering session the same. Also add version numbers in the file name.
- Please give a heads-up if the projected delivery date of the material can not be met.

I highly appreciate your trust! If you have any questions or would like to plan a call, please reach out on mail, whatsapp or text:

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Appendix: Final mix bus processing

Bus processing in mixing is a controversial topic, because there is no overall right or wrong. There should definitely be space for creative applications of bus processing and it can be part of a good workflow. However, I hope the following examples will underline the importance of separating mixing and mastering and how bus processing can disrupt this, having negative consequences for the final result.

Good:

The whole mix is too dark, except the snare. I use a low shelf on the mix bus to attenuate. I use a low shelf on the snare to boost its low end.

Using a transparent EQ, this would be the same as individually attenuating each channel except the snare. We have now used a bus process as a convenience to fix a mixing issue.

Good:

While I'm mixing I decide everything is too dark, although I like my relative balance. I use a high shelf and now my mix is not too dark and still balanced.

This is great, because it means you weren't wrong about the balance. It still works when centered around a different, more appropriate frequency. Now you know that the darkness is not a relative/mixing issue, your mix is ready for mastering, high shelf or no high shelf.

Bad:

While I'm mixing I decide everything is too dark, although I like my relative balance. I use a high shelf to boost and now my mix is centered around a more appropriate frequency, but it doesn't sound balanced anymore. I keep the dark balance, because it was good and send it off for mastering.

Apparently the great balance you thought was there, wasn't there. Getting your mix centered around a more appropriate frequency has revealed things that you couldn't catch before, possibly because of masking or sub-optimal monitoring in the low end. A (EQ) rebalance in the mix is required to fix the core issue and will lead to better final results.

Bad:

I'm happy with the relative frequency balance of elements in my mix, but it doesn't sound coherent. After I'm done mixing, I use a compressor on the final mix bus to 'glue' everything together.

Although this might actually be a good solution to the problem, it may also not be. Perhaps there is not enough overlap between elements in your mix. The balance might sound very clear and revealing, but it lacks character because elements don't interact in interesting and musical ways. Sure, a compressor might remedy some of that, but is it the best solution in the mixing stage? By consolidating this non-mixing choice, the mastering engineer will not hear the actual mix to guide their judgment. Since compression is a non-linear process, it's also impossible to go back. At this point you've eliminated both the chance of improving your mix and eliminated possible options your mastering engineer might have.

Worse:

I'm happy with the relative frequency balance of elements in my mix, but it doesn't sound coherent. I use a compressor on the final mix bus to 'glue' everything together and then continue mixing into this bus compressor.

In this scenario an extra issue gets added to the previous example. You've just set up a compressor to sound good on your mix, then you're changing your mix. By the time you've made a bunch of changes, chances are those compressor settings are no longer optimal or appropriate. All the while, you have been monitoring through this compressor, not knowing what your mix sounds like without it. This can turn into a can of worms very quickly as both the mix before and after the compressor can be compromised.

Not all these examples are set in stone, especially the last one. You should definitely take creative freedom and do what you feel is best, so take it with a pinch of salt. The most important takeaway is that mixing should be about relative balance and introducing bus processing is not a valid strategy if it only accomplishes something outside of that scope. Guarding the line between mixing and mastering helps you work on your mix in a constructive manner, providing the mastering engineer with a mix that is fit for the next stage.