MIXING MUSIC
WHAT IS MIXING?

• The final balancing of track levels.
• The final processing of individual tracks.
• An artistic rendering of the music elements to create a finished product that conveys the artist/producer’s vision.
APPROACHING A MIX

THINGS TO CONSIDER

• What are the most important elements?

• What tracks create the rhythmic foundation and groove?

• Can the lyrics be heard clearly or should they be?

• Where in 3D space is the most effective placement of especially the primary important tracks?
LISTEN & ANALYSE

• Are you wanting your mix to sound similar to another commercial mix? If so listen and compare. What’s different in how your mix sounds?

• Listen for differences in the EQ or tonal nature of tracks.

• Listen for differences in left/right placement and depth. How much reverb is used? Are the different sections, Intro, Verse, Chorus, Bridge etc. contrasting enough?
SETTING UP YOUR MIX
(ONE WAY)

• Bring up all the tracks and find a rough balance.

• Evaluate what’s lacking. Is the rhythm section supporting the groove? Are some tracks fighting others? (Try muting tracks to see)

• Can you hear the most important elements clearly, especially in Vocal based tunes the lyrics?

• Is there depth and width to your stereo image?

• What amount of reverb or ambience is right?
TRICKS TO BRING CLARITY TO YOUR MIXES

• High pass filter tracks to reduce combined “mudd”.

• E.Q. similar frequency ranged instruments differently.

• Pan similar frequency ranged instruments away from each other.

• Use different reverb on instruments you want to sound distinct.

• Make sure your reverb “tail” is appropriate for the tunes tempo.
MIXING IS MOST EXCITING WHEN DYNAMIC

• Try different levels and or effect in different sections.

• Eliminate tracks that don’t contribute.

• If soloing individual tracks always listen to how changes effect the entire mix.

• Use effects that compliment the mood or style.

• After mixing listen to your mix on different systems and different levels.
IF POSSIBLE TAKE YOUR TIME

• Live with a mix for a few days.
• Don’t listen to a mix for a few days then listen again.
• Get opinions from professionals (if possible)
• Take breaks if you get fatigued.
MASTERING
WHAT IS MASTERING?

• The preparation of the final mixes to create the final product(s) i.e.: CD, DVD, Download etc.

• The final opportunity to shape the overall sound with E.Q. and/or dynamic processing.

• Sequencing the tunes in the final order with the correct track to track time spacing.

• The creation of the Final Master for replication or distribution.
WHY YOU NEED A MASTERING ENGINEER

• A fresh perspective on the music and sound
• Experience with different genres and what’s been successful mastering.
• Specialized knowledge, software and/or hardware.
• Specialized skills.
DELIVERY

• The best way to deliver a CD master is by the creation of DDP files which create an exact replica of the CD to be used to create the glass master.

• DDP files can include: UPC or EAN (barcodes) and sometimes copy write protection by the use of IRSC codes that are unique to each tune and embedded.

• If creating a file that is compressed into an MP3, ACC etc. It’s important to leave at least 1.5db headroom otherwise distortion can occur.
LOUDNESS

• For many years the mastering engineer was asked to make the master as “LOUD AS POSSIBLE” in an effort to have the music have more “impact” relative to other mixes. (louder sounds better mentality)

• The loudness wars are mostly over due to loudness normalization.

• Youtube and Spotify among others now use loudness normalization so that a heavily compressed (loud) track is turned down proportionately so that average level is equal to a tune that isn’t compressed as much.