

How to prepare your music for mastering

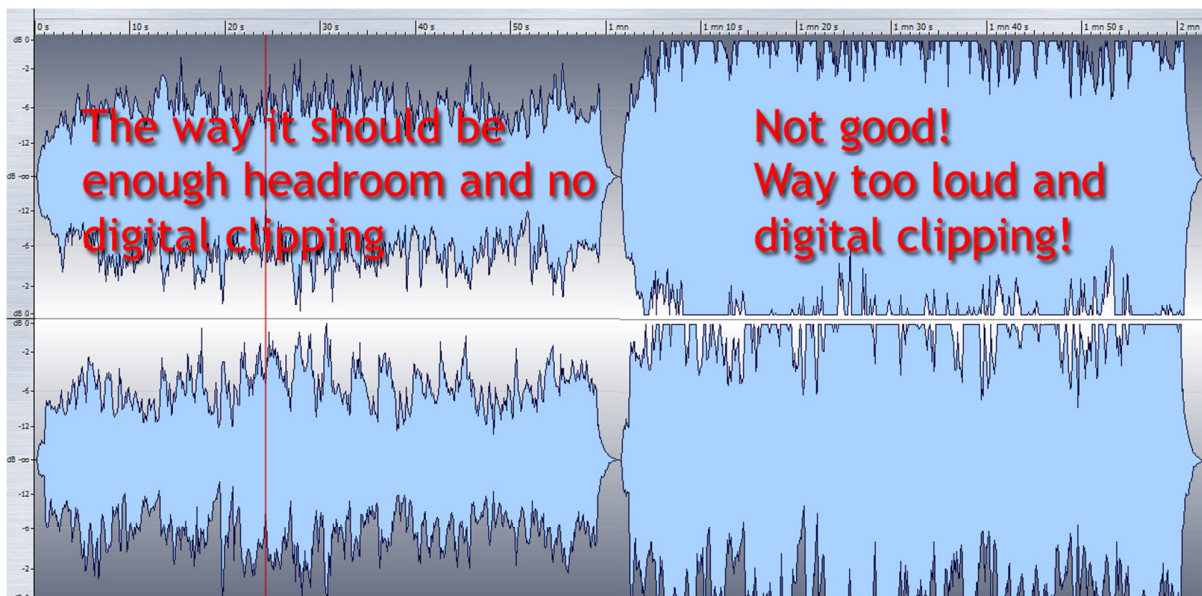
There are quite a lot of people asking us questions about how to prepare your music for mastering. That is why we have made this document with some tips and tricks to make things just a little bit easier for the both of us.

Format:

We prefer 24bit/44.1khz files. 16bit is also OK and 32bit floating point is even better. Even though we can handle files up to 192khz, we believe that samprates higher then 44.1khz are really not necessary. File formats can be WAV or AIF, mp3's are not suitable for mastering.

Levels:

Your mixes should have a decent level without EVER reaching 0 dBfs. In the digital world It doesn't matter all that much whether the highest peak is at -1 or -6 dBfs. One really important thing: **NO digital clipping!** Digital clipping can NOT be undone during mastering. When the damage is done, there is no way back..



Mix Bus processing:

Please do NOT apply any processing on the mix bus. There should simply be NO limiter, compressor, finalizer, exciter, stereo widener, tape simulator, EQ or such on the master output. That is something going to be taken care of during the mastering process in a much better way than you can do yourself. In other words, **don't 'pre-master'**.

Individual channel compression and group compression is of course part of the mix, but signal processing on the summing bus can really make our work very hard because it limits later choices and may create unforeseeable artifacts.

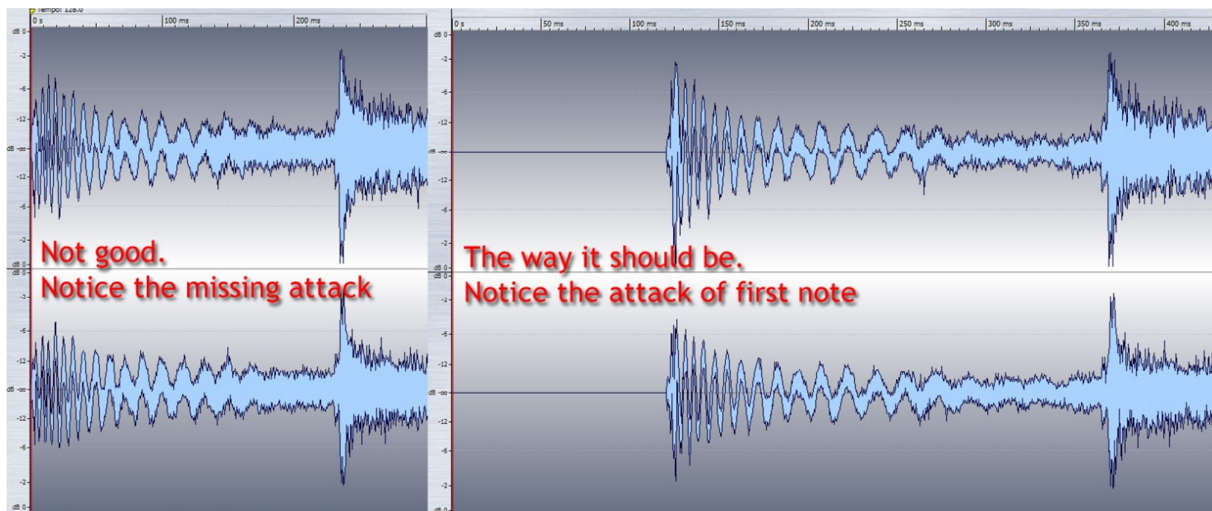
If you really like the way your processing sounds on the mix bus, we suggest you send mixdowns together with the un-processed files too. They can sometimes be a useful pointer as to your sound preferences.

A general rule for processing on the mix 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 seconds offset at the start of a track when rendering. This can sometimes lead into the problem that, for instance, the first bass drum is missing the first attack of the sound. It's best to render with something like 200ms of silence in front of the track. Same goes for the end of a track. It's better to have some silence at the end, then missing that really important reverberant tail at the end.

Starts and ends will be taken care of during mastering.



Others:

If you are not sure if what you are doing is right, simply contact us and ask!

With kind regards,
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