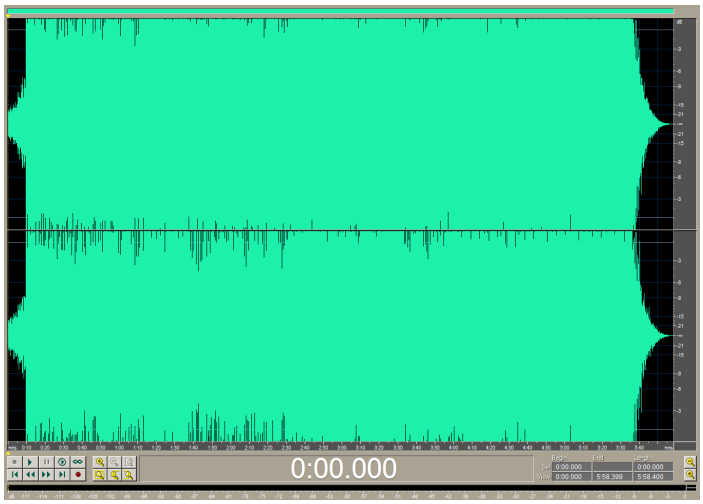
Da Goose MASTERING

Some info on loudness *(© Jeffrey de Gans v4.0 13-09-2018)*

There is more to mastering than making your music loud!

Even though more and more people realize that squashing music is not the way to go, I still have to explain to some people about the consequences of overly loud masters. That is why I decided to make this page about loudness in music. I hope you find it useful.

How loud do you want your music to sound



There is/(was?) a thing called 'loudness war'. In short it means that artists and labels want to sound as loud as possible to 'stand out from the rest'. According to label/A&R managers, artists etc, you will sell more music if you make it louder. But please ask yourself, WILL you actually sell more or have more streams when it's louder? One pretty good example of a great selling record NOT participating in the loudness war is Daft Punk – RAM.

There is a big difference between sounding loud and sounding good. **Loudness ALWAYS compromises sound-quality**. Without some dynamics your music will sound flat and lifeless. It may sound loud and impressive at first, but will it still sound good after a few minutes? It might also sound strange at first, but music with a bit of dynamics will sound LOUDER than heavily compressed/limited/clipped/squashed music.

Radio and loudness

A common misconception is that a loud master will sound better and louder on the radio. The opposite is true. Radio uses large amounts of (multiband) compression, clipping and limiting and pushing those processors doesn't help. Radio-stations use processors like the Orban Optimod. This is a take out from the manual of one of those processors:

"There is a myth in the record industry that applying "radio style" processing to CDs in mastering will cause them to be louder on air or will reduce the audible effects of on-air processing. In fact the opposite is true: these CDs will not be louder on air, but they will be audibly

distorted and unpleasant to listen to, lacking punch & clarity. We hope that the record industry will come to its senses when it hears the consequences of these practices on air"

Clubs and loudness
Another misconception is that music in clubs sounds better and louder when it's squashed, the opposite is true again. Amplifiers have a peak and RMS value. Peak values are always higher then RMS (average) values. With no dynamic range it will 'not make use' of those peaks and trust me, amplifiers do not like digital clipping (square waves) at all.

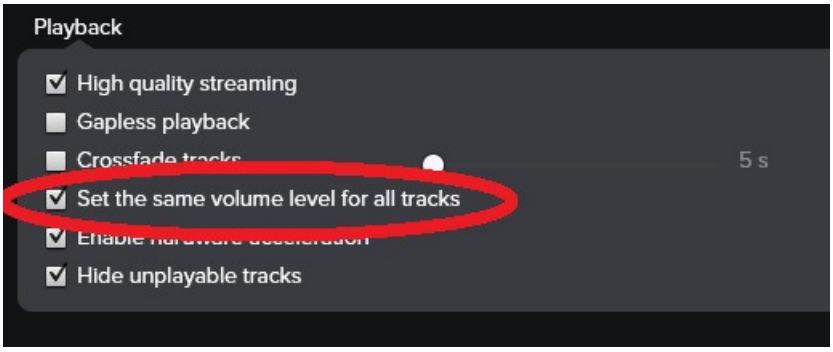
Loudness potential

In case you are not convinced yet and you still want your master to be (too) loud, please consider this; **Each song has its own loudness potential**. The final loudness of a master is not only determined by the mastering process but is a matter of arrangement, production recording and mix quality. A simple arrangement with just a few, but well-chosen sounds will always have more loudness potential than a big arrangement with a lot going on simultaneously.

I know when your song has reached its limit. Pushing things beyond that limit will gradually deteriorate the sound quality causing audible distortion and squashed dynamics.

The solution to the loudness war > Loudness Normalization!

More and more people realize that going (too) loud doesn't make you win the war, because actually, there is nothing to win. Just like in a 'regular war', there will be only losers..



Things have changed in the last couple of years, and 2017 is the year where things have changed a LOT. Nowadays people are listening to streaming services like Spotify, Apple music, Deezer, Tidal, YouTube etc. and they all have one thing in common; Loudness Normalization. Basically this means, **your music will always play back at the same perceived loudness**. So wait a minute.. It doesn't help to make my master that loud? No.. it doesn't matter how loud your master will be, it will simply be turned down until it reaches the appropriate level.

Loudness Normalization in 2018

The end of May 2017 was a big game changer when it comes to the use of loudness normalization, because that is where Spotify decided to stop using the (too loud) -11dB LUFS standard and started following the -14dB LUFS 'standard' that all/most streaming services are using. And since Spotify is market leader in streaming services, this means a LOT.

In practice, this means that all (yes, ALL) music on Spotify is played back at -14dB LUFS perceived loudness. So a really/over the top loud -5dB LUFS master will be turned down in level by 9dB.

Hooray! The end of the loudness war! ☺ OK.. there are still some things to keep in mind and the war is still not 100% over, but we are really close now. One of the things that could be done better, is that instead of **track normalization** it's better to use **album normalization**, but I personally think (and hope) that streaming services will soon default to using that instead.

In practice

Now you might think, **'I don't think it's a good idea to make my music too dynamic' and I totally agree on that** In practice you want pop, rock, dance etc to be not TOO dynamic for various reasons. For example, when listening to music on your headphones in the train or when you drive your car on a highway, you don't want the background noise to mask the softer breaks and things. So there should be dynamic range compression going on, but now you have the option to decide how much. **You don't have to focus on winning the loudness war.**

Quite recently Ian Sheperd came up with a website to check how much your music will be turned down on streaming services. Personally I don't like the fact that it's called a penalty, but still worth checking out I think. loudnesspenalty.com

Besides regular digital/CD masters, I also offer optimized masters with streaming services in mind. The main focus is sound, not loudness.

I know how to make things really LOUD if you still want to, but in the end good sounding music, with the right amount of dynamics will always win. It's up to you..

There is more to mastering than making your music loud!

With kind regards,

Jeffrey de Gans

Jeffrey de Gans | Da Goose Music

www.dagoosemusic.nl

info@dagoosemusic.nl

+31 6 53998686

An Eco Friendly Studio