

Title:

The Inside Scoop On Music Mastering

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Summary:

Discover why music mastering is such an important part to every record and get hot tips to make sure you get the most bang for your buck!

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Article Body:

Music mastering is an essential part of every hit record. Yet, few new (and even some "established") musicians have a good understanding of what mastering is and why they need it.

This often leads to many selecting the wrong mastering studio... and making many unnecessary mistakes in the recording and music mixing phases (which affects the mastering later on).

This is why below are the 5 most frequently asked questions about music mastering:

1. What exactly is music mastering?

Mastering is the final phase before your CDs, Vinyls, DVDs or MP3 files are produced. It's the last chance to get the sound right... and for errors to be fixed.

Mastering transforms your music from a "raw" sound into a professional, "radio-ready" sound. It gives your tracks punch, loudness, clarity, and completes your final vision.

2. Why is it so important and do I really need it?

All major labels have their artists' records mastered before they're released. But, often many independent artists/labels wonder if they should go-ahead and get it done.

The answer is a big YES! If you want to make the right impression, then at a minimum you need to get your demo professionally mastered.

Because just think about when your demo hits the A & R managers' desk, what's going to stand-out... the professionally mastered demos (yours) or the poor quality ones?

By having your music mastered, then you're going to increase your chances of getting signed and creating loyal fans.

Moreover, the single biggest advantage professional mastering offers are the "fresh" skilled and independent ears put to your music.

Because after working on your music for long hours in the studio, you often become too close to your work. And, as a result, your ears can't help but get used to mistakes.

Your ears begin to hear mistakes as normal. It's the same effect as when you are living near a heavy-traffic street - after living their for a few weeks, you will not wake-up anymore at night because your ears get used to those sounds and blends them out.

With the mastering engineer's help, you make sure you don't have any major errors in your music and gain advice (from an experienced professional) in what needs to be done to help get the perfect sound!

3. How much should I pay?

Mastering studios charge a wide range of fees. You can pay anywhere from \$5 a track or up to hundreds of dollars per hour for the most well-known engineers.

The reason there's such a large amount of fees is that there are many "budget studios" that have arisen online. These studios are often a single person who does all his or her work on the home computer.

Since these people usually don't have much experience, they often miss important problems and don't know what to look for (every track has its own unique problems). Additionally, they don't have tools a professional mastering studio offers to do it right.

This is compared to the more expensive engineers who have years of experience and know-how in creating a "hit" sound.

4. How important is the mastering equipment?

Professional mastering studios spend thousands of dollars on their equipment. The equipment gives them full flexibility in making a wide-range of adjustments.

However, when looking at the equipment a studio has, you should not focus too much on it. Instead, and more important, you want to look for an engineer who also has experience with it.

It takes years for an engineer to feel fully comfortable with all of the equipment and the adjustment it allows. This is especially true when learning how to adjust for different genres of music.

For example, the equipment is often used differently for Rock music than Classical.

5. Should I use an online or offline mastering studio?

Online mastering is a recent phenomenon. It has only been in the last few years that it has really begun to take off.

There are now hundreds of different people offering mastering services via the internet. Many of these people are amateurs (and can actually make you music sound worse). While, at the same time, some of the most famous and well-known engineers have now moved online.

Online mastering offers many advantages over offline studios. These include the speed at which you can transfer your music and communicate with the engineer. You aren't stuck with the time-limitations a booked session in a offline mastering studio has.

Additionally, you also don't have to deal with weeks of waiting to go back and forth with the engineer using "snail mail" or booking several times in the studio for revisions. You can also get access to the engineer anytime using email.

In an offline studio when working via snail mail, it may often be hard to get a hold of the engineer to share your ideas.

Moreover, an online mastering engineer has experience with more international music. In offline studios, the engineer often only works with a certain type of music that's popular in the area.

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