Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):
Differences between mastering engineers

In Holland there are quite a few mastering engineers (ME's) who work professionally. Besides those professional engineers there is a vast range of musical styles to master.
Do engineers have preferences? And do they excel in certain styles of music and in what way do they project their vision on masters they deliver?

These questions are hard to answer individually. The vision (sound wise, that is) of an ME says something about his or her profile and it's this profile that speaks to a group of people (artists, producers, mixing engineers) who work in specific genres of music.

In this way there's some kind of free enterprise going on. Different ME's serve different parts of the music market. A market based on networking and promotion, but also a market based on vision, appearance and profile.

The appearance starts with Google (for those customers who don't know you yet). Mr. G is one of our best friends when it comes to exposure on the internet.
After some research people looking for great mastering have narrowed their choices to a couple of mastering studios. They take a look at our website, they search for reviews and listen to some music mastered by those studios and they're ready to make their final decision!

The music market actually works quite simple. Most engineers or studios get chosen by their track record. And ME's always have some differences in their track records.
An engineer who has a focus on natural sound and dynamics will probably be asked sooner to engineer a jazz recording. An ME who's vision/focus is to use colouring to get to the desired (fat) sound will more likely be asked to master hip hop or other urban styles of music.

Of course, this is just an example, the market is much more complicated than that. An engineer needs to continually grow to expand his or her focus, vision and -technical- skills.

And besides, an engineer needs to have a wide profiling focus. Saying *no* to too many jobs isn't gonna help your business to grow. And it's just so much fun out there with all these different music styles and their spin-offs. Especially since the last 2 decades there is a lot going on in the music industry. A lot of those developments also apply to mastering.

Something that I regularly encounter is that the more specific the music genre, the more profiling is required from an engineer. In other words: a niche part of the market like jazz music asks for a very well skilled engineer, specialized in… jazz music.

Are you an engineer who works on 10+ jazz albums per month? You're probably most likely to master more of that genre. The more you do it, the better you will get at it. There's a word for it, let me think… Ah, yes: experience!

One thing connects all of us engineers. It's our aim and commitment to make recordings sound as good as humanly possible. I say humanly on purpose, I'm convinced that only a human being is able to evaluate a recording and to do (or don't do) the thing necessary to make it shine. Music is about connection between humans, no machine can be in charge of that.

We're a bunch of audio nerds and we're damn proud of it!

Renzo

Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. He has worked for Bart Voncken, The Legendary Orchestra Of Love and the John F Klaver Band.
More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on his <u>website</u>.