

Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):

Master the mix

While working on my previous (40th) column I stumbled upon a question within a question.

The above might sound a bit cryptic but while answering the fourth question (What is mastering worth to you?) the following question came to mind: “When is your mix finished and do you proceed to mastering?”

This question came from working with so called *package deals*, in which the mix and mastering engineer is the same person. But when do you decide that your work as mix engineer is finished and you’re ready to continue working as a mastering engineer?

The way I see it is that both mixing and mastering are two individual crafts. The mix engineer does something a mastering tech can’t and vice versa. Genuine allrounders do exist but it rarely happens that one single person is able to deliver both mix and master on a high level.

While there are many similarities mastering requires a different set of skills than mixing. As a mix engineer you work with many tracks simultaneously and effects are used differently than during a mastering session. Mastering is, just like mixing, producing and tracking, a craft of experience. The more you do it, the better you get at it. So why wouldn’t you aim to be extremely good (a master!) in one job?

And besides the monitoring environment is vastly different. From a mixing point of view you’d like to crawl into your mixes using nearfield or midfield monitor speakers. Mastering requires more of an overview of the entire song using full-range speakers to let your songs sound great on any sound system.

And finally: if I were a mix engineer I’d be very happy to have an extra set of ears to professionally judge my mixes, while delivering a sublime sounding master. A win-win situation!

Especially when dealing with a production on a high level working with a package deal wouldn’t be my first logical choice. (But I’m a mastering engineer. I would be burning my own bridge if I’d be promoting such a deal.)

A good couple of engineers (mixing and mastering) form a power duo for your production. In an ideal world the mix and mastering engineer think alike and they share some kind of musical connection. Combine the above with a great song and some good musicians and you’ve struck gold!

As a mastering engineer you build some kind of relationship with the people you work with. Artists, producers but especially mix engineers are important people in the life of a mastering engineer. From experience I know that the level of a production gradually rises as you work longer and closer with someone. It’s like chemistry, like it is with (good) relations in real life.

To return to the first question (When is your mix finished and do you proceed to mastering?): a good mix engineer *knows* when his or her kick-ass mix is ready to be sent out to the mastering engineer to become an even more kick-ass song!

Renzo

Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. As the owner of premium mastering studio Masterenzo Mastering he has worked for many independent artists like Voncken, Black Nazareth and the John F Klaver Band.

More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on [the web](#).