

## Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo): Masterenzo's mastering poll, the results!

In my [previous](#) column I asked you five questions. Five questions about mastering. Five questions in which I try to get a clear picture about how you producers, mixers and other music fanatics deal with mastering in your workflow.

And now, in my 40th (!) column for Rotterdam based music platform Popunie, I'll share the results with you.

You've supplied me with quite some answers, for which I am very grateful. Thank you all!

The results give me an insight in when you consider mastering, how you rate good mastering and - even more important- what high quality mastering is worth to you.

Here are the answers:

### **Question 1:** *When does mastering come into view?*

Over 65% of you starts to think about mastering during the recordings. The other 35% include mastering in their preparations prior to recording.

Hardly anyone considers mastering as a "problem solver" trying to save recordings that didn't turn out so well.

### **Question 2:** *Why would you choose for mastering?*

Almost unanimously you chose for answer A: You're precious recording has to sound great on every sound system everywhere! Although more than half of you find the technical aspect equally important: Proper file delivery for a release on vinyl or via streaming services (answer B).

Actually these are the ideal answers for us mastering engineers. Letting records sound great is the core of our business and it's even nicer when our technical skills are well appreciated.

Nobody gave the answer stating that mastering is something necessary without knowing what it actually is (answer C). Very reassuring!

### **Question 3:** *Why would you choose for a certain mastering engineer?*

Answers A and B both received about 50% of the vote. This shows that networking is important (answer A) but that the genre in which a ME (Mastering Engineer) seems to be specialized in is equally important (answer B).

About 25% relies on the power of almighty Google (answer E), while in few cases mastering for vinyl is regarded as being important (answer C).

### **Question 4:** *What is mastering worth to you?*

The answer to this question was completely unanimous: All of you find quality to be of much greater importance than the costs for mastering (answer C). A single individual even sent an e-mail to Bob Ludwig! (D)

Few people indicated to master themselves, whether or not commissioned for others.

Fortunately almost nobody indicated to work with so called "package deals": Recording, mixing and mastering, all at the same studio. I'm not so keen on that and it's nice to know that you share my opinion on this. A combination of recording and mixing is fairly easy to comprehend because there's a clear border between these two processes: When you're done recording you start to mix your tracks. Piece of cake.

But when are you done mixing and when do you move on to mastering? Or do you start with a mastering chain and mix backwards from there? These are some not easy to answer questions. Perhaps I should write a column about this...

**Question 5:** *Does mastering gear play a role in your choice for a certain studio?*

Of course I saved the best for last. The answer to this final question was also unambiguous: Except for one you all relied on trust. Trust and confidence in the ears, experience and skills of a professional ME. Exactly this answer is what we engineers like to hear!

The gear: Obviously this plays a role in choosing a studio. Gear is fun. They form the (fairly expensive) toolbox a studio uses to work with and to impress future clients and I would be lying by saying gear has no influence on the sound of the end product.

But it's important to rightfully turn those knobs, faders and switches. It's ever so important when working on full mixes during mastering.

These were the answers. I'm exceptionally thrilled that you took the time to share your thoughts with me.

I will probably come back to the answers in future columns but for now: Thank you so much and I hope to see you in my studio sometime!

*PS: I serve a delicious cup of coffee prior to a mastering session, made with freshly roasted coffee beans from Rotterdam. Just so you know...*

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, The Legendary Orchestra Of Love and the John F Klaver Band.*

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