

Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):

Feedback: hi Masterenzo, what do you think of my mix?

That's a question I get every once in a while. In a perfect world every mixer or producer would let his or her mixes be checked or verified by a skilled mastering engineer, before sending definitive mixes to mastering. Big chance (in case of a good mix that is) I'd say: "Okay fine, wicked mix. Bring 'em in."

It happens on a regular basis that a mix can make a big leap forward in quality, impact and musical connection with only some minor changes. The quality of a mix is leading for the quality of the end product (the actual master itself). I get asked pretty often to turn water (a not so good mix) into gold (a great sounding master).

A lot of things can get done in a mastering session but turning water into gold isn't one of them. So mixers out there: get me a seriously kick-ass and wicked mix!

I think it's time to throw in another statement:

"The better the mix and the less needs to be done during mastering, the better your song will eventually sound!"

It's not that we as mastering engineers don't want to do anything with an already great mix. It's doing exactly what's needed that sets a great engineer apart from the rest. Impact, energy and connection, keywords of a great sounding master.

By listening carefully and critically to your mixes they will most definitely improve. It's always best practice to thoroughly listen to your mixes before sending them to the mastering studio. It happens more than occasionally that a mix contains a small fault here and there.

A little checklist for checking your mixes: is it the right version of a mix? Think about (possibly confusing) names of your mix files. Is the mix "clean" from talking musicians at the end of a blistering solo or other unwanted sounds in the background. Are the fades all right?

And last but not least: does your mix level stay below 0dBFS? This also applies when you set the fader of the master bus to zero. If the master bus is overloaded and clips (everything above 0dBFS) when it's set to zero, you'll have to lower the faders of single channels or busses in your mix.

By just lowering the fader of the master bus it might look like you got rid of your (digital) overs but truth is that the clipping is still there internally in your DAW. You should look at your master bus as the sum of all parts; all single channels and busses are routed to the master bus.

So mixers out there: keep an eye on those levels while mixing!

Happy mixing 😊

Renzo

Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. He has worked for Gery Mendes (GMB), The Legendary Orchestra Of Love and John F Klaver. More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on his [website](#).