

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING FILES FOR MASTERING

BEFORE THE MASTERING SESSION

Send an e-mail, or include a typed note with the following information:

-artist name exactly as you want it to appear in the CD-Text or metadata (info embedded into the master files).

-album name or release/project name

-song order/track listing (please note where side A and B split for vinyl releases).

-Make sure the spelling and capitalizations are exactly as you want them to appear.

Also, make a note if there are any files that may have an old name or working title rather than the new name.

-format(s) your project is being released on (CD, vinyl, digital distribution etc.)

-ISRC codes (if you are choosing to include them on the master CD, it's optional)

Remember, since the files are being submitted to me as data, they are not going to be in any order other than alphabetical, even if your mix engineer has burned CDs for you in the past in the correct order.

Feel free to include any notes about song-to-song transitions, and spacing between the songs.

Let me know if there are issues with any of the mixes that you'd like me to try and address, such as too much low or high end, or lack of etc.

If you have a stylistic preference, let me know ahead of time. Some clients want a master that is as loud as the average commercial CD these days, while some prefer to preserve more of the dynamics of the music, and sacrifice some overall loudness, please let me know if you have any strong preferences either way.

DELIVERING YOUR MIXES FOR MASTERING

Dropbox.com is my preferred way to receive your mix files (via the Internet). If you don't have a Dropbox account you can go to www.dropbox.com and sign up for a free 2GB account which should be plenty of space to upload your hi-res mix files.

My Dropbox account is: mysteryroommastering@gmail.com

Once you have your files uploaded to a folder in your account, you can share the folder or zip file with me and I'll have easy access to the the files. Please avoid using file sharing services that require me to sign in or make an account just to retrieve the files. Direct links from other sites are ok. I suggest making 1 zip file of all your mixes to avoid possible errors.

Please do not bring in, or send in audio CDs or mp3s to master from.

Audio CDs are not appropriate to master from for a number of reasons. Bring in your mixes on a DATA CD (or DVD), hard disk or flash drive etc. If your master files have ever been on an audio CD, please try to get the raw data files directly from your mix engineer as once the files have been burned to audio CD or converted to mp3, there is no way to get the resolution or quality back.

If you prefer to mail a DATA CD/DVD or flash drive please send it to:

Mystery Room Mastering
PO BOX 70302
Milwaukee WI 53207-0302

FILE TYPES

- Your final mix files can be either .wav or .aif files (wave or AIFF)
- 24-bit audio files are strongly preferred, 16-bit files are acceptable when 24-bit files are unavailable, or the original recording/mix session was done at 16-bit.
- Sample rates up to 192k are accepted. Preferred sample rate is whatever the original mix is printed at, or whatever rate the recording session is at. Basically, no need to up-sample your files to a higher rate once they're printed.
- Please be sure that the mix files have reasonable volume headroom to work with, it's hard and sometimes impossible to do anything useful (sonically) to mixes that are already "CD Loud" or have a high RMS (average volume) level. Please don't send mix files that have already been "pre-mastered", normalized or made extremely loud using digital processing or plugins. I understand that in some cases, certain plugins on the master fader/buss can be very important to your sound, but if you're adding an L2 (or something similar) simply for the sake of loudness, I suggest that you remove it before making your final bounces for mastering. I can easily make your master as loud as you'd like, but it's hard to do a quality mastering job when the mix files are already loud.

I'm only referring to processing on the master fader or mix file, or overall mix. Compression on individual tracks or instruments within the mix is definitely ok and an entirely different thing.

It's becoming more common for mix engineers to show clients their mixes with some "pre-mastering" volume/compression added so that the mixes compete with some finished products that they might be comparing them to, but ideally the mix engineer should remove that "pre-mastering" and create a 24-bit mix file without any L2 type limiting/compression for the

actual mastering session. Although it might seem simple, I can't simply turn down mixes that are already too loud because in almost all cases, severe sonic compression and damage has already been done, and can only be undone from the mix source.

If you feel that your mixes won't be the same without a particular plugin on the master fader, feel free to send one song as a sample to see if it's something I can work with. Another option is to send your processed version and a version with no processing on the master so I can see what you're shooting for.

AFTER THE MASTERING SESSION

When the initial session is finished, I can give you a CD reference copy and/or upload the files for you to approve. Once everything is approved and finalized, I will supply you with a master audio CD-R, or upload a DDP image to your CD manufacturer. Most places accept DDP files, so check with them as it's an easier and better method to use a DDP file for the master in my opinion, since audio CD-R masters are much more susceptible to errors, and always contain some rate of micro-errors. All audio master CD-R's are tested for C1/C2 errors to make sure the error rate is within spec to be a master CD, but by submitting a DDP file for a master, there is no place for those errors to happen. DDP usually saves time too, rather than shipping a physical master.

Add \$20 for preparation, testing, materials and shipping of physical master CDs for production.

If you're releasing your project via iTunes or another form of online digital distribution, let me know what file type you need. Some places prefer 16-bit WAV files and they handle the conversion to mp3 or various formats. Other places require you to submit files that are already in mp3 format. There are a few bit-rates to choose from for mp3s. 256kbps and 320kbps are currently the most common.

VINYL MASTERS: Unless otherwise directed, for vinyl masters I will prepare one 24-bit file for each side of the record. Unlike audio CDs, vinyl has no limitations when it comes to bit-rate or sample rate, so rather than reduce your music to CD quality and then transfer to vinyl, I keep the audio at 24-bit, as well as leave some more dynamics and headroom/breathing room in the music for the vinyl cutter to work with. The reason I make one file per side, is to assure that the spacing between the songs, or that the song order won't get changed accidentally. I also include a PDF file with all the song information and times so the vinyl cutter knows where each song is starting and stopping.

The quoted mastering fee includes one round of adjustments to be made after the initial mastering session. This only pertains to the original mixes you've sent. Submitting new mixes, or remixes of songs is subject to further billing.

*** * * If you are using United Record Pressing, add \$20 for burning, testing, materials and shipping them a physical master CD-R as they are one of the last vinyl manufacturers on the planet that only accepts physical masters (without a fee).**

Please send all payments via check to:

Mystery Room Mastering
PO BOX 70302
Milwaukee, WI 53207-0302

I can also accept PayPal/Visa/MasterCard/Discover and American Express either in person or over the phone.

*** PayPal or Credit/Debit card payments may be subject to a 2.5% transaction fee. This allows me to keep my rates for everybody as low as possible.**

Thank you.