

# GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING FILES FOR MASTERING

## BEFORE THE MASTERING SESSION

**Once we've agreed on the terms of the project, 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 and/or meta-data (info embedded into the CD master and/or mp3/WAV files).

-album name or release/project name

-song order/track listing (please note where side A and B are split for vinyl releases). Make sure the spelling and capitalizations are exactly as you want them to appear in this info. Also, make a note if there are any mix files that may have an old name or working title rather than the new name to avoid confusion or guessing.

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

-ISRC codes (it's currently not possible to embed ISRC codes into raw WAV files but it is supported for mp3 files and CD masters) ISRC codes are optional and not required.

-If you'd like me to embed the album cover art into an mp3 version, please email a .jpeg or .png file as soon as it's available.

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

If you know of any noises or count-ins/talking before or after any songs, please let me know if they should stay in or be cut out. Feel free to include any notes about song-to-song transitions, and spacing between the songs. It may be helpful to send one continuous file of the album to demonstrate the transitions from song to song if you have precise transitions.

Let me know if there are issues with any of the mixes that you'd like me to address such as too much low end, 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 a 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](http://www.dropbox.com) and sign up for a free 2GB account which should be plenty of space to upload your hi-res mix files for a single project.

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. Direct links from other sites are ok but please avoid using file sharing services that require signing in or creating an account to retrieve the files. I suggest making a single zip file of all your mixes to avoid possible errors.

My Dropbox account is: [mysteryroommastering@gmail.com](mailto:mysteryroommastering@gmail.com)

### **Please do not send in audio CDs or mp3s to master from.**

Audio CDs are not appropriate to master from for many reasons. If uploading the files isn't an option, send your mixes on a DATA CD (or DVD), hard disk or flash drive etc. If your master files have ever been mp3s or on an audio CD, please get the raw data files directly from your mix engineer. Once the files have been burned to audio CD or converted to mp3, there is no way to get the resolution or quality back that is desired for mastering.

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**

## PREFERRED AUDIO FILE TYPES

- Your final mix files can be stereo .wav or .aif files
- 24-bit stereo 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 recording and/or mix session is. 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 already 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. I understand that in some cases, certain plug-ins 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 mixes 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 super loud.

I'm only referring to processing on the master fader, 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 mixes with some “pre-mastering” volume/compression added so that the mixes compete with some finished songs they might be comparing 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 most cases, severe sonic compression and damage has already been done, and can only be undone from the mix source, and you won't get the most from your mastering session.

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

## **AFTER THE MASTERING SESSION**

When the initial mastering is finished, I will e-mail a download link for you to approve the master. Once everything is approved and finalized, I will supply you with a master for the format(s) needed. Most CD manufacturers will accept a DDP file (which can be uploaded via Internet). Check with them as it's an easier and better method to use a DDP file vs. CD-R masters which are much more prone 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. Uploading a DDP file saves time too, compared to shipping a physical master to the plant.

**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 outlets prefer 16 or 24-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 so let me know if a certain bit-rate is needed. 256kbps and 320kbps are currently most common. 320 kbps is higher quality and my suggestion.

In most cases, I will provide raw 16-bit WAV files as well as tagged mp3 files (with artwork if you send it to me). It's not currently possible to tag WAV files as extensively as mp3s, so if your online distro requires WAV files, they will be the ones doing the tagging with artwork and other data.

**VINYL MASTERS:** 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 and 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 starts and ends.

**\*\*\* If you are using United Record Pressing (or other pressing plant that requires a CD-R master (rather than 24-bit data file that can be uploaded), add \$20 for burning, testing, materials and shipping a physical master CD-R.**

**Submitting new mixes, or remixes of songs is subject to further billing.**

Please send all payments via check to:

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

I 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 4% transaction fee. This allows me to keep my rates for everybody as low as possible.**

Thank you.