



TREVOR NOKES MUSIC
MASTERING

THE MIXING ENGINEERS COMPANION

By

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INTRODUCTION

"The decision to hire a dedicated Mastering Engineer is rarely about the Mixing Engineer's lack of skill; it is about the physiological and psychological limitations of the human ear."



TREVØR NØKES MUSIC
MASTERING

THE MANIFESTO



The Myth of the "One Stop Shop"





WHY SPECIALIZES MASTERING IS THE ULTIMATE CLIENT SERVICE

- In the Modern era of digital audio, the lines between production, mixing and mastering have blurred. With powerful plugins and AI-assisted services available at the click of a mouse, the temptation for a mixing engineer to finalise the track themselves is understandable.
- However, to truly serve the client and achieve a “Major Label” standard, separating these processes is not just a Luxury, it’s a necessity. On the following pages I’ll explain why the professional Mixing Engineers choose to collaborate, rather than consolidate.



THE CURSE OF FAMILIARITY (YOU CAN'T “UN-HEAR” YOUR MIX)

- The Primary enemy of the Mixing Engineer is not a lack of talent, but loss of perspective. By the time a mix is near completion, your brain has “acclimatized” to the sonic profile of the track. You mentally autocorrect for harsh frequencies and low-end buildup. Just think about how many time you have listened to the track whilst mixing.
- A specialized Mastering Engineer provides fresh ears. They hear the music Exactly how a consumer will, identifying issues that have become invisible to you the Mixing Engineer.



MICRO VS. MACRO MINDSETS

- The Mixing Mindset is emotional and surgical (balance the snare, the vocal breath, the reverb tail). It is a process of construction.
- The Mastering Mindset is Holistic and technical. It looks at the song as a single stereo (Or Immersive) Waveform.
- Attempting to switch instantly between these modes is akin to a writer trying to be their own editor; you are too close to the work to critique it effectively.



THE TRUTH OF THE ROOM

- Mixing studios are designed for “Vibe.” Mastering studios are forensic laboratories.
- A Mastering Engineer works on full-range monitoring systems that reveal the “Brutal” truth of the audio – Phase Issues, Sub-Bass rumble and digital distortion to name a few that might be physically inaudible in a standard mixing room, but there robbing the song of dynamics and headroom.



PROFESSIONAL STANDING

- Advising your client to use a dedicated Mastering Engineer demonstrates high-level professionalism. It signals: "I have taken this as far as it can go; now let's bring in a specialist to polish it to perfection."
- This Team based approach mirrors the workflow of Grammy-winning productions.

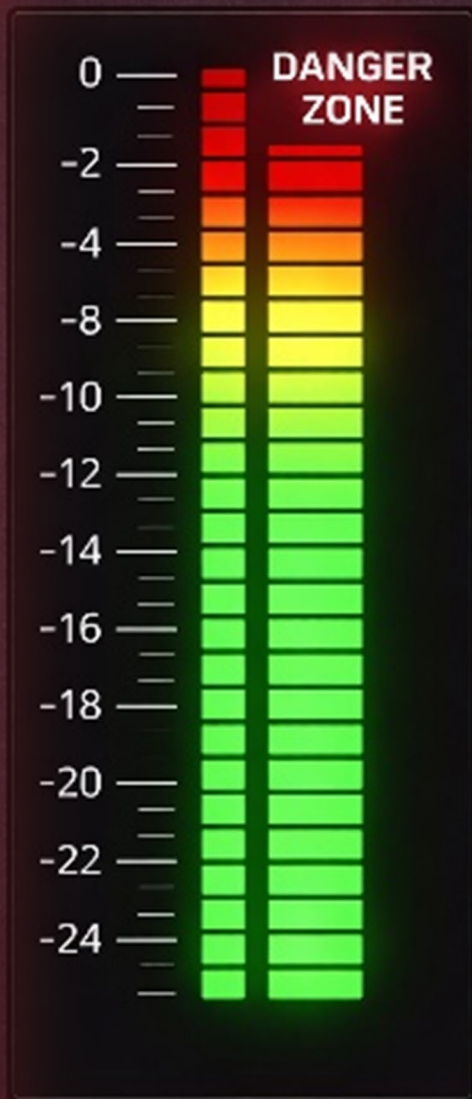


THE MEMORY JOGGER (PART 1) THE FOUNDATION

Protect the Raw material

- Do Not push your mix bus to 0dBFS
- Do aim for peaks between -3dBFS and -6dBFS.

Why? This “Gold reserve” of headroom allows the Mastering Engineer to apply EQ and compression without inducing digital clipping or inter-sample peaks.



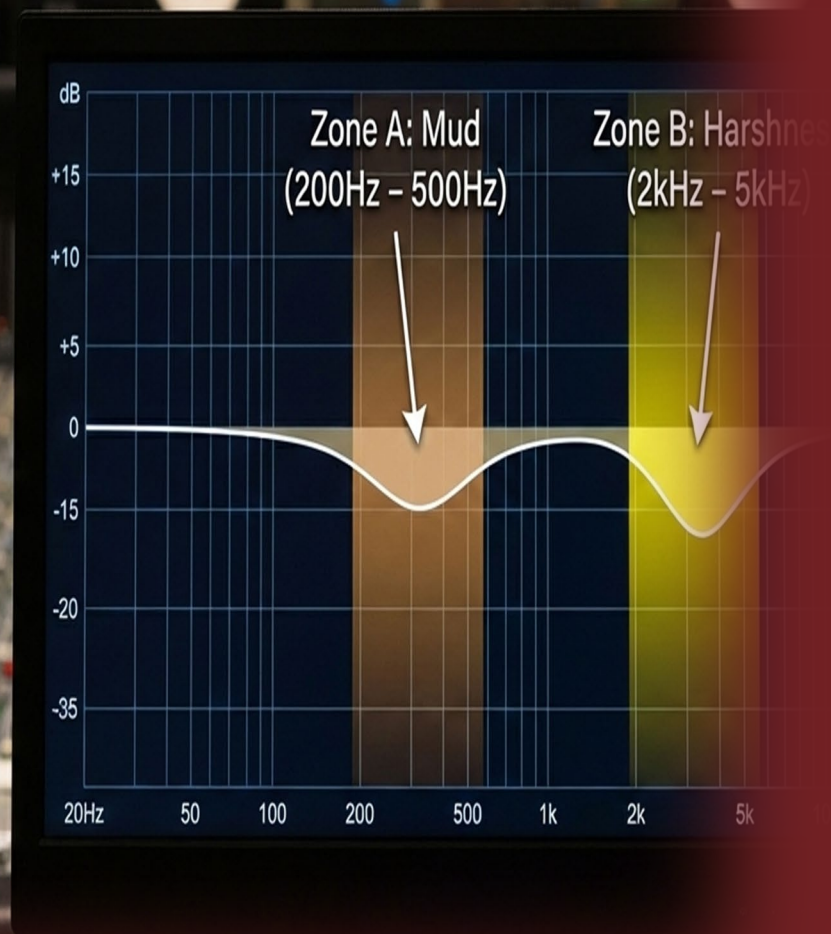


THE COMPRESSION TRAP

- AVOID aggressive limiting on the Master Bus.
- CHECK: If you bypass your master bus plugins and the mix “falls apart,” your internal balance is weak.
- ACTION: Achieve loudness through individual track control, Not by crushing the master output.



MEMORY JOGGER (PART 2) SONIC CLARITY



Eliminate the Mud and Harshness

Before you print a mix, check these zones:

- The Mud Zone (200-500Hz): is the snare fighting the guitars? Is the vocal thick? *Cut here to reveal clarity.*
- The Harsh Zone (2-5kHz): Will this hurt the listener's ears at high volume? *Soften the peaks.*



THE LOW END ANCHOR

- High-pass Filter everything except the Kick and Bass
- Sidechain the Bass to the Kick

Result: A tight, punchy low-end that translates to various systems without the added “flab” due to a reduced build up of low frequencies.



DELIVERING & REFERENCING “THE FINAL CHECK”

Step 1: The “Reality Check” (Referencing)

Don't mix in a vacuum.

- Select: 3 Commercially available tracks in the same genre.
- Gain Match: Lower their volume to match the output of your mix.
- Compare: Does your vocal sit as high? Is your low-end as tight. Compare at differing volume levels.



THE TECHNICAL BIT

“GOLDEN” EXPORT SPECS

Setting	Requirement	Reason
Format	WAV or AIFF	No MP3's. Lossless Only.
Bit Depth	24bit / 32-bit Float	Maintain dynamic resolution.
Sample Rate	Native (e.g. 48k)	Do Not Up sample or Down sample.
Dither	Off	Do Not apply Dither.
Limiter	Off	Remove the Final Brick-wall Limiter



THE FINAL SIGN-OFF “YOUR MIX, YOUR LEGACY”

By internalizing these insights, you move beyond merely creating a “good” mix to crafting a mix that is inherently Master-Ready.

You empower the Mastering Engineer to achieve optimal loudness, clarity and impact without the compromise. This proactive approach is the direct path to consistent professional results, client retention and an enduring reputation in the industry.



READY TO SEND?

- Headroom Checked (-6dB)?
- Buss Limiter OFF?
- Files Labelled Correctly?
- Reference Checked?
- Saved!

All Good?

SEND



TREVOR NOKES MUSIC
MASTERING

THANK YOU

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