Checklist Mastering

This is a checklist for some important aspects before sending your music to mastering.

1. Audio files of the mixes in .zip file - sent via <u>wetransfer</u>

a. **Audio format** is .wav or .aiff in 24bit or 32 bit floating point with the sample rate of your DAW session. Avoid sample rate conversion!

b. **Labeling of the files** clearly shows following parameters:

track position/vinyl side & track position_track title(version) ;

- example: 03_autotune

                                            03_autotune_vers3

- example stem: 03_autotune_stem_vocal

- example vinyl: A3_autotune

    If the music is being transferred to vinyl, keep in mind that playback distortion and damped playback of high frequencies will increase towards the center of the record. When determining the running order, you may choose not to put tracks with strong or delicate high frequency content towards the end of a side.

c. **Stems** are rendered in stereo and every stem has the exact same starting point

d. **Enough headroom** with peak level never hitting 0dBFS

    A digital peak meter may not show the true peak values of the audio due to inter -sample peaks. By keeping the peak level at around -3dBFS, there is enough headroom to avoid distortion.

e. **Mix bus processing and normalization**; the mixes are not normalized & mix bus processing is applied within reasonable limits

    Heavily compressed or peak limited mixes restrict the amount of processing that can be applied in mastering. If you use mix bus processing only for the sake of loudness, this is very likely to be more effective when mastering. You can print mixes with and without the mix bus processing, if you are not sure. If you sent louder peak limited mixes for approval to the artist or producer, it is important to also send them to mastering for reference.

f. **Mixes are checked** for:

- Sibilant vocals or other intense high frequency information

   A lot of high frequency information and sibilant vocals can result in playback distortion when the music is being transferred to vinyl. The processing required to take care of sibilance in a track during mastering will have an effect on all the other instruments appearing in the sibilant frequency area. It is better to take care of it adequately during mixing. If need help addressing issues with sibilance, get in touch - i'll try to help out.

- Missing or muted tracks

   Listen to the final mixes for elements that are missing. Checking the mixes before mastering makes sure the mix is delivered as intended.

- Unwanted noise

   Make sure to carefully check every mix for unwanted noise like clicks, pops, distortion and vocal-plosives <u>after</u> rendering and <u>before</u> sending it to mastering. Leave a few seconds before and after the song to keep any potentially problematic noise like hiss, buzz or hum. That makes it easier to use the noise as a fingerprint for applying noise reduction if necessary. If you want me to apply specific trims or fades, let me know.

- Complete beginning and ending of the track

   It is good to leave one or two seconds before the beginning and after the end of a track to avoid loosing any crucial element.

2. Information (*if available)

Artist name for every track

Song title for every track

Project title*

Project artist name*

ISRC for every track*

UPC/EAN for the project*