



MIXDOWN & MASTERING: FAQ & CHECKLIST

Hey!

Kris here – hopefully this set of FAQs will shed some light on any queries you have; however, if you can't find the answer here, email me on kris@keepthinkingmusic.com with your query and I'll get back to you ASAP.

For your convenience, a comprehensive [Checklist](#) is included at the end of this document for a quick step-by-step walkthrough.

How should I prepare my files?

MASTERING

Please provide your track in **24-bit WAV at 48kHz** (or 44.1kHz if this was the native recording rate), at no greater than **-6dB peak** on the master channel throughout the track. This will give me ample headroom.

Please ensure there are **no effect chains** on the master channel.

Do not normalize audio when exporting, and **export without 'dither'** if you have the option in your DAW/studio.

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MIXDOWNS

Reference/Arrangement Mix – Please provide a copy of the **full** song as a WAV as well as the individual tracks, this will allow me to check all files have been correctly received and are functioning as per your original arrangement.

Additional References – Mixing styles vary significantly by genre! If you have a specific sound in mind for your track, feel free to include reference tracks from other artists that capture a similar vibe. This will help me align with your creative vision more accurately.

Master Effects – Ensure they are all removed/turned off.

Levels – Ensure there is no red-lining or clipping occurring at any point during the track. There should be no part of your track exceeding 0dB on the master channel. A good habit is to have your master levels peak at around -6dB, as this is the general level expected for mastering. In most cases, you can bring the faders up/down in unison to achieve this without losing your track level settings.

Label – Please ensure each track/channel is labelled effectively. Separating with simple titles such as *Drum, Bass, Melodic, Vox & FX* means I spend less time sorting your tracks and more time working on your music. 😊

Effects>Returns – Retain all effects that you have used on each channel. This includes delays, reverbs, EQ, and compression. If for whatever reason I require you to remove an effect on a certain sound, I will be in touch to arrange this.

Bus/Groups – If you are using filters or FX on a bus/group, be mindful that these will not be baked into individual track prints! If you need those bus/group FX, but want me to work at track level first, please do the following:

- For FX that will act the same at track level (e.g. filter downs, gain automation, general EQ) – copy and paste the group FX into each corresponding track so they apply at track level. Then remove the group FX. There should be no change in your arrangement sound, but double-check!
- For FX that are only suitable for the group (e.g. bus compression, big transitional FX, etc.) – leave them where they are, but include some screenshots of the settings you are using and the associated automation.

Exporting – Please export full track length stems (at 48kHz or 44.1kHz, 24-bit (WAV) format.

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Sends/Returns – If you are using sends/returns (such as reverbs or delays in Ableton or Logic, for example), please export these as **separate audio track**, rather than baking them into the individual channel stems.

Make sure you select **'no dither'** or equivalent within your DAW.

How long will it take?

The following timeframes apply once I have the correct audio files from you:

Mixes: Please allow **7-10 working days** from receipt of your audio files. If you need it sooner, please let me know and I will try my best to accommodate, depending on my workload.

Mastering: Please allow **3-5 working days** from receipt of your premaster. If you need a faster turnaround, please let me know.

How many tracks can I use for mixdown?

There is no limit to the number of tracks you can submit for mixdown. It's all included in the rate.

I'd like the processed stems back when the mix is complete. Is this possible?

Absolutely! Providing stems is a great way to future-proof your project for remixes, live performances, or high-end archives. Because I use a hybrid workflow with analogue hardware, printing stems requires a real-time process to capture the specific "glue" and character of the outboard gear. I offer two options for these exports:

Analog Processed Stems (£35.00): You will receive the main grouped elements (Drums, Bass, Instruments, Vocals, etc.) printed through my analogue signal chain to ensure they sound exactly like the final mix.

Full Project Archive (£45.00): This includes the analogue stems above, plus all individual raw tracks exported for your permanent records.

If you need these, just let me know when we are finalizing the mixdown and I will add them to your final delivery.

What genres do you work with?

I specialise in electronic music, but also have experience in other genres too. If your music is programmed/recorded into a DAW, I can help. If in doubt, drop me a line and we can discuss your project!

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What happens once I order mixdown services from you?

Once you have paid for the service, I will contact you personally with a link to drop in your files. I'll then check them over and make sure they are all ready to work on. If there are any issues I'll let you know!

What if I would like any changes to the mixdown/masters?

If you need any adjustments after you receive your mix or master, just let me know.

I make any initial amendments **free of charge**. It's really important to me that you are happy with the end results. Further edits beyond this are charged at an hourly rate of **£35.00 per hour**.

I have a question that isn't on here, where can I find the answer?

No worries! Drop an email to kris@keepthinkingmusic.com and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

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AUDIO CHECKLIST - MIXDOWN

Feel free to use this handy checklist to ensure your project files are correctly uploaded. This ensures the best possible results for your mix.

Organization

Labelling

Every track is clearly labelled and prefixed, ready to export. I use “DR” for drums, “BS” for bass, “FX” for effects, “BUS_” for bus/groups, and so on. Example:

DR_Open Hats

DR_Shaker RH

BS_Moogy Bass

FX_Sweep 1

BUS_DRUMBUS

Reference Bounce

A clearly labelled bounce of your full, current arrangement in its current state is included for reference, so I can ensure all files are present for mixing.

[Optional] Artist References

If desired, you have included 1 or 2 tracks from other artists that capture the vibe or sonic profile that you would like to achieve.

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Processing & Effects

Returns/Sends – Export Setup

When returns/sends are used for shared FX, these have been exported as separate audio tracks, not baked back into the track channels.

Returns/Sends - Labelling

All return/send exports are clearly labelled so they can be easily identified.

Bus/Group FX Check 1

If you have filters or EQ on a bus/group, you have moved them to their individual tracks before exporting so the sound is preserved at track level.

Bus/Group FX Check 2

For complex group effects that cannot be moved (e.g particular FX or processing that are designed to treat the bus/group and you wish to keep them), you have provided screenshots of the plugin settings and automation as required.

Note: if you prefer me to just use the bus/group stem for particular audio, just let me know!

File Preparation & Export

Master Bus

All limiters, compressors, and EQ chains have been removed from the master channel or switched off completely prior to exporting anything.

Headroom

Ensure your master bus peaks at approximately -6dB (with all master channel processing removed). Check that individual channels have sufficient headroom and are not clipping into their respective faders before they hit the master bus, unless intended for creative effect.

Format & Sample Rate

All tracks exported as **24-bit WAV** files and at **48kHz**.

Length

All files exported are individual, **full track-length** files, starting from 0:00.

Hopefully this helps in your preparation, but if you have any queries just drop an email to kris@keepthinkingmusic.com and I will get back to you as soon as possible. 😊

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