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20 Mixing Principles That Will Change Your Life

Home Studio Center

1. **Get it right at the source** - If you are recording and mixing the same track, spend more time and effort on the recording phase. A high-quality mix is 80% the recording and 20% the mix.

2. **Time is of the essence** - Mixing is a race against the clock. Don't waste time. Make the most of every second.

3. **Focus on the key elements** - Don't waste 30 minutes tweaking a shaker. Focus on the vocals, drums, lead guitar etc.

4. **Loop the loudest section of the song** - Get the mix right here first and then automate and check the rest of the song.

5. **Get the balance right first** - Before you jump to EQ, compression etc. spend plenty of time (30 mins or more) adjusting the faders and getting a good static mix.

6. **Start with the bigger picture** - Leave the finer details to the end of the mix. After balancing, I address the mix buss and group busses (where most of my processing is) before individual channels.

7. **Start with mix buss processing** - Add compression on your mix buss at the beginning of the mix, rather than at the end. The sample applies for mix buss EQ.

8. **Avoid the solo button** - If you can't hear what you're doing, just turn the channel up instead of hitting solo.

9. **Have an intention behind every move** - Think about what you want to achieve before you adjust anything.

10. **Always adjust plugin gain** - The source should be roughly the same volume coming out the plugin as going in (even with EQ).

11. **Check your moves** - Always bypass to check that you've made an improvement (don't be afraid to start again if you haven't).

12. **Use good reference tracks** - Choose a well produced track in a similar genre and constantly compare while mixing. You can use several references - one for vocals, one for drums etc.

13. **If you're inexperienced, be conservative** - Make all of your changes subtle. As you improve you can be more aggressive.

14. **Mix in mono for the majority of the mix** - Flip to stereo at the end to sort your panning. This helps you to create separation with EQ and balancing rather than panning.

15. **Listen back on multiple speakers/headphones** - I like to constantly flick between my pair of large Yahamas, my single

small Auratone style speaker and my open-back headphones. This helps to reveal flaws in your mix and prevent ear fatigue.

16. **Mix at a low volume** - The ideal volume for mixing is around casual speech level. You should be able to easily talk to somebody else in the room without raising your voice.

17. **Use the volume knob as a tool** - Every now and again turn the speakers up and down to see how the mix translates. At high volumes you can hear more low end, at low volumes you should only hear what's most important (vocals, lead parts).

18. **Take regular breaks** - Ear fatigue is a mix killer.

19. **Assume that volume automation is needed** - It's rarely possible to get a perfect balance throughout the entire song without some volume automation.

20. **You don't need a load of expensive plugins** - You can get a great mix with stock plugins. It often helps to limit your options, too - so the less plugins you use the better.

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