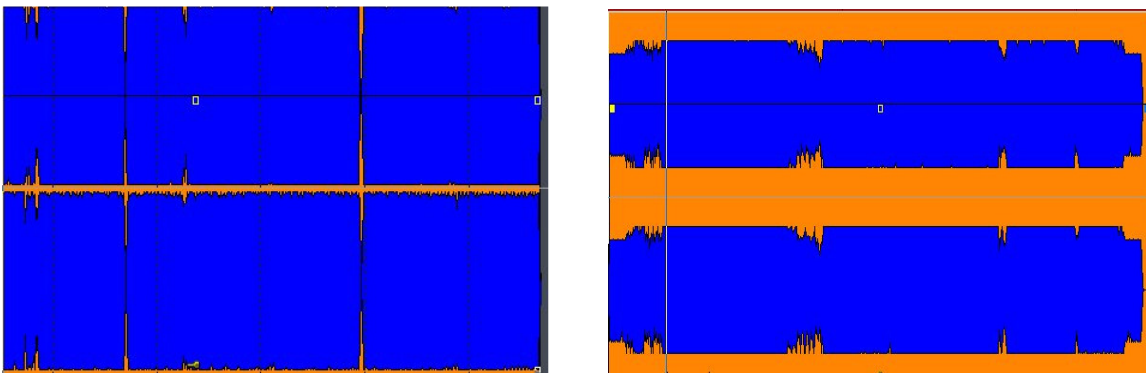


Snorksounds Mastering

Guide to sending a track for mastering

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Mastering is the process where by we seek to boost the audio quality of music to a threshold that makes for maximum clarity and overall balance for the listener. When making music it is often preferable to make it as loud as possible however mastering can often attain a much better result, please bear this in mind when mixing down. Remember, 2 sets of ears are better than 1!!!!



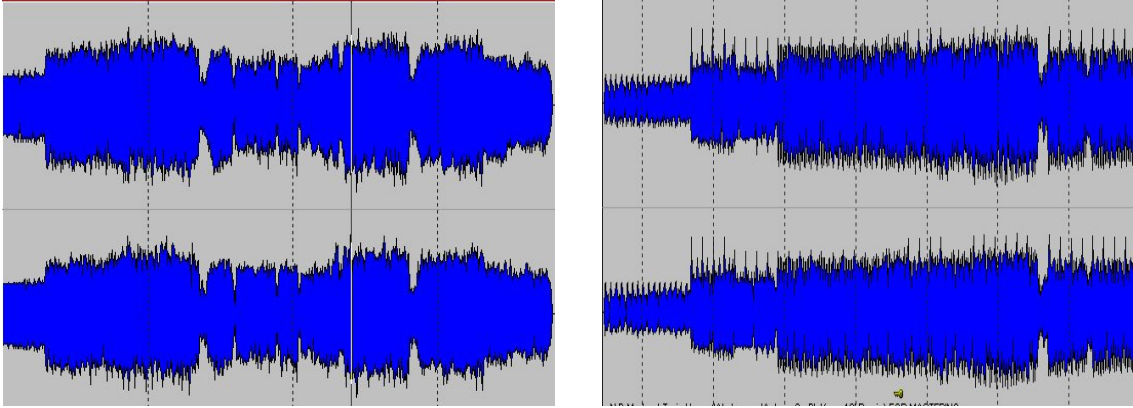
The screen shot on the left above shows a wav file that has been achieved by the use of a limiter/compressor placed across the stereo output of a DAW and limited at 0dB.

Again the above right screen shot shows a wav file that has also been mixed-down through a limiter/compressor but this time limited at -3dB in an attempt to provide the mastering engineer with a -3dB mix.

This has been done with good intention but in error.

Looking at the above two screen shots of wav files, although it can be possible to master tracks that have been mixed-down at such a high level, Experience has shown that ultimately much better sounding masters can be achieved if the tracks are mixed-down at a lower maximum level – typically -3 to -6dB below 0dB.

As can be seen in the 2 screen shots *below*, room for manipulation of the audio files is maintained.



The above mixes have been achieved by just lowering the output level on the stereo bus until -3 to -6dB is the maximum output level, no limiter or compressor has been used.

Also note that the wav files should not be normalised.

One point though, is that the producer should check their mix *with* a limiter on the stereo bus and with the level raised up loud to check for any parts of the mix that jump out, especially anything that sounds harsh or ear piercing. Then it's just a matter of adjusting the mix, switching off the limiter and making a mix-down to be sent for mastering.

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