ADDAC File Format Delivery Aid

A master audio file formats overview and recommended optimisation methods for distribution and delivery.

Spotify, iTunes & other online stores:
16-bit/44.1 kHz WAV files

Digital WAV files directly from the mastering session
Files get submitted by you to an aggregator, for example: CD Baby, Tunecore, or The Orchard.
From this you can distribute your music how you choose.
Warning! Loud masters can clip/contain overs when conversion takes place from WAV to AAC or alternate compressed formats used by online stores.

Compact Disc - DDP image or audio CD-R red book master:

DDP is the most secure, easiest, quickest and safest method.
Can be sent via internet and most glass master disc duplication prefer this method.
CD-R red book master is a physical burnt disc error checked and with industry standard protocols ready to be sent to for duplication.
Again some glass master disc duplication plants prefer this method over DDP. Please check.

SoundCloud & Bandcamp:
24-bit/44.1 kHz & above WAV files

SoundCloud and Bandcamp accept 24-bit WAV files and sample rates higher than 44.1 kHz if available from the mastering session.
Warning! Loud masters can clip/contain overs when conversion takes place from WAV to mp3 or alternative compressed formats.
Original format sent to master should not be a lower bit depth & sample rate than received.

Mastered For iTunes:
24-bit/44.1 kHz, 48 kHz, 88.2 kHz or 96 kHz sample rate WAV files

Aggregators sometimes now offer the ability to have a Mastered-For-iTunes version of your releases to get distributed through Apple Music/iTunes store and this is dependant on whether the mastering studio/engineer is officially MFiT approved* through Apple, which follow strict guidelines for upload and optimisation in preparation for the AAC format. The files are 24-bit WAV with sample rates usually higher than 44.1 kHz.

**Note:* I currently do not have the Mastered-For-iTunes badge officially, but will provide the additional .WAV audio file(s) that conform to the specifications set out by Apple all the same.

Key Additional Information Notes

- Always use highest quality files for upload where available.
- Do not up convert sample rate or bit depth to try and increase sound quality. This does not work, and once something has been truncated, for example 24-bit to 16-bit, increasing the bit depth back to 24-bit will not magically put back what you had removed.
- This also applies to changing the format, WAV – mp3 – WAV will not make your mixes sound better, it will in fact sound worse due to the further conversion process in online stores/streaming services which turns uncompressed formats to compressed such as mp3 or AAC. If you wish to retain the best sounding audio go back to the original source WAVs to use for upload.

File tagging and online distribution:

About Metadata

When working with WAV and AIFF you will find that these formats may not support the range of metadata that and mp3 or AAC file format can contain. WAV and AIFF can contain a number of metadata, however consumer devices are limited in capability to read such information, mp3/AAC however is widespread in adoption and distribution, plus the number of devices that can read the metadata reflects this. Online distribution services will require manual metadata input for WAV files when uploading files, for example the .png album artwork and artist/album information.

These WAV files will then go through a conversion process to a metadata compatible compressed format such as MPEG-4 for the end user.

With most aggregators you can choose to distribute your music via iTunes Store/Apple Music, Spotify, Google Play, Amazon, TIDAL and more.

ISRCs:

International Standard Recording Codes (ISRCs) are the track identifiers encoded into audio files for distribution.
More info can be found at ppluk for UK IRSC or for general info http://isrc.ifpi.org/en/.
This is optional but I highly recommend you obtain IRSCs as an artist.*

**Note:* Some distribution firms generate these codes for you.*

DDP:

Disc Description Protocol image

A DDP image is at its core a digital image of a compact disc that contains:

Audio
Track IDs
CD-Text
ISRC

Unlike CD-R/physical red book masters, a DDP is an error free format, as such read/write errors, skips or scratches do not occur on the digital image. This makes DDP a preference for CD masters rather than physical that then needs to be sent to the glass mastering duplication manufacturer. DDP also has a benefit of quick delivery via internet.

iTunes & CD info:

Gracenote

You may find that when you put in a newly mastered CD into your PC/Mac and try to play through iTunes you will find CD information missing/blank and be left with a group of numbered track listings. This is when you want to add CD information to the Gracenote database. You will need to be connected to the internet to work.

More information can be found here.

All Music

Like Gracenote for iTunes, All Music is for Windows Media Player; however you have to send a submission of a physical copy of your CD to All Music to get it on the database.

More information can be found here.