The Ultimate Mastering formula Presents...

the 10 Major Mastering Mistakes

“How To Avoid The Common Pitfalls That Cause Most People To HARM Their Tracks Without Even Realizing It”

SPECIAL REPORT

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The 10 Major Mastering Mistakes

“How To Avoid The Common Pitfalls That Cause Most People To HARM Their Tracks… Without Even Realizing It”

By Rob Williams
Introduction

Over the past few years of being in recording studios, and giving advice to others who are learning the skills of producing great sounding music, I’ve noticed that there are many common traps and pitfalls that the majority of us fall into at one point or another.

And when it comes to mastering, these can be the MOST DANGEROUS, because we’re not just dealing with an individual instrument, but the ENTIRE SONG.

Although there are MANY mistakes, I’ve narrowed down the list to the 10 that are most common and possibly also the most destructive.

The interesting (and tragic) part about many of these mastering mistakes, is that most people are completely unaware of them, and in many cases, may even think that some of these things are HELPING them.

I’ve found that when trying to learn something new, you’re often so overwhelmed by ALL the different things you need to know, that it’s difficult to remember everything.

It’s impossible to get all that stuff in your head right away.

So what I’ve found to be more useful, particularly when you’re starting out, is a list of things NOT to do.

This gives you room to play and experiment with the confidence that you’re not committing any serious mastering faux pas.

...And it’s much easier to remember the 10 things to avoid, than the 150 things that you need to do :)

Some of these mistakes are things that you can instantly avoid or fix, while others are more ‘principles’ that will guide you down the right path.

The first step to improvement is always AWARENESS.
You can’t improve something that you don’t know needs improving.

You also can’t improve if you already think you know something.

I think this is a big reason a lot of people never improve the sound of their tracks, they think that they know all this stuff and so they never really go out to find the answers... And I’m not pointing fingers, we’re ALL guilty of this :)

So I just want to commend you on taking this step, because the fact that you’re reading this right now, tells me you’re different to most people.

You have the determination to succeed, and you’re actually DOING something about improving your tracks – not just sitting around and either thinking you know everything, or complaining about it.

So I hope that these next few pages will give you some insights and new perspectives that will help guide you on your path to producing world-class tracks.

With that said, let’s get started!

–Rob Williams

By the way, if you have questions or comments for me, I’d love to hear from you. You can email me at rob@prosoundformula.com
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Mistake #1

“Guessing, instead of understanding”

The first, most dangerous, and most common mistake when it comes to mastering is GUESSING, instead of UNDERSTANDING.

Now I can tell you that just by the fact that you’re reading this, you’re ALREADY a step ahead of most people, because you’re taking the time to learn and understand.

So I really commend you on that.

But still, don’t we ALL find ourselves from time to time… –how can I say this nicely… “pretending” that we know what’s going on when actually we don’t?

It’s like the drunk guy in the bar singing karaoke, he thinks he sounds amazing, but to everyone else… maybe not.

The point is, if you want OTHER people to enjoy your music, you don’t want to be the drunk guy in the bar! (I know, very profound)

Ignorance may be bliss… but it certainly doesn’t SOUND like bliss :)

Something I tell people a lot is;

“You can’t win a game that you don’t understand”.

Einstein, who was a pretty smart dude in his day, said;

“You have to learn the rules of the game,
And then you have to play better than anyone else.”
This is true for anything, from music to business to sports to politics –The one who UNDERSTANDS the ‘game’ the best, is usually the one who comes out top, because they know how to best take advantage of all the available options.

When it comes to mastering, most people literally GUESS their way through the process.

From EQ or compressor settings, to final formatting and album layout.

Now let me just say, I think that just trying a lot of different things and seeing what works and what doesn’t is great, especially when you’re learning.

– You WANT to experiment.

But eventually you have to stop and ask your self ‘What’s really going on here?’

When you start to UNDERSTAND what the different plugins and processes are doing, and you understand how they work, now you can start to manipulate them in a way that gives you the best results in the quickest amount of time.

And let’s be honest, the chances of someone getting great results by guessing what to do, is slim to none.

So it may take you some extra time to figure some of this stuff out, and it can be a little overwhelming at first, but let me assure you that in the long term it’s one of the best things you can do to improve the sound of your music.

“You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else.”

— Albert Einstein
Mistake #2

“Treating mastering like mixing”

We all get into producing music in different ways.

Maybe you had some songs that you wanted to record, and so you started reading up and learning about it.

Or maybe as soon as you discovered you could program tracks on your PC, you were hooked.

No matter how it happened, eventually we all get to that point where we start to compare our tracks to the records we love, and ask ourselves that fateful question:

“Why don’t MY songs sound this good??”

…And once we ask that question, there’s no turning back!

We’ve GOT to figure it out.

So after the recording hurdle, we eventually stumble upon this thing called “MIXING”.

– We learn that you can process and balance individual channels, and make the song sound a lot better.

But… it’s STILL not quite there… there must be something missing.

It’s generally only when we have some tracks that we really like, and now we want to release them to the world, that we stumble upon the final hurdle:
MASTERING.

But because we don't have any frame of reference yet for what mastering is, or is supposed to achieve, we simply try to take what we learnt about MIXING and apply it to mastering.

Big mistake.

The fact is, mastering is virtually nothing like mixing.

And if you approach it in the same way, you're destined to fail... and more than likely ruin your tracks in the process.

It's beyond the scope of this Report to go into the entire purpose of mixing and mastering, but if I could put it as SIMPLY as possible into just two sentences, it would be this:

In mixing, we're focussed on balancing and enhancing the INDIVIDUAL instruments. In mastering, we're focussing on balancing and enhancing the track as a WHOLE.

As you would imagine, this requires not only a different skill set, but a new way of THINKING.

What many people do when mastering their own tracks, is they focus on the way individual instruments sound.

They make changes to the ENTIRE track based on the way the vocals sound, the way the bass drum sounds, or the way the snare sounds.

And what happens is they end up compromising the entire track, and not really fixing the problem anyway.

We've got to take a HOLISTIC approach and consider the ENTIRE track and the way it's balanced.

If you do want to change an individual instrument, then it's best to go back to the mix phase and do it there.
Another common trap that many fall into, is using both the same plugins, as well as the same kinds of settings as in mixing.

As I mentioned, in the mixing phase we’re really focussing on processing INDIVIDUAL instruments, and so the plugins we use are targeted to those specific channels – and the settings are generally more extreme.

But when it comes to mastering, we need to be far more careful and subtle about the processing we use, as it will affect EVERYTHING.

In mixing, we’re also often trying to ELIMINATE frequencies from different tracks in order to make the mix cleaner.

In mastering, we want to make sure that we preserve the frequency spectrum, and get it sounding BALANCED.

So the important thing to realize is that mastering is a ‘different animal’, and we need to treat it that way if we want to get great results and do our songs justice.

“In mixing, we’re focussed on balancing and enhancing the INDIVIDUAL instruments. In mastering, we’re focussing on balancing and enhancing the track as a WHOLE.”
Mistake #3

"Using mastering presets"

‘The term ‘mastering preset’ is a perfect example of an oxymoron.

The two words simply don’t go together, yet so many people take songs they've spent days or weeks working on and ruin them by throwing the ‘Loud Rock Mastering 3’ preset at them.

I’m sure you’re wiser than this by now, but just in case there may be one person reading this who still thinks using a preset is a good idea, let me make it slightly more clear:

NEVER.

EVER.

EVER.

EVER.

...Use a ‘mastering preset’ —unless of course you are going for that cheap, amateur “I recorded this myself in my garage” kind of sound, then by all means, go ahead!

You see, presets may work now and then on individual instruments, like a ‘Guitar EQ’ preset for example, because in general there are certain things you can do to EQ almost any guitar that will sound good.

This could also work for something like a compressor preset that you put on a vocal, if nothing else, it should at least get you in the ballpark.
But when it comes to mastering, it’s a whole nother animal, and the game changes.

We’re now not dealing with INDIVIDUAL instruments, but with an ENTIRE mix and all the subtleties and nuances that go along with it.

Not only that, but mastering presets usually COMBINE EQ, compression, enhancements, limiting etc. ALL IN ONE “Convenient preset”

Now let me ask you the obvious question:

What are the chances that 8 different processes are going to magically be a match to the culmination of the 40 unique tracks you just mixed down?

You’ve probably got more chance winning the lotto.. or getting struck by lightning.

It’s just not possible.

Ok so now that I’ve made that quite clear, I’m going to completely contradict myself.

I actually like using presets on plugins sometimes.

–OK HANG ON, before you throw rocks at me, let me just explain…

1. I ONLY use them as a STARTING POINT.

In other words, I don’t just pick a preset and go with it, what I may do is go through a couple just to hear what they sound like, and which makes the track sound better.

Then from there, I’ll tweak it to get the best result.
2. I ONLY use them for INDIVIDUAL processes.

I’ll only use presets as a starting point on individual plugins, such as an EQ or a compressor; NEVER one of those ALL-IN-ONE presets that sets everything for you.

So the bottom line is, if you have a clear idea of what you’re going for, and you understand what you’re doing, then flipping through a couple of presets can sometimes get you on the right track more quickly.

But using presets as a crutch, or cover-up for not really knowing what’s going on, is one sure-fire way to ruin all the hard work that’s gone into creating, recording, and mixing your music.

And each time you use a preset, you rob yourself of a chance to LEARN something and improve your skills.

So until you understand what they’re doing, it may be safer to just stay away for now.

“So many people take songs they’ve spent days or weeks working on, and ruin them by throwing the ‘Loud Rock Mastering 3’ preset at them”
Mistake #4

"Monitoring too loud"

One of the best lessons I ever learnt about getting a great sound, was from the renowned mixing engineer Chris Lord-Alge – who has more credits to his name than the closing of a blockbuster movie.

He said – and I’m paraphrasing… “If I can make it sound big at a LOW volume, I know it’s going to sound even BIGGER when I turn it up.”

I’m always amused when I go into other studios and the engineer has the track BLASTING on some giant JBL monitors - and shouts over to me ‘IT SOUNDS COOL HEY!’

Well DUH! You’re playing it as loud as a rock concert.

Almost ANY track sounds cool if you turn it up loud enough!

So what most people do is they keep on turning up the volume because it gives the impression that the music is sounding better – and it actually DOES.

No joke, as you may know, our ears really do perceive louder to sound better.

However, it’s an ILLUSION.

It can easily lead you to believe that the low end is big and FAT, and the tops sound nice and crisp.

But the real test is when your track goes up against another commercial record – And the pro’s DON’T make this mistake.

Also, when it comes to making fine tweaks and adjustments, the louder you listen back at, the quicker your ears become fatigued and the more difficult it is to actually hear the changes.
So when you’re mastering (and mixing), spend most of your time monitoring at a low volume - around ‘normal’ conversation level.

But also make sure that you reference back at different levels to get different perspectives on how your track is going to sound.

“If I can make it sound big at a LOW volume, I know it’s going to sound even BIGGER when I turn it up”

– Chris Lord-Alge
Mistake #5

"Confusing harshness with loudness"

One of the dead give-aways of an amateur master, is a track that sounds LOUD, thin and harsh.

You come across this more and more these days as home muso’s who haven’t learnt the skills, try to make their music as loud as the pro’s tracks.

Is it some strange coincidence that they end up sounding this way?

Not quite.

The fact is, it’s EASY to make a track sound loud, all you have to do is roll off the bass and add some harshness and you’ve got a master that sounds louder than anything else out there.

...It also sounds WORSE than anything else out there.

Now to make a track loud, but still clear, fat, warm, full and retaining the dynamics, now that takes a bit of skill and know-how.

Confusing ‘harshness’ with loudness is one of the most common mistakes made by amateur mastering engineers.

Because our ears are more sensitive to frequencies in the presence range, around 2kHz - 6kHz, a track literally sounds louder when it has more of those frequencies present.

So what a lot of people do is boost those frequencies thinking that it sounds just as loud as their favorite records, but really it just sounds harsher... and gets TIRING to listen to VERY QUICKLY. (And they wonder why people don’t like their songs...)
This may not be so bad if you're listening back on some big speakers with a sub woofer—but what about all the fans who listen on their laptop or tinny MP3 player earphones, or these days, even their CELLPHONE'S built in speaker.

It’s going to sound terrible.

You want your tracks to sound FULL and WARM, not harsh, thin and piercing to the ears! (Unless you make music for sonic warfare.. and want to pierce the enemies ears and bring mass confusion...)

Go for QUALITY over quantity – It’s better to sound better than to sound louder.

That said, LOUDNESS DOES MATTER...

In today's 'A.D.D.' society, getting people’s attention is critical to the success of your music.

And how can you expect your music to stand out and compete if it sounds soft and weak compared to other commercials tracks?

The fact is, the way are ears are designed make it so that we perceive a louder track to sound better—it literally sounds like it has more low end and more tops.

However, the infamous ‘loudness war' has gotten to a point where we really can’t make tracks any louder.

We're sacrificing quality as it is.

I've even been accused once or twice of being one of the 'Nazi's of the loudness war' by showing people how to make their tracks louder.

These idealists will have you believe that everyone should just ‘drop their weapons' and agree that no one will make a track loud ever again.

...Unfortunately, they’re living in a world with magical rainbows and unicorns covered in chocolate sprinkles.
I tend to be more of a realist, and the fact of the matter is, loudness DOES matter.

BUT…

There’s a big difference between loud and FULL sounding, and loud and HARSH sounding.

We want to avoid the latter.

At the end of the day, the only way the loudness war is going to end is if the big name, already ESTABLISHED artists change FIRST.

If or until that happens, we need to make the most of it and make sure that we’re not scaring off potential fans by making our tracks harsh and cold sounding.

Ok, so after all my rambling on about how loudness matters, let me just clarify something.

Most of the commercial records you listen to were mastered by some of the top mastering engineers in the world, using the best equipment in the world.

I think it’s important that if you want your music to be taken seriously, we at least need to get in the ball park.

But you should NEVER try and make your masters any louder than commercial records.

…And if they do sound louder, chances are, it’s actually just HARsher.

The bottom line is, if you learn the correct principles and techniques, you can get the level you want AND the quality.

Sure, there’s going to be a slight sacrifice, but if done right we can minimize the downside.

So don’t make the same mistake as most people – thinking that loudness is the goal at any cost, and making your tracks loud and harsh is going to get them noticed.
Quality should ALWAYS be the number one consideration.

Because although making your track louder than everyone else may get you noticed, people will QUICKLY turn it off if it sounds bad.

The bottom line is, if you learn the correct principals and techniques, you can get the level you want AND the quality.
Mistake #6

“Mastering every song the same way”

Mastering every track the same way is a great idea—as long as every single one of your songs has EXACTLY the same instruments, played the same way, in the same room, recorded with the same equipment, on the same day,—I think you get my point here.

With each and every variable, the SOUND CHANGES.

What a lot of people do is once they’ve found something that works, they just keep doing that over and over.

In mixing, it could be with something simple like a vocal EQ, they’ll find one that they like one time, and then just use those exact settings on every single vocal they come across.

Now, this actually can work if it’s the same singer, using the same mic, and recorded in the same general space.

But when it comes to mastering, we’re dealing with maybe 20 to 60 different channels that have been blended together in a UNIQUE way, and the chances of one track being exactly the same as the next is... very unlikely.

Ok, that said, there is actually a 'middle ground' here.

If the songs are all from the same recording, using pretty much the same instruments, and you mixed them all yourself, they should sound pretty similar.

So what you can do is, once you’ve mastered one song and got it sounding right, you can use that as a STARTING point for the other tracks.
This can also help to make the album sound more consistent because all the songs are being processed in a similar way.

So the idea here is to use the same general plugins, but tweak them to adapt to each song.

It’s important to keep in mind that every song is unique, and that if we want to get the best results, what worked last time may not work this time.

This is why it’s critical to UNDERSTAND the mastering process, so that you can adapt to the changes that come along, and make sure that every song is the best it can be.

“It’s important to keep in mind that every song is unique, and that if we want to get the best results, what worked last time may not work this time”
Mistake #7
“Looking for the magic bullet”

We humans are funny creatures, we’re always looking for that ONE magic technique that’s going to be the answer to all our problems... we do this with a lot of things.

It’s completely irrational –and we KNOW it, but we still do it.

Anyway, enough with the psychology lecture, the point is, just like most things in life – there is NO MAGIC BULLET.

Most people waste so much time and money looking for some magic plugin or piece of gear, instead of spending their time honing their SKILLS.

There is NO one secret technique that the pros are all hiding from you and don’t want you to ever find out.

The fact is, it’s the CULMINATION of all the little things that you do, that ADD UP in the end to create a great final result.

So instead of wasting your time trying to find the latest plugin that’s going to change everything, rather focus on learning the principals and techniques that have been proven to work over time.

The fact is, it’s the CULMINATION of all the little things that you do, that ADD UP in the end to create a great final result.
Mistake #8

"Not considering the album"

With the advent of MP3 singles, the album as we know it may seem to be dying off.

But I personally don’t think it’s going anywhere.

Just think about the music that you’ve loved and enjoyed, although there’s always individual songs that stand out, you remember listening to ALBUMS.

There’s something about a great album that you can’t quite put your finger on.

It’s like a story.

Each song tells a part of the story, and in the end, it’s as if the album becomes STRONGER than the collection of it’s individual songs.

Most people have never even considered the way each song flows from one to the next, and where to place different kinds of songs to have the biggest impact.

They haven’t thought about how the sequence and spacing in between tracks changes the way someone perceives the album.

And they don’t master their songs in a way that makes them FIT together in a seamless way that enhances the album as a whole.
Singles are great, but they serve a very specific purpose:

TO GET ATTENTION.

But once you’ve gotten that new fan, they want something more – an EXPERIENCE, an ALBUM.

So when mastering, it’s important to take this all into consideration so that you end up with a great ALBUM... not just a collection of individual songs that happened to be placed next to each other.

“Each song tells a part of the story, and in the end, it’s as if the album becomes STRONGER than the collection of it’s individual songs”
Mistake #9

“Overcooking it”

Mastering is just as much about knowing what NOT to do, as it is about knowing WHAT to do.

The term ‘over cooking it’ is a reference to how food that's been overcooked, not only doesn't taste very good, but loses much of it’s natural nutrients.

In the same way, a track that’s been over processed starts to sound 'plasticky' and 'fake'.

It’s difficult to describe this, but I’m sure you’ve come across this before when you’ve over EQ’d or over compressed something.

This could be the single biggest aspect that sets amateur recordings apart from the commercial records.

What happens is, when the recording isn’t great, people try to FIX it by processing the instruments more.

So they keeping EQing and compressing, trying to make it sound good.

But the more you process it, the more it loses it’s natural sound, and starts to take on this ‘artificial / over processed’ kind of sound.

When it comes to mastering, it’s VERY easy to over do things because not only are we dealing with the overall track – but also, it’s probably ALREADY had a lot of processing done to it.

The thing that we need to keep in mind is that no plugin is totally transparent.
In other words, every plugin takes the ENTIRE sound, and re-calculates it based on its algorithm.

With every calculation, there is some degree of error, and so we get further and further away from the original sound.

This may work on certain types of instruments, but when EVERYTHING has been processed to death, what you end up with is:

A Big Mac.


– Ok, I'm just kidding (kind of)

…I'm really not out to take down Macdonalds here, but I’m sure you’ll agree that even if you enjoy eating Macdonalds now and then, you don’t want your music to sound like Macdonalds!

You could also look at it like making a meal.

If you overcook that meal it starts to lose its taste, texture, and natural goodness.

If you BURN the meal, it actually DOESN'T MATTER WHAT IT WAS BEFORE – burnt is burnt.

In the same way, it doesn't matter how great a song, recording, or mix is – if you ‘burn’ it during mastering, it can destroy ALL the hard work that has gone into it.

So am I saying NOT to use plugins?

Of course not.

All I’m saying is that it’s important to realize that every plugin has both its pros and cons, and it’s important to take that into consideration before throwing 27 plugins on a track.
But using a lot of plugins is actually NOT the biggest factor, it's HOW MUCH you use each plugin.

So, if it's an EQ, it's how drastic the changes you're making are.

If it's a compressor, it's how much you're compressing.

The biggest amateur giveaway is over EQing or over compressing.

You never hear this on pro records, yet you almost always hear it on budget demos.

The best advice I can give you on this is: 'Less is more'.

That said, sometimes the best way to figure out what NOT to do is by going way overboard.

In other words, the only way to learn what over-compression sounds like, is to OVER COMPRESS.

So by trying out some extreme settings, your ears will become more accustomed to hearing those side effects, and you'll notice them a lot sooner.

But if in doubt, follow this advice – straight out of a Chinese fortune cookie:

“It's better to undercook than to overcook”.

“Mastering is just as much about knowing what NOT to do, as it is about knowing WHAT to do”
Mistake #10

“Not referencing enough”

If I had to give you just ONE piece of advice about mastering, it would be to REFERENCE MORE.

You cannot reference too much.

Referencing just means going and playing your tracks back on as many different systems as possible to make sure they translate to those systems.

We want to make sure that our songs sound great on as many different systems, and in as many different environments, as possible.

Many of the top mastering houses have dedicated rooms filled with a collection of different playback systems that they can listen back on and switch between.

It’s all about getting different perspectives.

Each system gives you a new perspective because you hear the track in a new way, and you hear how that system accentuates different aspects of the mix.

It’s impossible to cater for every single scenario, but we need to find the best COMPROMISE so that it sounds great on the MAJORITY of systems.

We need to make sure that the ‘essence’ of what makes a track tick, doesn’t get ‘lost in translation’.

So for example, if a bass line is critical to the groove of a song, we need to make sure that it doesn’t get lost when played back on smaller systems.
It may sound great on a system with a big subwoofer, but what about when it’s played on the radio and someone’s listening to it on their little boombox?

So in this case, we may look at enhancing the lower mid-range, bringing it out a bit so that the bass line will be more audible on smaller systems.

Of course, it’s important that these things are considered in the mix phase as well, and there’s only so much you can do to the overall track.

Even in the ‘pro world’, if a mastering engineer is unhappy about something in the mix, he may send it back to the mixing engineer to make changes.

In the same way, when you’ve got your ‘mastering engineer’s hat’ on, it’s up to you to make the final call, and that may mean going back and tweaking the mix.

The bottom line is, mastering is the FINAL step, so just keep asking yourself:

“Does the overall track sound RIGHT when I listen to it on this system?”

“If I had to give you just ONE piece of advice about mastering, it would be to REFERENCE MORE”
Summary checklist

Mistake #1 – “Guessing, instead of understanding”

✓ “You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else” – Albert Einstein

✓ Most people guess their way through the mastering process, and that’s why they don’t achieve CONSISTENT results.

✓ Understanding the mastering process enables you to adapt to each song’s unique sound and make the necessary adjustments.

Mistake #2 – “Treating mastering like mixing”

✓ Mastering is a “DIFFERENT ANIMAL” to mixing, and must be treated differently.

✓ Because we’re dealing with the overall track, our changes need to be more subtle and transparent.

✓ In mixing, we’re focussed on balancing and enhancing the INDIVIDUAL instruments. In mastering, we’re focussing on balancing and enhancing the track as a WHOLE.
Mistake #3 – “Using mastering presets”

✓ Using mastering presets as an excuse for ignorance is a sure-fire way to ruin your tracks.

✓ Once you understand what the presets are doing, they CAN serve as a good STARTING point.

✓ If you’re going to use a preset, only use one on an INDIVIDUAL process. i.e. NOT an all-in-one mastering preset.

Mistake #4 – “Monitoring too loud”

✓ Monitoring too loud is the quickest way to delude yourself into thinking your track is sounding great.

✓ When you listen back at a high volume, your ears get tired quicker and it becomes difficult to make accurate judgements about the mix.

✓ “If I can make it sound big at a LOW volume, I know it’s going to sound even BIGGER when I turn it up” – Chris Lord-Alge

Mistake #5 – “Confusing harshness with loudness”

✓ There’s a big difference between loud and FULL sounding, and loud and HARSH sounding.

✓ Go for QUALITY over quantity – It’s better to sound better than to sound louder.

✓ Loudness does matter, but quality is first priority.

✓ NEVER try and make your masters any louder than commercial records.
Mistake #6 – “Mastering every song the same way”

✓ Each song is UNIQUE
✓ With each and every variable, the SOUND CHANGES.
✓ When mastering an album, the idea is to use the same general plugins, but tweak them to adapt to each song.

Mistake #7 – “Looking for the magic bullet”

✓ There is NO MAGIC BULLET… this includes plugins, techniques, gear, software, instruments, etc.
✓ It’s the CULMINATION of all the little things that you do, that ADD UP in the end to create a great final result.

Mistake #8 – “Not considering the album”

✓ Consider the way each song flows from one to the next, and where to place different kinds of songs to have the biggest impact.
✓ Singles get ATTENTION, albums create an EXPERIENCE.

Mistake #9 – “Overcooking it”

✓ The biggest amateur giveaway is over EQing or over compressing.
✓ When it comes to mastering, we need to be even more careful about over doing it, because the individual channels have already been processed in the mix phase.
Mistake #10 – “Not referencing enough”

✓ The purpose of referencing is to get many different perspectives on how your track sounds.

✓ We also want to make sure that our tracks sound great on the MAJORITY of systems.

✓ If I had to give you just ONE piece of advice about mastering, it would be to REFERENCE MORE.
Mastering can seem like a minefield of potential disasters, but once you start to understand it, it’s really not that complex.

Just by being AWARE of these common mistakes, you’re already ahead of 99% of the people simply guessing their way through mastering their tracks.

I think of mastering, along with recording and mixing, as the 3 essential pillars of getting a great sound.

You can’t neglect any one of these areas.

But if you work at getting good at them, and developing your skill in each area, before you know it you’ll find the sound of your songs improving dramatically.

I hope this Report has been insightful to you, and that it contributes in some small way to your music improving and sounding great... and ultimately, more people getting to experience and enjoy it.

Because that’s the whole point, that’s why we do this.

I wish you all the best, and I’ll talk to you soon,

– Rob Williams
The 10 Major Mastering Mistakes

“How To Avoid The Common Pitfalls That Cause Most People To HARM Their Tracks… Without Even Realizing It”

By Rob Williams

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