PRIME LOOPS

The Pros and Cons of Mixing as you go.

There is definitely something to be said for mixing as you go, especially when creating computer based music. But there are also drawbacks. It all really depends on how you produce your music, and which style suits you, and who will be doing the final mixes and masters of your track.

If you are creating Electronic Music, you will inevitably mix to a certain extent as you produce. You will be adjusting faders, adding effects, and getting it to sound as you like. Which is useful as it helps you visualise the finished product and allows you to see how your track is progressing. However, it is easy to get too drawn into this, and if your not careful it can begin to hamper the creative process. If you come up with a great idea, and you feel like you're on a roll so to speak, don't get bogged down playing with effects and compression, or you may begin to lose site of your track. Now this is only an opinion as people successfully produce in a great number of ways. However, I personally find it best to get the ideas down, especially if they are flowing at the time, and get a basic structure before I start playing with effects, compression, and EQ.

If you are intending to have your music professionally mixed or mastered, you are best keeping the mixing to a minimum. If it is to be mixed by somebody else, steer clear of adding too many of your own effects, and don't put any effects on your master channel. Leave a good 1dB of headroom, and definitely don't compress on the master channel. Speak to whoever will be doing this for you as different Engineers will have different preferences.

If you are mixing and mastering yourself, try and get all the creative bits out of the way first (the fun part!) before you begin EQ-ing and Compressing etc (the pro part!) and before you add any effects, make sure you get the levels and panning done first. Once the foundations of your track are in place, then you can begin sculpting it. Try and stay away from adding effects to your master channel. Get your mix as good as possible, bounce it down to a 24 Bit audio file, then master this separately, or ideally, send it off to be mastered.

Many modern types of music require the use of effects as part of the creative process, such as delay, reverb, filters and automation. In this case you will be doing this as part of the creative process, so the line between mixing and producing starts to get blurred. Personally, I like to have a good idea of how I want my track to turn out, so I sketch down a rough structure and take notes on ideas I come up with. This allows me to get the basics down, and then go into the 'fiddly bits' later. However, I know a great deal of producers who sit down, play about and come up with ideas which develop as they go, and they often have no idea how their track will eventually turn out. They do a lot of mixing as they go, and it is really part of the creative process. It is worth mentioning this however, that having some structure to your creative process if you wish to carry out professional tracks does help, although there is also nothing wrong with letting loose and having fun…so…its up to you…there is no right or wrong way, if you are confident with your EQ-ing, compression, use of effects ect, and want to 'mix as you go' with a clean idea of how your track will turn out, then you're onto a winner, if not, then clean it up afterwards, or let someone do it for you!

Most importantly, have fun!

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