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The first time I ever made a piece of music, and no one said 'God that sounds terrible', I thought, "Well, I got away with that." — *deadmau5*

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CHAPTER RECAP

Lots of people send their recordings to mastering engineers to put on the final touches. If you're like Joel and you want total sonic control over your music (or if you can't afford a mastering engineer yet) you should be mastering your tracks yourself at home.

Mastering is usually just three processes: adjusting the dynamics of an entire track (difference between loud and quiet sounds), the overall EQ, and the overall volume. Joel starts his mastering process by turning his channel volumes down until his master volume is peaking around -6db. Next he EQs out every frequency in the sub-audible range below 30Hz.

Then comes the master chain, which usually consists of some combination of compressors, multi-band compressors (which can compress different frequency ranges with different intensities), parametric EQs, and limiters.

A limiter is almost always the last thing on his chain. Limiters are like harder working compressors—they apply very serious gain reduction to all sounds over a certain volume threshold. The more you limit, the more you can turn up your entire mix without it clipping. But the more you limit, the less dynamic range you have between the quiet and loud sounds in your track. Dubstep mastering is all about overcranking your limiter. Joel likes to find a sweet spot for his limiting where his track feels loud, but the quiet parts still sound quiet.

SUBCHAPTERS

- ▶ Mastering Yourself
- ▶ Mastering Basics
- ▶ Limiting
- ▶ No Magic Master Chain
- ▶ Loudnesss. Perceived Loudness
- ▶ Getting Feedback on

NOTES

Here's some of the gear featured in this lesson:

- ▶ Fab Filter L1 Stereo Maximizer
- ▶ Fab Filter Pro L Limiter

TAKE IT FURTHER

- ▶ Listen to some different approaches to limiting. Listen to Skrillex's [Scary Monsters and Nice Sprites](#) again. Which are the loud sounds and which are the quiet sounds? How much difference can you hear between them?

- ▶ Now listen to Rush's [Tom Sawyer](#) and ask yourself the same questions. Now listen back to some of your favorite tracks—what kind of dynamic range do they have? This will help you figure out what kind of limiting might be right for your music.

ASSIGNMENT

- ▶ Do a blind loudness taste-test. Take one of your own tracks and add a limiter to the master channel. Export three different versions of the track with different levels of limiting—one very light; one in the sweet spot that still gives good dynamic range; and one with the limiter cranked to dubstep levels. Now listen to each of those three tracks on different stereo systems—in your car, over headphones, on big and small speakers. Which style of limiting is usually your favorite?

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