

Mixcraft Assessment 1 Mastering

Name. MICHAEL FREEMAN (HOLMES)

Date. 7th June 2023

Module CRMT160

Aim

Master for a streaming ready E.P. that sounds consistent and compares well to similar tracks. I used multiple reference tracks including *Radiohead - Where I end and you begin (The sky is falling in)* (Hail to the Thief 2003). I also used *Suzanne Vega - Marlene On The Wall* (Marlene on the wall 1986), *Michelle Shocked - Graffiti Limbo* and *(Making the Run to) Gladewater* (Short, Sharp, Shocked. 1988). For Q magazine the recording of Michelle Shocked voice maintained the "spontaneous feel of her raggedy vocals" (Q Magazine 1990). I aimed to master to retain this spontaneous quality.

Discussion



Figure 1 - A/B Listening

A/B listening was setup for the reference tracks as can be seen in Figure 1 (Marshall 2016).



Figure 2 - M/S and Compression

M/S correction was used (Figure 2 and 3) to fix problems in the original.

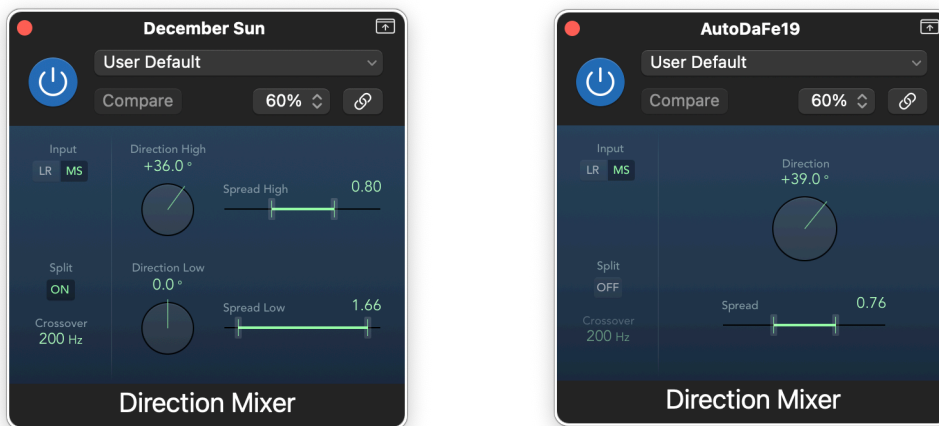


Figure 3 - M/S Correction

I found M/S to be an effective way to correct harmonic balance as born out by comparing to reference tracks. Jonathan Wyner identified the benefits of Mid/Side in mastering.

"[...] in mid/side mode, if I'm just de-essing the mid and I don't have to mess the sides up in certain instances, it's genius, it's brilliant. Every so often to create a slightly greater sense of space and to declutter a mix a tiny bit, fantastic." (Hepworth-sawyer 2019: 75)

Jonathan Wyner went to on to echo the approach ...

"[...] there was way too much "bloom" in the low mid from the guitar, and it was covering the vocal. The only way to address it was to pull a little bit of low midrange energy out of the sides. I could have done it with a stereo tool, but then the vocal would have ended up being too thin." (Hepworth-sawyer 2019: 76)

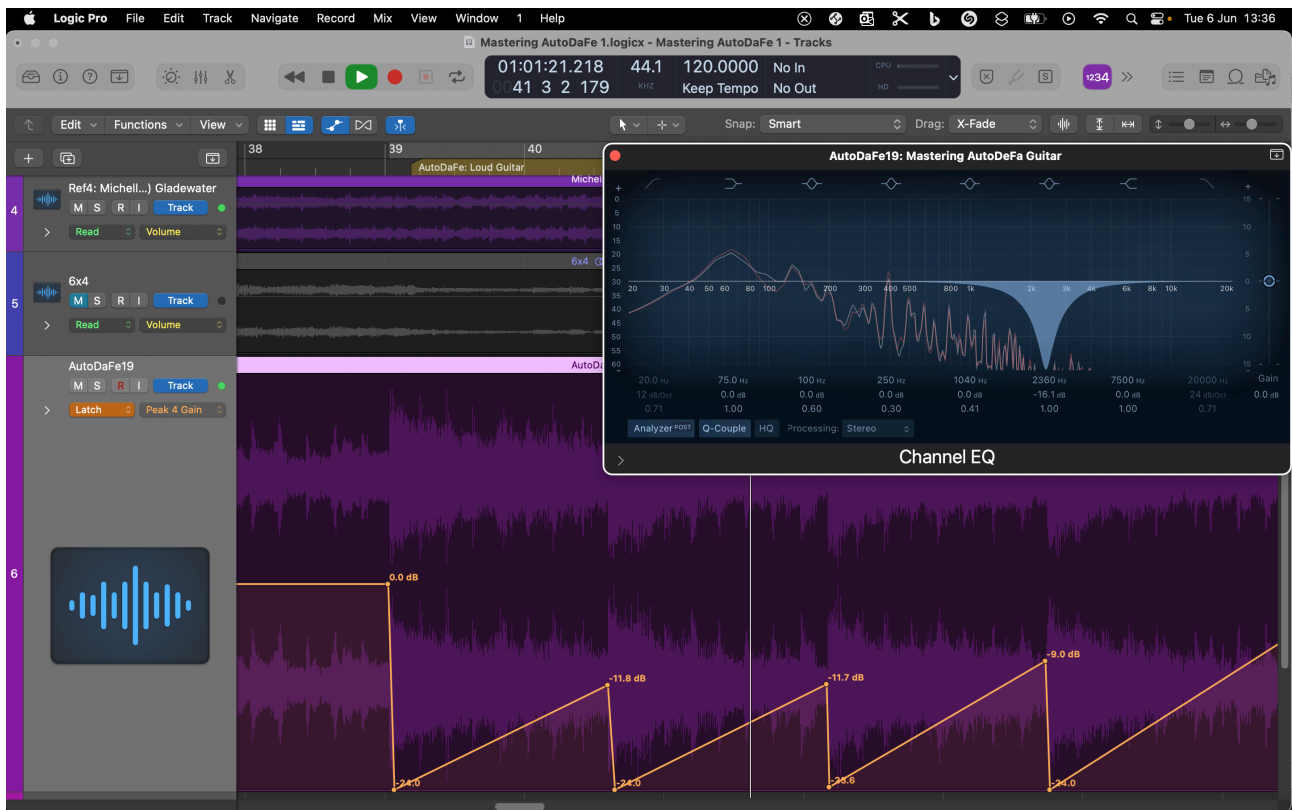


Figure 4 - Guitar correction.

For AutoDaFe there was a harsh guitar sound that was corrected using automation of the channel equalisation (Figure 4). According to Randy Merrill maintaining EQ balance is important in order to achieve the overall loudness.

"I find that much of achieving loudness is about EQ balance. A recording that is balanced in terms of EQ is going to sound loud naturally, because it has a fuller frequency spectrum." (Hepworth-sawyer 2019: 46)

A high pitched glitch at 3:17 resisted being removed with EQ. The part of the arrangement repeats, so the offending section was cut out and replaced with the same part of the arrangement just prior to the problematic section as can be seen in Figure 5. This is termed an "intercut".

"Although these changes can be attempted 'on the fly' in real time, it is best to go back and record the sections with different settings into the RDAW as an intercut and edit them into the original mastered pass of the song." (Göknar 2020).

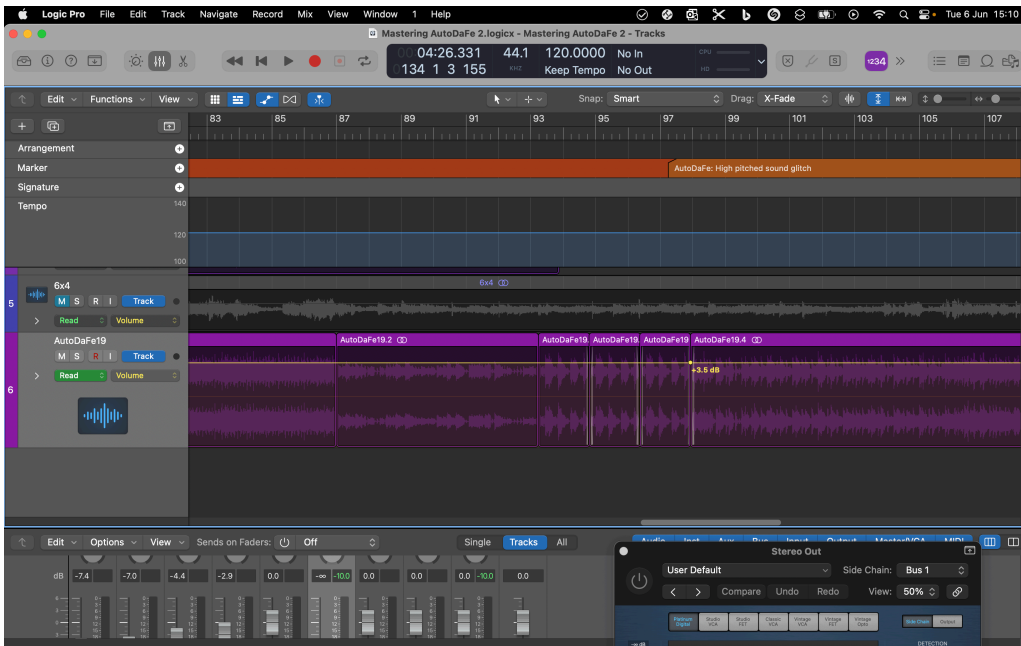


Figure 5 - Glitch fix.

Conclusion

I mastered using a common approach and using genre specific reference comparators. I was happy with the final result as it retained a spontaneous quality of the vocals as well as a rawer “live” production. There was some macro processing I could have done on some imperfect equalisation in the tracks but I was undecided if this would lose some of the raw quality I was looking for. I found that my experience as a DJ allowed me to clearly compare to the reference tracks but I would like to go into more depth of study on various mastering techniques.

List of Figures

Figure 1 - A/B listening. June 2023 while using Logic Pro. Screenshot by the author.

Figure 2 - M/S and Compression. June 2023 while using Logic Pro. Screenshot by the author.

Figure 3 - M/S Correction. June 2023 while using Logic Pro. Screenshot by the author.

Figure 4 - Guitar correction. June 2023 while using Logic Pro. Screenshot by the author.

Figure 5 - Glitch fix. June 2023 while using Logic Pro. Screenshot by the author.

References

GÖKNAR, Evren. 2020. *Major Label Mastering : Professional Mastering Process*. 1st edition. New York: Routledge.

'Graffiti Limbo'. *Short, Sharp, Shocked* [sound recording: CD]. 1988. Mercury.

HEPWORTH-SAWYER, Russ and Jay HODGSON. 2019. *Audio Mastering : the Artists Discussions from Pre-Production to Mastering*. Edited by Russ Hepworth-Sawyer and Jay Hodgson. London ;: Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.

'(Making the Run to) Gladewater'. *Short, Sharp, Shocked* [sound recording: CD]. 1988. Mercury.

Marlene on the wall [sound recording: CD]. 1986. A7M Records.

MARSHALL, Haze. 2016. 'How to Make an A/B Switch Button in Logic pro X for Referencing'. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkySLnvyRuc) [online guide]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkySLnvyRuc> [accessed 3 Jun 2023].

Q Magazine. 1990. *50 Recommended albums of the year*. Q.

'Where I end and you begin (The sky is falling in)'. *Hail to the Thief* [sound recording: CD]. 2003. EMI.

Appendices

