

MASTERING TIPS

GENERAL INFORMATION AND HELPFUL TIPS

When the mastering engineer receives your master tape, the only knowledge he will have of your project is the information you provide. Any information you supply is useful in obtaining the best possible product. Always give a phone number, or fax number where you can be reached during normal business hours. The engineer may start work on your project and need to communicate with you. If you cannot be reached, your project may be delayed until contact is made. A master tape log with song sequence and times should be included with each master tape. This information is necessary for the mastering engineer to complete your order efficiently. If requested, test CDs and cassettes will be sent for your approval before production of your order. Do not delay in your approval. Quick approval is necessary to ensure your shipping date. If a problem arises between what you sent to QCA for manufacturing and what you receive as a test CD or cassette, remember this is the purpose of a "test." Feel free to call us with any concerns you have. We will correct and/or adjust for your full approval before manufacturing.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR THOSE FURNISHING THEIR MASTER ON DAT

DAT tapes must have two minutes of recorded silence at the head of the tape. This is to provide lead in time and avoid tape damage which may occur from the tape being stretched at the spool. Unreliability of DAT tapes is common. DAT tapes may play back problem free on the deck they were recorded on, but show some type of problem when played on another deck. Always have a backup made before shipping your master tape. DAT tapes have a control track recorded along with the music. It is important if you start and stop recording on your DAT that you do not break this control track. A broken control track may cause digital glitches or tracking problems. DAT program numbers never seem to line up with the number of songs on a DAT. This is OK, as long as you note this on the information you provide the mastering engineer. When recording to DAT tape digital zero is the loudest possible level which can be recorded. Anything above digital zero is referred to as an "OVER." This "OVER" can cause digital distortion. This is not acceptable to the industry's "Red Book Standard" for CD manufacturing. QCA mastering can correct this problem and obtain maximum digital zero for your CD project.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR THOSE FURNISHING THEIR MASTER ON ANALOG TAPE

Analog tapes must have test tones to ensure proper playback. The test tones you provide are used to align the playback machine in mastering to the exact specifications used in the recording of your master tape. If noise reduction was used on your master tape please indicate what type of noise reduction was used. This is important for proper playback. Analog tapes recorded after 1970 may develop a problem with shedding and gumming causing severe problems when played back. This is a tape industry problem and includes all major tape brands. QCA mastering can restore your analog masters and furnish you with a digital backup tape or CD one off.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR THOSE ORDERING CDS

CDs are manufactured at 44.1 K sampling rate. If you send in a digital tape at any other sampling rate it will be digitally converted to 44.1 K. It is important not to mix different sampling rates on the same master tape. The amount of space between songs is important. You may furnish the master tape with the space between songs already set. On the other hand you may need the mastering engineer to set the spacing between songs for you. Song spacing of three to five seconds is standard, but you may choose as little or as much space as you wish. CD track start and stop points are of the utmost importance. If there are two songs without silence between them the engineer needs to know if you want a CD track number inserted. In this case you need to give some information as to where the song's start point should be. Although CDs have >90db of dynamic range the trend seems to be, "CUT IT HOT." If you want it "HOT" remember, compression and/or limiting may be used. Please give permission on this approach.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR THOSE ORDERING CASSETTES

QCA manufactured cassettes are encoded with Dolby B noise reduction. Dolby B noise reduction is an industry standard for both major and independent labels. Decoding of Dolby B is required on playback to reduce excessive tape hiss. You may request Dolby B noise reduction not be used in the manufacturing of your cassettes if you choose.

Cassette tapes are mastered directly from the source you provide to a digital master CD-ROM, therefore it is essential that songs master is in the correct sequence with desired gaps between tracks. When figuring the sequence of your cassette, keep in mind the total length of each side. Try to make the "A" side the longest. If the "B" side is longer, the "A" side will have blank tape at the end. Example: "A" side 19:00 minutes, "B" side 20:00 minutes, "A" side will have 1:00 minute of blank tape at the end. When mastering your cassette the engineer will stop play of your master tape between sides. Please allow enough space between sides for starting and stopping of your master tape. This does not apply to CDs because they don't have "sides."

