Make an EP in 30 Days
## Ableton Course

Day 17

Take notes

Congratulations! You've come a long way & we are in the final stretch. This is where we are going to put a final ear on our work & make some final tweaks.

So now that we have our song mostly dialed in, we are going to take it out of the DAW. Although having the visual aspect helped to get you this far, it can often hinder the final process.

Render

Our first step is to render our song.
To do this, follow the steps below:
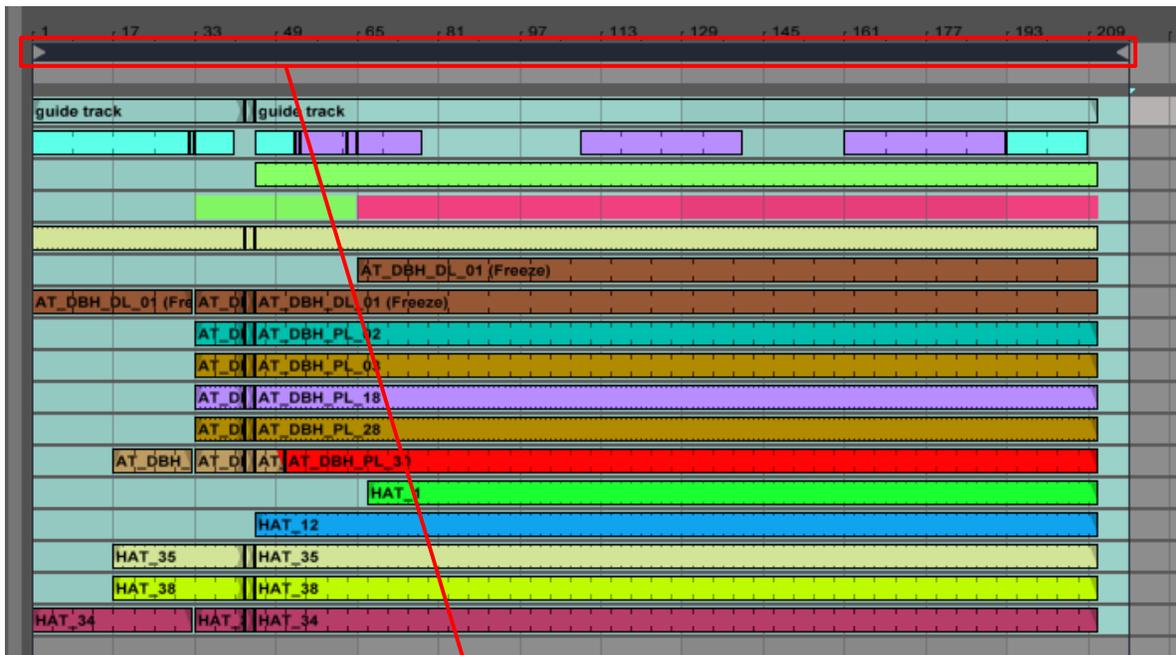
Loop Brackets

1. Set your loop brackets to the beginning & end of your song. Leave an extra 4 to 8 bars at the end so you don't cut off any final delays & or reverbs.

2. Go to file then click export audio/video

3. choose where to save the file & name it

Now you will want to grab a pen & paper or open a note taking app on your computer. Textedit, notepad or evernote will all do the trick.

In the next pages, I'll tell you what to listen for.

The 1ˢᵗ thing you'll likely notice is your volume levels. It should be fairly easy to determine anything that jumps out too much & what might be too quiet. Write down the specific minute & second for each part that needs to be raised or lowered.

Boring spots

As you listen through your song, listen for a groove going on too long without anything new happening. Unless you have a really good reason for keeping that tension, you want the whole song to keep your interest.

Extra drum hits, hi hat layers, fillers or an added loop in a certain section can create new interest. It doesn't have to be overly noticeable to still be effective. The brain is really good at detecting little changes.

Make sure to write down where your song needs an energy boost or a change.

As you build your song & have many instruments with reverbs & delays, you can run the risk of it muddying up your mix. Listen for any spots that you can back off an effect to make your mix a little cleaner without taking away from your song's atmosphere.

When you have gone through the process of writing down each necessary change, it's time to go back into Ableton & tackle each item on your list.

Be attentive to the process, but don't overthink things. Go through your checklist 1 by 1 until you're done.

Before over analyzing things, remember that nothing is ever perfect & that it's the imperfections that give your music personality. Don't agonize over 1/10th of a db.

If it sounds good to you, trust your gut. You'll be having to rely on it a lot in the future.

Listen

After you've gone through your checklist, render down your mix & give it a few listens in different systems. Listen on a home stereo system, your car & through your phone.

Listen to how your mix sounds on multiple systems & take any final notes if something sounds off to you. Listen to each instrument & also listen in terms of low, mid & high frequencies.

Understand that your song is not mastered, so don't compare the volume to other songs, just listen to the mix itself.

If you find you need to make some final tweaks, go through the note taking process again, and go through your checklist 1 last time.

Calling your song done can be the scariest part of the process. You put yourself at risk of people not liking your work. This is normal, even for the pros.

The pros know that they get better with practice & there is no such thing as perfection. Do the best you can & call it done. Sharing your art with the world is what separates an artist from an amateur.

Prepare for mastering

When it comes to rendering your final mix, you aren't going for volume. Instead, your goal is to prepare your song for the mastering stage. Here are some things you'll want to do.
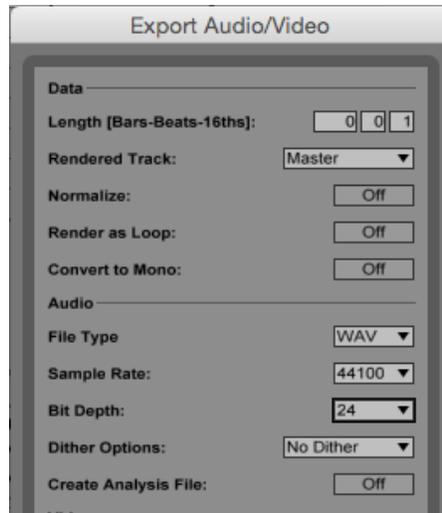
1. Make sure the highest levels in your mix don't exceed -3db

2. Render to 24bit, 44.1Hz or higher (but this should be fine)

3. Set Dither options to "No Dither"

4. Do not put any compression or limiting on your master channel. If you have been using either of these during your songwriting process, turn them off now.

Homework

1. Homework: Listen to the track you mixed down from the file (not your daw).

2. Take notes of anything that seems off to you & the time it happens.You can stop & replay parts so you are accurate on the time.

3. Give it a 2nd run through just to double check your notes.

4. Take a 15 minute break & then dive back into your daw & tackle each issue quickly. Don't overthink. Just knock them out. Then do your 2nd mixdown & repeat the process to make sure everything is sounding dialed it.

5. When you have no more problems with your song, it's done. Congratulations!