

10 WAYS TO USE REFERENCES ON YOUR NEXT MIX

I know you've heard to reference, but how? Do you just hit play and start mixing? Clicking back and forth endlessly until trial and error lead you to the perfect mix? No way!

If you've lost hope in referencing or you're still fighting through the pain, I hope this list will help you out.

Here are 10 ways that I use referencing.

BALANCES

Simple, but effective! How's your vocal sitting compared to the reference? How about the kick? The snare? Clicking over to a track that you or your client has chosen to reference is a great way to double check your balances. Lose your pride and try it! ;)

LOW END

The almighty low end. Get this right, and you'll have acceptance from audio engineers around the world. But seriously, your average listener knows when the low end is missing or if it's overloading the song.

TOP END

Harsh mixes leave the listener fatigued and won't get your songs playing on repeat anytime soon. You should be able to tell if your mix is overly bright, but then again, our ears can get tired pretty quickly

SIBILANCE

Sibilance. Harsh and painful if not tamed. Give a listen to a mix that you love and chances are the sibilance won't bother you. Listen back to your mix and see if you feel the same way.

WIDTH

Be careful. If you listen to a reference and it's wider than your mix you may think use an imager on your mix buss and spread eagle. Don't. Instead, try widening your guitars or keys while leaving your drums and bass alone.

EFFECTS

I don't suggest stealing ideas, but I do recommend that you become inspired by them. Hear something that you like in the reference? A delay throw or reverb splash that you think could work for your mix? Tweak to taste!

RADIO READY

IF it's your goal or your client's request to deliver a mix that competes with what's on the radio, you should consider referencing multiple radio hits. And not just from the genre of your song.

VOCALS

Compression, EQ, distortion, you name it. You can learn a lot by referencing even if you just pay attention to the vocals. Are the doubled parts down the middle? Out wide? How about the EQ? Thin? Warm? Don't forget to study the level of the vocals in the reference.

LOUDNESS

Try reducing the references overall volume to match yours before you go smashing it with a limiter. Which do you prefer? Use your ears and trust your judgment.

EQ MATCH

An incredible tool for working with references. iZotope's Ozone EQ and the Fab Filter Pro Q2 are my go to plugins for this. Don't underestimate the power of EQ matching.