



The Headphone Mixing Blueprint *Featuring Frequency Focused Referencing™*

A Proven System for Mixing Tracks That Translate — Straight From Your Headphones

Trusted by 25,000+ producers, engineers, and worship mixers worldwide.

This is the system that finally makes headphone mixing not just possible — but reliable.

Hey friend — David Glenn here.

I'm a multi-platinum mix engineer (Redimi2, Dr. Tumi, Blanca, Christine D'Clario, Jeremy Rosado...) but more importantly, I'm a husband, father, and follower of Jesus — helping music makers like you create incredible mixes that move people with the intended message and emotion of the song.

Whether you're in a spare bedroom, church studio, or a tour bus with earbuds and a laptop — if you're mixing, you need a trusted system that works on headphones. That's what this guide is all about.

Can You Actually Mix on Headphones?

The short answer: **YES.**

The better answer: **You have to.**

Let's be real — most of your audience is listening on headphones. So why wouldn't we mix with that in mind?

Mixing on headphones lets you:

- Work anywhere — no need for a treated room
- Eliminate the guesswork of bad acoustics
- Hear subtle details you might miss on monitors
- Save time, money, and frustration

Yes, there are challenges. But I'll show you how to fix them inside this blueprint.

My Journey with Headphones

Back in 2014, I started sharing my mixing journey through The Pro Audio Files and eventually through my sites David Glenn Recording and The Mix Academy. I also co-founded Pro Mix Academy with my friend, Warren Huart of Produce Like A Pro and have written and/or consulted for many awesome audio engineering YouTube channels and websites over the years including The Recording Revolution, Produce Like a Pro, Unstoppable Recording Machine, Slate Digital, Sonarworks, and many more.

Since then, I've mentored thousands of producers, musicians, and church teams through courses, YouTube, and coaching — many of whom mix exclusively on headphones (just like I have for years).

And not because I have to — because they work.



Open-Back vs Closed-Back (And Why It Matters)

Headphone Type	Best For	Pros	Cons
Closed-Back	Recording	Isolation, mobile use	Less accurate stereo image
Open-Back	Mixing	Natural tone, less fatigue	Sound leakage, less portable

Closed-back headphones are best for recording — a good pair will prevent sound from leaking into the mic.

Open-back headphones are ideal for mixing — more natural sound, less ear fatigue, and better stereo imaging.

That said, I use both depending on where I am and what I'm doing. My closed-backs are lifesavers in loud environments or when I need to focus on the low end. For longer sessions or critical decisions, I lean on my Sennheiser HD650s — the comfort and clarity are next level.

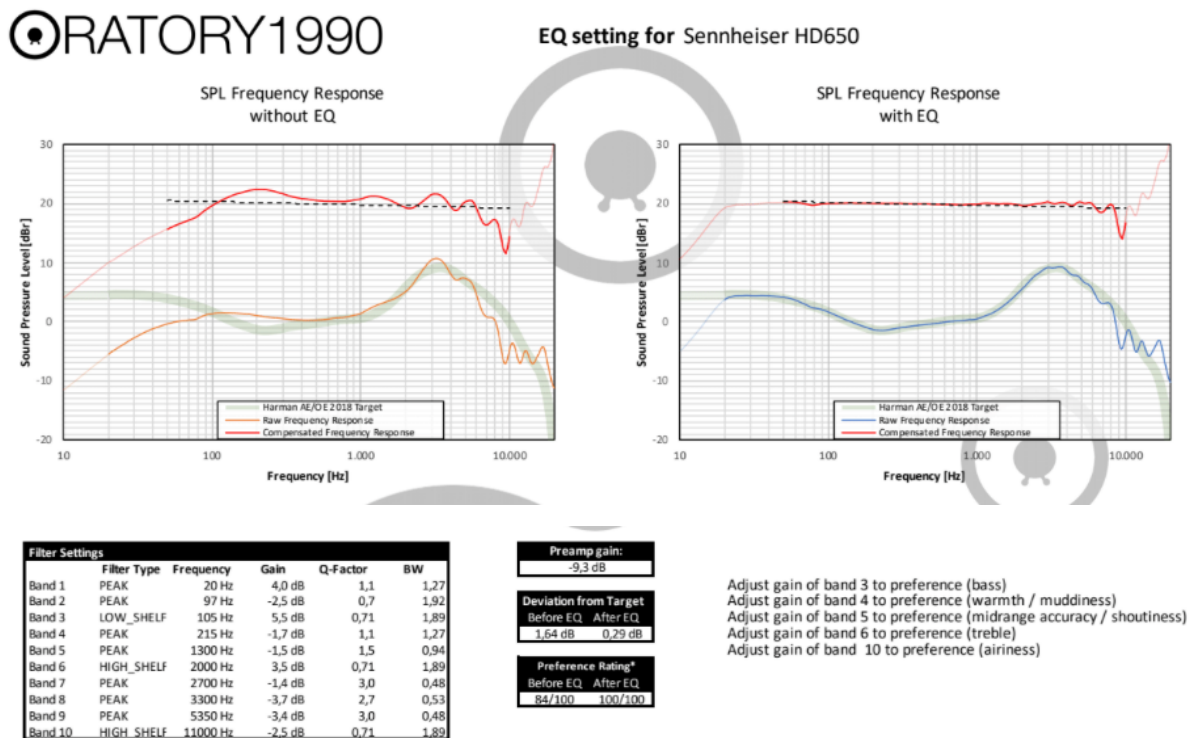
✅ **Pro Tip:** If you're only buying one pair, and you're focused on mixing — go open-back and add a good pair of closed back when you can to help manage your low end easier.

Try This: Mix a track using only your open-backs. Then “save as” and tweak the same mix with your closed-backs. Compare notes. Commit to learning how *your* pair responds. Trusting your cans is more important than chasing the “best” pair.

Headphone Calibration + Oratory1990

I used to pair my headphones with a calibration plug-in but have switched to simply using the Oratory1990 headphone target curves and I couldn't be happier.

If you want to see if he's created a curve for your headphones you can search and download them all for free: [Oratory1990 Presets on Reddit](#)



Pro Insight: Without calibration, you're mixing through a broken lens. With it, you're mixing in HD.

Quick Note: If you use the FabFilter Pro-Q EQ (any version) as your EQ of choice for the Oratory1990 presets, you'll need the conversion spreadsheet.

[Click here to access the free conversion spreadsheet!](#)



The Real Pros and Cons of Mixing on Headphones

Benefits:

- Consistent sound no matter where you work
- Better detail for reverb tails, delays, and spatial effects
- Great low-cost alternative to studio monitors
- Easy to mix quietly — perfect for late nights, church offices, hotel rooms
- Immediate feedback on your most common playback system

Limitations:

- Less low-end feel (fixable)
- No inter-aural crosstalk (fixable)
- Faster ear fatigue
- Different sound across models (you must learn YOURS)
- Potential neck and posture fatigue during long sessions (meh)

More on Crosstalk: On monitors, both ears hear both speakers. On headphones, each ear hears only one side. This creates an unnatural stereo image. Tools like CanOpener or Realphones simulate crosstalk to fix this. I personally don't use anything to address crosstalk but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try it. You may love it!

Understanding Your Headphones = Better Mixing Decisions

Every set of headphones has its own personality. You might have a pair that scoops the mids... or boosts the highs. If you don't know what you're hearing, you'll keep chasing your tail.

Solution:

- Study reference tracks using your headphones
- Use Frequency Focused Referencing™ (details coming up)
- Learn their strengths and blind spots
- Use correction software (Oratory1990, Realphones, Sonarworks, etc.)
- Simulate crossfeed if desired (CanOpener Studio, Realphones)

When you know what your headphones are doing, you can make confident, accurate mix decisions.

My Favorite Fixes for Common Headphone Problems

1. Ear Fatigue

It's real. And it will wreck your judgment if you ignore it.

Solution:

- Mix at **lower volumes**
- Take **frequent breaks** (I don't do this well)
- Switch between **open-back** and **closed-back** if needed
- And **never, never send a mix right after finishing it**. Sleep on it. Review with fresh ears. Tweak and then send to your client!

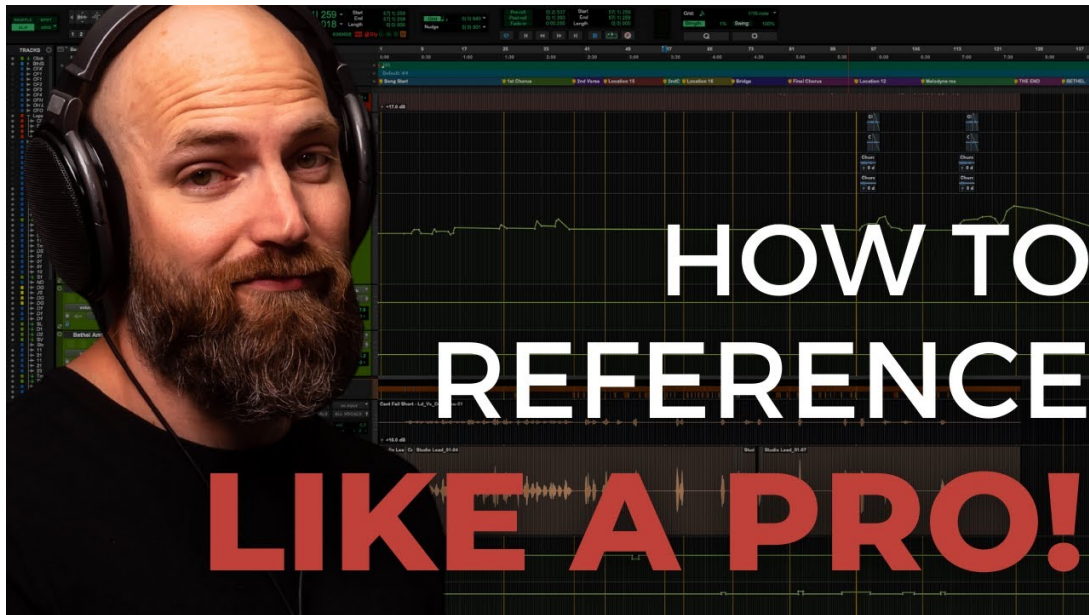
⚠ I learned this the hard way — then had Grammy-winning engineer Paul "Salvo" Salveson drop this wisdom on me:

"If you send a mix after 10 hours of work without resting your ears, you're not sending your best."

2. Lack of Low-End Feel

This was my biggest frustration for years... And I have a few ways I deal with it but for now, let's talk...

Frequency Focused Referencing™ (Your New Secret Weapon)



This one's a game-changer! Inspired by Dave Pensado years ago, I adapted this to work entirely in the box — and it's my most-used mix translation tool.

Step-by-Step ([Click here to see this technique in action!](#)):

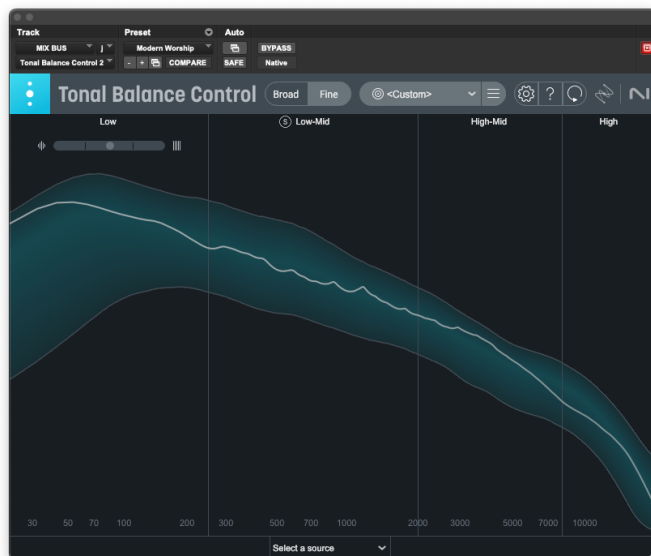
1. Pick 1–3 pro mixes that work as great references
2. Apply loudness processing to your mix (strategies shown in the video)
3. Use ADPTR Metric AB to level-match
4. Insert a steep high-cut filter, starting at 30Hz
5. Sweep upward comparing your mix to the reference(s)
6. Make adjustments within each band as needed
7. Trust your taste — don't copy blindly, remember to think about context with YOUR mix.



Frequency Focused Referencing™ focusing on the low end of the track.

Pro Insight: Use my Mix Cube and/or NS10 FabFilter ProQ presets in conjunction with Frequency Focused Referencing™ for an even brighter spotlight onto your midrange.

[Download: David Glenn's Midrange ProQ Presets](#) (works with any version of the FabFilter ProQ.)



More Pro Insight: iZotope's *Tonal Balance Control 2* is one of those tools I reach for more than I'd like to admit — especially on days when my ears are off.

It gives you instant visual feedback on your mix's frequency balance, showing you where you're heavy or lacking compared to pro-level tracks. Whether you're mixing on headphones or in a tricky room, it's like having a second set of trusted ears that never get tired.

Blueprint Labs: Lock It In

Mission 1: Build Your Reference Arsenal

Import 3–5 of your favorite pro mixes into your DAW. Level-match them.

Mission 2: Diagnose with FFR™

Run your latest mix through the Frequency Focused Referencing™ process. Note what improves.

Mission 3: Send Me the Proof

Bounce a quick before vs after sample for a chance to be featured in TMA. Email me at david@themixacademy.com. I'd love to hear the difference!



Bonus Resource: What Gear Do You Need to Start?

Not much. If you already own a decent pair of headphones, that's enough.

Don't overthink the gear right now — what matters most is how well you *know* your headphones, not how much they cost.

Want to See My Full Gear & Plug-in Stack?

I break down every tool I use — including session templates, plug-in chains, and headphone monitoring setups — inside the [Mixing Modern Worship and Mixing Discipleship](#) programs.

Final Thoughts

You don't need a fully equipped studio.

You don't need \$20k in gear.

You just need a clear path, a trusted pair of headphones, and the will to keep improving.

Headphones aren't a handicap — they're a legitimate, powerful mixing environment.

Your next step is easy: **Pick one thing from this guide and apply it today.**

With you all the way,

David Glenn

Founder, TheMixAcademy.com