

COST:

Varies, though a five-minute track is £58

TURNAROUND TIME:

Five days to three weeks, including delivery. Can do it in one to two days for an additional fee

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND OTHER SERVICES OFFERED:

Artist area, vinyl mastering, distribution info. Also check out <http://lorenzvauck.com> where XARC's founder offers free mastering info and advice

PRE-UPLOAD ADVICE:

"24-bit/44.1kHz quality, compressed with lossless application like WinRAR. Do not send MP3s"

STUDIO HIGHLIGHTS:

"A good magician never tells how he does his tricks! That said, much of our outboard and DSP is custom built, not something you'd get off the shelf. Other than that, it's a healthy mix of analogue and digital"

Lorenz Vauck's Germany-based XARC Mastering serves well over 1000 customers a year, including former Motown writers and producers, Eurovision entrants, videogame soundtrack artists and chart groups. XARC's approach is to concentrate on communication, and this was borne out when we uploaded our track. No other company demanded as much information about what we required, so top marks for that. Like others here, XARC offers a preview of the final track so you can check before agreeing to pay.

Again, the process is very easy. You can contact XARC direct or fill in a form on the site. You then get a welcome email, including details of your login and how to use the service. It's essentially the same as the others in terms of uploading, but what does differ is that before any payments are made, the engineer tells you if there are any problems with your track. XARC don't like to rush the process, preferring to return to the project with fresh ears after a few days.

XARC top tip

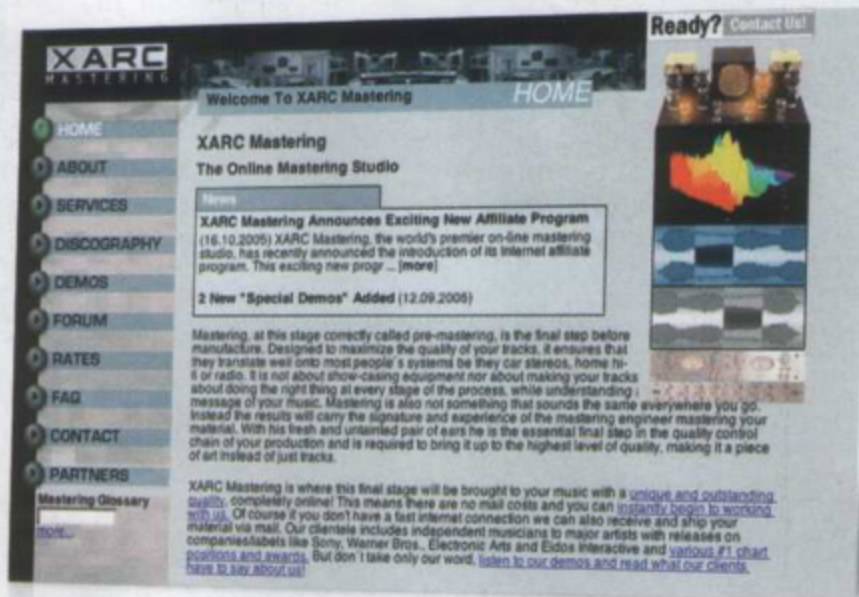
"Like dentistry, it's best to put mastering in the hands of the pros. We will also have fresh ears and be impartial to the project. When mixing, the artist spends a long time trying to get a 'huge' sound that's best left to the mastering engineer. As odd as it seems, a dull mix is a lot easier for us to work with. Also, be restrained when using mastering processors like compressors, limiters, etc, as they can't be undone."

WHAT THEY SAY

"We strive to constantly set the standard in the industry, in terms of the three main factors: pricing, quality and service"

When the track was done (only a week or so after uploading) the attention to detail was obvious. It was accompanied by in-depth notes about what Lorenz had done to the track. The master was slightly louder and more subtle, and the depth and width had been improved, giving it a lot more character.

XARC's detailed service is outstanding, and the mastering itself is absolutely up there with the best.



▲ Lorenz's sheer passion for the job ensures top-class results

WHAT WE SAY

Great communication – these guys really want to know how you want your track to sound