

Billy Hume Mixing

Creating Stems for Live Performance

Many of our clients ask us how much it will cost to create Stems or Performance Tracks for use in live performances. This is not an easy question to answer because every client has different needs and the complexity and number of stems can vary widely.

What's the difference between Stems and Performance Tracks?

- a. Stems typically consist of stereo sub-mixes of different elements of a mix such as: drums, electric guitars, acoustic guitars, keys, background vocals, click track, etc. If you ask for stems of a song you'd get several (or a lot) of stereo files for each song you want stems for. Using stems gives you more flexibility but will cost more to create and can be more complicated to use in a live setting as you would need a playback system capable of playing back multiple tracks.
- b. Performance tracks are basically the whole mix of the song minus certain elements such as: lead vocal, solos, maybe a particular instrument, etc. If you ask for a performance track of a song you'd get one stereo file per song with certain elements removed from that mix. Performance tracks are not as flexible because the mix is set but they are less expensive to create and playback in a live setting can be done from an iPod, phone or just about anything.

Which do you need?

That depends on how you will be performing your music live.

Stems - If you have a lineup of musicians that might change from time to time then you might want to go with using stems. You will need a way to play them back live, typically a laptop computer on stage running Protools, Logic, Ableton or some sort of DAW is used. You will need an interface to send the audio to the mixer and monitors and if you want to run a click track to the band or drummer then you'll need an interface with more than 2 outputs.

Performance Tracks - If your lineup of musicians for your live show never changes and you know exactly what you'll need then you might want to go with a performance track. Most of the time I make performance tracks it is for vocal groups or Hip Hop artists who perform with little or no musical accompaniment.

What do I Need?

I need to know exactly what you want on each song. Specifically, which instruments and/or vocals need to be removed on each song. Make sure to consider particular sections of each song as well, you may want some background vocals in one part of a song but not another. You will need to deliver to me a detailed breakdown of each song in order for me to give you an estimate of the cost and to complete the work.

Make sure that you go through each song and song sections very carefully and determine exactly what you'll need for your Stems or Performance Tracks. Your needs may vary from song to song.

If you have any questions please contact Kit at:

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