Orchestral Mixing & Mastering with Joël Dollié

[00:00:00] Hey guys, and welcome to another episode of the Trailer Music Composers podcast. Today I'm absolutely thrilled to have a superstar mixing engineer with me. He's looking bashful now. Joel Doe. For those of you in the audience who don't know, Joel, would you care to take a moment to introduce yourself and tell us what it is you do?

Yeah. Thanks Rich. Thanks for having me. Hi everybody. My name is Joel dk. So I'm a mixing engineer who specialized in orchestral mixing. So I do soundtracks for games traveler music of course, and, you know, all kinds of orchestral related things. Now I do a few more things, but usually people contact me for orchestral stuff.

So yeah, I do samples and live orchestra and yeah, all fun stuff.

Now I've been requested many times to have you on the podcast. I'm super thrilled to have you. Because as we talked before the show, there aren't many engineers who specialize in [00:01:00] orchestral and specifically trailer music. Because let's face it it's a pretty specific niche and as you said, a lot of composers.

Do the mixing themselves, and then some special people in the audience do their mastering themselves as well. But for me I'm one of these people, one of these composers who likes to hand the mixing, even the mixing over to somebody like yourself. Yeah, I think

the, you know, as you said there, there aren't too many engineers who specialize in that, and I think it's because it's probably not worth it for most composers because, you know, there is not too many people who really make a lot of money with try music.

I mean, for most people it's just like a side income. So investing in full mixes when you don't have the the certainty that it'll be placed is kind of risky, which is understandable. But, you know, there is still a place, of course for trailer mixing, I think because you have labels who can. Pay for mixing directly, even though it's kind of rare.

And then you have composers who really want [00:02:00] to invest in specific tracks, you know? But you know, I think that's the reason why it is what it is.

Yeah, absolutely. I think it's also, it's a special skill. It's kind of like somebody's specializing in beat production. You know, the way you approach orchestral writing and orchestral mixing is a thing unto itself.

Now, my question to you is, how on earth did you get into

it? Yeah, so it's quite an interesting story. Yeah, so I would say it started in 2014 as a composer, you know, because I listened to two steps from hell and all that kind of stuff when I was a kid like everybody else. And yeah, after a while I was like, okay, maybe I should try to do this myself.

It looks interesting. I noticed like there is contact libraries and all that stuff. So in 2014, so quite a while ago I started with with that. Then after making a few tracks, you know, I realized that I. Was more interested in the production aspect, the mixing aspect. So mixing and mastering, because I was just spending like way more time on just mixing my tracks compared to [00:03:00] composing.

So yeah, that's really kind of when I transitioned in 2016. So a few, couple years after after I started. And then, you know, it kind of. Started from there, I started mixing tracks for friends. So just make close friends at the beginning, and then it kind of branched out, you know, from friend to friend of friend who to actual clients.

And you know, slowly I just kind of. Stopped composing? Well, I still composed from time to time, but I just kind of transitioned from composing to mixing like from 2016 to 2018. And then 2018 is when I really started doing mixing full-time, like hardcore, you know, like only mixing. And yeah, that's kind of how it went.

So That's awesome. And also it's really nice cuz it's kind of, kind of the exact opposite. Obviously we both started composing But my thing was I realized I was spending less and less on the production and more and more time on just generating the ideas, because that's the thing that I like just getting the ideas out and then being like, ah, someone else can polish this.

You know?[00:04:00] So it's very interesting. Now the thing with being a freelancer is it's not talked about enough as to. How difficult is, you know? Oh, yeah. And how stressful it can be and how you are not just doing a job, you are doing countless jobs. I mean, what's your experience been of being a freelance mixing engineer?

Yeah.

You know, I think it's I think I had it easy compared to many people because I had the opportunity to kind of start all of this at my father's house, cuz you know, I was middle tw 20 or 18 back then when I really kind of started taking this seriously. So I had United safety net.

But I think it's extremely difficult for people who previously had like a job and they need to kind of transition into this. While still, you know, paying the bills and stuff like that. So I can imagine it's way more difficult for them, but for me it was still quite stressful because, as you said, there are many facets to this [00:05:00] job.

Like you need to learn about so many things. Like you need to go from zero like not knowing anything about business. To knowing how to run a business. And even though it's not the most complicated business to manage, you still have to learn about bills, what they don't teach you in school. You know, like business specific bills, you know, various from c from country to country.

But there is a lot of like administrative stuff to, to figure out and you know, just like plan for the future. You have to be more, you have to plan more for the future because, You, your income will vary a lot. So you can't just plan things as easily. So you have to save more money. You have to, yeah you have to account for a lot more things, a lot more details.

You have to learn about social skills, communication. I think, well, I guess how you do this in a normal job as well. But you have to learn about quoting, you know, what's your worth? So lots of little things you don't necessarily think of at the beginning that you need to be good at in order to be a successful freelancer.

Yeah. I think when, if you transition from like once, like a salary job to this, it can be very difficult cuz you don't [00:06:00] have enough time to do all of this. But for me it was a little bit easier, as I said, because because of that, my situation.

You you touched on absolute golden nugget there, which was this question that you do have to confront as a freelancer, which is what is your worth?

Yes. Yes. That's a surprising thing. Cause all of a sudden you realize how insecure you are. You go, what is my worth? Oh, nothing. $5, just give me some money, you know?

Yeah. And then you have some people who go the opposite way and they think, oh, I guess I'm gonna do they're gonna Google are, they're gonna Google, like, how much should the freelancer charge?

Oh, 600 a day. Okay, sure. Boom. Let's try to do 600 a day. And then like you tell people, okay, I'm gonna make a track for you for 600 a day. Oh, by the way, I don't know how many days I'm gonna take. Is that okay with you? Yeah. That's not how it works, you know? So you have to kinda figure out like the middle ground and you know it.

Yeah. You know, it takes a bit, I think, but then you,

I think you're right that it [00:07:00] does take a while. It's kinda like I was reading about people starting Businesses on Five and all these tactics they use, for those of you who don't know the audience five, is like this freelancer website essentially where you pay, the idea is that you pay a five for someone to do something.

It's very rarely ever a fiver. Oh yeah. But people were sort of saying, if you wanna start it, you go in rock bottom price just to build up a reputation and get money coming in. And then you start raising your prices. And I think actually that's not that you'd necessarily go rock bottom, but that's quite a good way to think about starting as a freelancer.

You go in at entry level. And as you develop your. Skills and reputation, you then start raising your prices. Yeah,

I mean, you're kind of, I mean, you're kind of forced to do that. I mean, nobody will hire you if you don't have anything, any credits, nothing. And you ask for the same price as someone with credits.

I mean, it doesn't make sense. And if you are, even if the quality of your work is good, just the quality of your work is not enough, sadly. So you need like both, you [00:08:00] need skills and reputation, and that takes time. Yeah, I actually use five quite a bit. Not myself like, but to hire people to do like web design and stuff like that.

So it is definitely more than five. It's more like a hundred. But you get a lot done for a hundred, so it's still a good

Yeah. Yeah. Or it is five and it's if it was one tweet design. Yeah. That's it. Yeah.

Make one button.

Yeah. That's it. Yeah. And then it's $2,000 for the whole website.

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I use five quite a lot for other musicians. Again, same thing. It's rarely a five or it's, you know, 5,000, couple hundred dollars. And actually it's a fantastic resource for anyone listening, by the way. Yeah. But yeah, so the other thing, you mentioned it there. It's not just like soft skills, like being a nice person or you know, not necessarily being a nice person, but being a nice person with clear boundaries that everyone understands and respects.

Yeah. It's also you have to do all the accounting, or at least Yeah. Understand the accounting and then you have to understand your finances. And then you just touched on this one, which I think is a huge one that no [00:09:00] one talks about. It's your ability to understand websites, you know, cuz you like myself.

You're not just a Mixi engineer. Yeah. True. And you've got a lot of other stuff going on. So let's talk about that other stuff, because I think as a freelancer it's really important to understand, it's good to have other irons in other fires, you know? Yeah,

sure. At least, I mean, in the opinion, I think a freelancer should have at least two things, you know, at least two sources of income that are, they can be connected, but somewhat separate because.

You never know when walk raise up. You know, even big freelancers that I know are pretty famous. They have some months where they have just half the income they would have in another month, for example. Usually August is pretty bad compared to February for example. Depends on the industry of course.

But anyway, so if you have a certain lifestyle and even though you save your money and you know, everything is fine, if you want to kind of. Not be stressed. I think you should have at least two sources of income that [00:10:00] way, you know, when you have a low month, you have at least the other activity to kind of procure up a little bit.

So yeah, so personally I have what do I have? So I have. I have a few things. So I do my mixing services, of course, then I do private lessons. You know, it's very linked because if you can mix stuff for people, you can teach mixing, well, not necessarily, you know, you need to learn how to explain concepts, but you know it's possible.

So you have this second activity then. Somewhat related as well. I sell courses, so I made a mixing course with master Thek and back then I had a course that I released myself in 2018. And also I sell an ebook, so also related, it's an ebook on Amazon. It's pretty small, but you know, it's a good entry to orchestra mixing.

Then I also make plugins, so that's a new venture because I started in December of 2022. And it's not the thing, you can just start like that. I had to learn about a lot of stuff to, to start this, but yeah, it's really interesting so far. I love it. So plugins and then I think [00:11:00] maybe I'm forgetting.

No I guess that's it. I guess that's it. You know, I have a few things. I try to diversify my my income. So of course it varies a lot. You know, my main income by far is mixing and mastering for clients and, you know, but all this stuff helps as well. So just like mentally, when you have a low month, you're like, okay, that's fine.

I'm still gonna sell a few courses and I'm still gonna sell a few plugins. And, you know, So you just feel better as a freelancer because if you're salaried, it's okay. You know, you're gonna get X amount each month. You don't have to worry about things. You can know exactly what you can do. But yeah, as a freelancer, I think you need some kind of side income, even if it's just like on your website, a section to, to do private lessons.

You know, there is, there will be a few people who are interested at least even with a small online presence, they're gonna have a few people who will be interested at some point. So it's Wolf doing this, I think.

Dude, I couldn't agree more to have lots of things. I mean, I mean that's, it sounds like you've got a lot on, essentially it's mixing teaching and [00:12:00] plugin development.

Yeah. I guess that's the three main pillars of what they do.

Yeah, and I think, you know, I mean that's take out the plugin development. I mean, that's not too dissimilar from me. It's the writing and it's the teaching and the teaching. You know, it's quite expansive for me at the, at this point in time, which I absolutely love.

But, it's that same thing. It's oh, got some core sales coming in. You know, it doesn't matter that I didn't land a placement this month. You know? Yeah. I think it's really fantastic advice. Let's let's talk about this plug-in development thing, because this is, as you said, a new venture for you.

What was it that got you into that?

Yeah. You know, it's kind of this idea which I've had for a while because, you know, I have a bunch of plugins, of course as a mixing engineer and. I'm always like, okay, so this plugin does this and this plugin does that, and I have this specific process which I can do only with grouping these two plugins in the chain.

It's kind of annoying. So what if I could just make my ideal plugin with all the features I [00:13:00] need to do this? And then, okay, I have another idea. I also do this, but it doesn't sound quite exactly like I want if any, I could tweak this plugin to make it like this. And yeah, so it's, it is just like buy mixing and buy experiencing.

I like different plugins. You kind start noticing things you like and things you don't like about certain plugins. Then after a while you realize when you kind of dive in deep inside the mechanics of each plugin and you try to understand why you like what you like, then you kind of get into the plugin dev mindset, I would say, because you know exactly like what is going on in this plugin.

You deconstruct it and you understand why this process sounds good or why it sounds the way it is. Like an example I could take is Okay, so I'm trying to create a really transparent room with nice early reflections that just adds depth, but like in a transparent way. So what is the best way to achieve that?

Do you need like whole early reflections? So for people who don't know what early reflec reflections are, it's just like the front end of a river, basically. So it's just an example [00:14:00] I'm trying to take to illustrate the mindset of plugin development, but okay, so you realize that in order to create a good depth that's.

Fully neutral and doesn't really destroy the sound you need relatively short, early reflections. So now it's how do I design the best short, early reflections, you know, to give me like a depth that I like on many sources and make an actual useful plugin. And you know, that's kind of how I develop my first plugin.

I figure out that it's actually quite simple. You just need a few delays and you can really create a nice. White field that's going to be transparent and work on many sources. So it's just by kind of analyzing what certain plugins are doing and figuring out exactly why it's working for you. And you know, I think for me it's kind of like that, that I'm not doing like crazy AI plugins, you know, with like super complicated algorithms.

The mindset of my company JD Factory. It's more like creating nice plugins, which are, you know, give you like instant results. And that just sound good, you know? And I'm not noting to create the latest like resonance suppressor because you know, there is people who with huge resources.[00:15:00]

Same for Rev. There is people with massive resources for research, rivers in facilities and stuff like that. You know, I think it's not my role to do this. I'm not gonna make the better cinematic rooms. No way. But you know, just find these little things which are not yet in the plugin form and that are just really cool and useful.

So lots of the change that I do in my mixing process com, like are composed of several plugins. So I try to kind of make the ideal workflow and create plugins with that. And, you know, I think if I like it, some people will like it as well. That's my thing.

Nice. I think the thing is like the way you're talking about it completely.

Explains what makes you excited about what you do. Because I'm, you know, I know some people would load a plugin and not think what is it about this plugin that works and that I'd like and I use Exactly. You know, some people just load up sometimes I do that, I load it up and I go, nice.

And that's it. You know, job done. You know, I'm not thinking, I wonder, you know, it's in the same way. [00:16:00] You know, you could load up different compressions and say to yourself like, what is each individual compression doing differently and why?

And how. Yeah, I mean, it's the, for example, the I don't know if some people know this one, the, I think it's called the ACM e Opticum Compressor by Plugin Alliance.

It's the green compressor. I mean, it's pretty popular. It's like a green optical compressor. Like it sounds really good in drums. So then it's like, why? Well, I noticed that it actually distorts a lot. This thing is like it's like a crazy distortion and the er at the same time. So it really gives you it really kind of runs off the transient of all your drums, you know?

So it makes them much, much fatter because it saturates them a lot. So it's okay it's the comor with a relatively kind of slow attack and saturation. So you get more definition in the kick, but you don't get the clicky sound because it's crunching the transient as well see, just Thisor by itself, you know, it's two plugins in one.

So then I realized, okay, that's the sound I like. So I actually, I like saturation and big drums. Just a little I like to really over overanalyze plugins. Sometimes I even put them in Plugin [00:17:00] Doctor. It's a plugin that allows you to deconstruct a plugin and find out what each process is doing.

So Plugin Doctor is called, it's pretty interesting. You load a plugin and you have a bunch of graphs and you can see like kind of inside the plugin. What's doing? So yeah, basically I'm in the other story. I was gonna

say, we've gone super, haven't we? We've gone into graphs from plugins. Okay.

No, but this is great. This is the thing like, Your passion freak. It clearly comes out. And that's, this is great because we need people like you doing that work because that's how we get these great plugins that we all know and love. Someone's done something slightly different.

They've gone, I like this in a plugin, but can it do this? And you know, and that's where, you know, like for instance, if I was to ever make a plugin, I probably would've tried to do pool stretch.

Oh yeah. That's one. It's cool,

which is, those of you don't know. It just it, I have no idea how it works.

I don't know how it does it, [00:18:00] but it does it magically. You know, it stretches audio without getting the artifacts. You can stretch like a five second sound to become two hours long. Without having any horrible digital artifacts. It's,

It's probably just it's probably interpolating stuff and just adding content, like copying samples and modifying them slightly and just like inserting samples, I think in the middle of, and that's the only way, it's not like literally stretching, like we're not missing data.

I think it's adding data. Yeah. Yeah. But it's pretty interesting. It's really kind of a genius thing for pads and stuff like that.

It is, it's basically just a massive copy paste machine, isn't it?

Yeah. I think it must be, and I really don't know how it works, but it has to be adding data.

Otherwise it would just be like, yeah,

well, yeah, five seconds to two hours, it'd be like,

yeah, like one sample every 20 seconds. Just you know,

yeah. Yeah. No, this is it's really fascinating because actually the way you are talking about plugins is I think, [00:19:00] Your a brilliant piece of advice for anyone who wants to improve their mixing and mastering skills is to analyze the plug-ins to think, okay.

That just put bit more simply, like you said, what is it that I like about this and what is it doing? Yeah. You know, I like I often like to bounce mid into audio. And then bounce that audio through a plugin so I can then see what it's done to the waveform. So you go, ah, it smushed it like this, you know, then.

Because that, for me, I'm a visual, very visual person, so I see the visual element of it. Yeah. But yeah. That's awesome. So that's those of you interested, it's JD Factory. Is it.com or,

yeah, that's tall. Yeah, jd,

Oh, dot store. Okay, cool. Yeah, I'll put a link in the notes JD Factory store.

I'm gonna head over there in a second. So

Yeah, for now I just have one plugin. It's called OID now, but I'm making another one, so that one will come out soon. Okay. Tell us about

room Widener.

Wrong way, TOK. It's [00:20:00] that's what I was talking about with the earlier reflections. So it's a way to kind of add depth to your sound, but it's it's not just like a rev revolve because basically what it does is that it creates opposite reflections compared to the source.

So say you have a source pan left, it's going to create reflections on the right. So it's like a depth, but also wide enough by adding. Like content. So if you have the left, it'll create the sort of river, it's not really a river, but it'll create the reflections opposite, so you end up with a spread effect as well as the depth effect.

So it's kind of doing well. It is great for dry mics, you know, like VSL stuff, for example. Even though you don't necessarily recommend like intra music with VSL stuff. But it's going to add depth to your, like your dry recordings or even like weather sources. For example, c s but like libraries which are not super, we, you know, I don't know if you really need it on spit for your stuff, but for C S C S B cinematic studio bra and string, for people who don't know, it's kind of nice libraries, but they have a bit of a small room [00:21:00] so you can use it to just enhance the size of the room and make the room feel bigger than it actually is.

Yeah, that's that's what it does.

So it's essentially, Correct. Correct me if I'm wrong. Essentially kind of doubling the reverb.

It's a pre reverb stage. You would put this as an insert on your strings bus before, before a whole reverb. And it would sort of simulate a further away sounding make position in a way by adding these little delays and these little other reflections.

It's a bit like as if you moved the decat tree a bit more far away in the room, as if the room was a bit bigger and then you have to throw the whole thing into a river. Right. So it's like a mid stage, like you would put this as an insert on the strings bus, for example. That's what I would recommend.

Ah, okay.

Okay. So I did a session with an orchestra. Oh, why me? 15 years ago, and the engineer, this is in London, the engineer was asked by the client, They said, why? Why does it, the strings not sound big enough? [00:22:00] And he said, just gimme a second. And he did some stuff on the desk and pushed up a fade and Evan went, wow.

And he probably raised the Alteryx.

Yeah. All he did was he doubled the signal of the reverb from, I can't remember this. Was the decry or the A riggers. Oh really? You basically just Left right. Panned the reverb. Oh, really interesting. Yeah, it was. He didn't tell them at the time.

He was just like, ah, trade secret. And then when they went in, he was like, let me show you what I did. That's cool. Yeah. But it's that type of thing. Yeah. Where, you know, my natural approach as the client's natural place approach would be, let's buy more string players. You know, let's buy a bigger room.

Oh yeah. Buying a bigger room is usually the best way, but it's a bit expensive.

Yes. Yeah. That's it. But now let's room widen now.

Oh yeah. Which, it's not I don't get your hopes like too much. Cause. It's not gonna replace Ibu rude, but you know, [00:23:00] it can make your room like 20% bigger and

awesome. And PS I love how minimal it is. I'm just looking at the, it's pretty simple. Yeah. But the thing is, I really love plugins like that. I've I always, when you load up a plugin that's just got like hundreds of controls Yeah. I go, oh, come on. I don't have, ain't nobody got time for this. Yeah.

Yeah.

Okay, next plugin is gonna have the next plugin is going to be a bit more complex, but still straightforward. Okay. What It's gonna be like a, it's gonna, I'm just gonna leak what it is because it's not really a leak. Cause I've told people before, but it's like a panel but a panel that's pans more intelligently.

So in a way you're able to pan the before the lows in various ways. So there is a bunch of different pending algorithms which work for stereo sources. So you can pretty much pan the library without paning the room. So if you want to, for example, to pan like balance strings and you have the violin, you want to pan them more left, but you don't want to pan all the room ambience cause it would sound weird and sort of narrow the room, the natural room ambiance, right?

Then you can kind of move the, just [00:24:00] the violence but not the room. So that's what it's doing.

Okay. Wait a second. How is it doing that? Because, okay. Okay. So it surely it would move the same frequencies within the room.

Yeah, but the thing is the river is ty typically more out of phase compared to the direct sound.

So if you split a panel in mid side and then you, yeah, basically it's it's applying like tunnel panning to just the mid signal. That's the kind of the smart pan knob. It's, so it's just going to take the mid signal and leave the sides, which contain most of the river, and it's going to apply tunnel paning to just the mid.

So then you kind of decompose the mid signal, which is the mono part of the signal. You decompose this in drill mono and you sort of brighten one of the sides off only the mid signal and you darken the other side. So it, it applies like tunnel. So basically you pan the highest first. To the left and on the left side sorry, wait.

Let me explain this. So say you, first of all, you split in mid side. So side is mostly rub, right? [00:25:00] And in the mid signal, you put this in your mono, so you have a mono left, mono right, in terms of physical channels, right? And you brighten the left ear and you darken the right ear on only the mono signal.

So you end up maintain the sides. So you end up not planning the base of the mono signal not pan the base of the sides cause it's just staying there, but you plan using the mids and the heights of just the mono signal, if that makes sense. Yeah. Perfect. You end up shifting the instrument in the stage without truly affecting the room.

You know, I tried different things, but this worked best for me. And so then it's about, then it's all about tweaking the curves to make sure it's natural and doesn't feel like. You're brightening the sound and volume compensation and the relationships between the mids and the sides as you can, because if you don't compensate the level, then it becomes too wide.

So there is a bunch of parameters, but basically if you sort of get all these parameters right, it can sound very natural. And that's what I was trying to do here. That

sounds awesome. In quite a lot of my courses and I get a lot of flack for [00:26:00] this. I narrow the signal and pan the strings in their positions.

Oh, you narrow the signal. And then send it into its own room.

So that's interesting because yeah, you're trying to refocus the instrument, but then you have to send it into a room again. Otherwise you would just get a narrow sound, right? Yeah. So this kind of allows you to, to. To get more directionality but not narrow the signal.

So it allows you to kind of keep the natural room, which in my opinion is usually better if you can keep the natural room. But usually the only way to do that is just to physically move the players, you know, yes. In the room. So you would end up with a more pan signal naturally.

And but you know, the issue is many libraries many libraries don't have enough spread. And sometimes it's because of physical limitations or just the waste recorded. So you end up with. Strings, which are kind of centered and you want to spread them, but then you spread the room as you pan. So it's like, how do I not spread?

How do I not pan the room, but just pan the players? And [00:27:00] that's always the tricky aspect. Yeah. So for that you really have to use some kind of tunnel paning. You can't just use like balance panning. Cause just changing the levels of the panels, sorry. Changing the levels of the channels is going to pan the base as well.

But in real life the base is less directional. It's more of an omnipresent. Sort of rumble that is less directional because the waves can stay on for longer. So if you were to shift a player in the real room, you wouldn't really pan the base. So that's why you kind of wanna bend the highs and the mids first, and that's why tunnel paning makes more sense compared to straight up like balance paning, if that makes sense.

Yeah. So lots of little things, you know, related to physics that you need to keep in mind. And yeah, you can, there's some really interesting stuff you can do with

See I'd like your explanation of base frequencies. I dunno if you've ever done this, we did this at uni, we loaded up a base on a big sub in a room.

Yeah. We cranked up super loud and we walked around the room cuz I'd heard the term base trap before. But I'd never like [00:28:00] actually experienced it. So you walk around the room and you'd, it'd be like, and then you'd step one foot forward and all of a sudden the base would just disappear. Right.

All of sudden you're like, what the, you know? Yeah.

Base is wild. Yeah. Sometimes you would have like double bases on the right, but you actually have more wind on the left just because of the layout of the room and how these waves cancel. Like you end up If you put the max at a certain spot, you would end up with more low end on the opposite side, which makes no sense.

Right. But yeah, it just base is wild. So you need to you can't really control base. It's just there in the room, you know, you can't it doesn't make sense to just have it isolated in one ear. So yeah, it can't be like that in real life. Like it's so hard to control to begin with. We need to put base traps in every corner.

It's a mess.

Yeah. That's it. So it's you kind of, at least to imagine it as like a big cone, you know, the lowest frequencies are kind of like slap bang. In the middle, perhaps even a mono signal. And then as the frequencies get higher and higher, you can allow yourself more and more [00:29:00] room for panning.

Yeah,

pretty much. And well, I would say it's not like a mono signal because, I mean, base is stereo. In real life. It's very stereo. But if it's too stereo, then you get cancellation. And that's bad as well. So you don't put it too wide. You can have it a bit wide, but not too wide, you know? Yeah. But then it's yeah, understanding that as the frequencies go higher, they become more directional and.

Like the sound becomes more direct and you get less audible phasing, you know? So yeah, that's really how it is. The higher frequencies are just less prone to resonating in the room, so you get more direct sound out of the highs, and as you go lower, they tend to kind of live longer, so they have more chance to resonate in the room and come back as in a way, that's why like whole rivers are.

Not super bright just because the highs don't have the chance to kind of bounce and come back. So the very highest highs, they just kind of die off. And the only very highs you get like the highest highs. It's only direct sound from the instruments like 20 K, you know? So that's just how physics walk and it's [00:30:00] pretty interesting.

I, I love this stuff.

Me too. Me I mean, cuz I try and explain this when I'm talking about using sub hits Yeah. In trailer music, like we're, we are using them. For a specific reason we're we are using them to imply distance. Yeah. Because of the physics, the way the sound works, the base frequencies travel further.

Exactly. So by just hearing this huge sub sound, We're telling the listener that there's been something massive very far in the distance.

Right. And the fact that the tail is long as well, like it, it's really kind of, it's like natural behavior of sub. So you're like, wow that's a giant

sound, you know?

Yeah. Yeah. A giant has landed two miles from here. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, this is awesome. This is awesome. I Now, what I wonder is that now we're gonna move slightly away from nerding out into plug-ins and physics. I'm gonna move slightly in more into the, actually, how can we as composers be better at mixing, especially mixing orchestral [00:31:00] music and trailer music?

So let's start with this is a really easy one for you. What are the most common mistakes you experience when you are mixing a client's orchestral track?

So when I hear a mix from them or like mistakes in their, in the orchestration and the composition or mix mistakes in their mix, which spoken like a

true professional,

I need to know, it's different, you know?

Okay. Let's approach. Arrangements

first. Okay. I think in many situations it's just that they don't, they didn't study orchestration, so they don't know how to write for orchestra, so they end up with missing instruments. That's a pretty common one. For example, they will. They will forget about Cubas or they will just avoid the trombones weirdly, or they will have too much instruments in unison.

So you end up with everything on the lead, for example just like one horn line, one baseline. And then you're kind of missing the middle harmony, right? Maybe they forgot to do the trombone chords, or they forgot the fifth and the thirds. [00:32:00] So you end up with a texture that's not very fulfilling.

Doesn't really feel satisfying because you just have too many voices in the same notes. And you end up with a texture that becomes thin and you end up with buildups at certain frequency syringes just because of the fact that they didn't spread the instruments properly. So orchestration, like orchestration mistakes, and sometimes it's just composition as well.

Straight up You know, the the voice leading is not good. It's just not an interesting melody and stuff like that, so that doesn't work. But when it comes to like travel music, I think it's a bit more related to production itself. Like the way you stack instruments to create that powerful texture like mixing country is save a track that's not orchestrated properly.

And just aside from like orchestra aside, thein as well You know, the way you kind of stack sins, the way you kind of stack everything really. Or drums, you know, not using the right libraries missing a big layer, layering drums. That's also a big one. Like just relying, for example, on the mid drum layer that's fairly just has a rumbly sub.

You never doesn't have the punch in [00:33:00] the sub or like the hits. Another big one is the hits. For example, just using kind of a noisy, a wimpy hit that's very like, Bit like a simple crash, but not having like the thumpy aspect or for example, they want to use a big trailer hit, but the low end of that trailer hit is like a low boom.

So you end up with like a very kind of slappy high end, but in, it doesn't really translate in the lows because the loads are pretty flat, dynamic dynamically. So you have a very kind of click high end that's good for a trailer hit, I guess. But then in the loads you don't have that punch, you don't have this Short, kind of thy punch.

And I think like for an ideal trailer hit, you need to have everything. You need to have some kind of punch in the lows and also tail in the lows. You need to have some kind of click in the highs and also some kind of tail. You kind of need everything at once. You need to have the most powerful hit of all time.

But if you miss when expect, it can just be passive differently and just be kind of lame, something. So yeah, knowing about layering stacking layers and orchestration, that's the [00:34:00] three main things. So usually composers who have a bit more of classical background or a bit more of a, you know, academical background, I would say they tend to orchestrate stuff better, but they're actually too conservative.

They're afraid of stacking as many instruments. They're like, oh, I already have so many trombone voices. But, so usually you want to, even the middle ground, you want someone who's not afraid to just go unrealistic, but you want someone who has the knowledge to. How to spread instruments in order to maximize the bigness of the texture.

And then you have the ideal trail track, you know? So of course it's not so easy. It takes years to learn all this stuff, but that's the really the main mistakes I encounter, I would say.

Okay. There are so many questions I wanna ask you right now. So many questions. I'm gonna dive straight in for the trailer hits though.

Yeah, right. So let's say I'm a novice composer or an aspiring trailer music composer, and I've just bought, say, a Keep forest plug in and they've got some [00:35:00] wonderful sounding trailer hits. And let's say it's a fully expansive, this is the whole kit and caboodle, you know, this is my Act three trailer drag and drop sample.

I drop it in. It seems like it's got what everything, but let's say to your ears, the trained pro. The sub and the low kicky end are a bit flabby. What would

you do? Okay, if it's close enough, I wouldn't try to layer more stuff because it can be tricky to just get two sub layers to work together.

You know, sometimes it works, but sometimes you end up with. Phasing and it just becomes fla. So if it's really kind of close and it's just missing a little bit, then I would just shape it with via stores. So first I would try eq, for example, if it's just a little bit too simple like a you know, it just likes this.

This oomph. Sometimes it just means you need to boost the sub because in context, a hit will sound different from in solo. [00:36:00] So you could listen to a hit sample and it sounds great in solo, right? And then once you layer it with the masking of the other instruments it'll be perceived differently.

So try to turn it up and. A little bit boost what you don't hear in context and see how it comes out of the mix. If it's still not quite right, then you can use other tools like transient enhance cells. I like the Buzz Digital labs transgress in particular because it's a multi-band transient enhancer.

So if you have a trailer here that's almost perfect, but it's still a bit flabby, you can just cannot create a kick within the hit. So you can use the highs as a detection for. Low expansion. So say for example, you have the click of that kick, you're going to use this as an internal side chain trigger, which means that the the transient designer will listen to this high end in order to trigger its expansion.

So it's process. And the process itself is going to be like a low kind of expansion that offer 150 milliseconds or a hundred milliseconds like between 50 and a hundred. So you sort of recreate a bit of a kick, a stator kick. In the [00:37:00] sub based on the high. So you get an accurate, predictable sort of trigger with the high, and you kind of trigger that low expansion.

So that's a way to kind of add more punch to a head that's almost perfect, but too flay, too flat. Now if that sample is way off and it's just kind of missing that range to begin with, there is nothing to boost there, then you need another sample to really make it work. But if it's close, you know, I generally would just try to fiddle with it.

Like that. Okay. My question to you is you, did you mention, you mentioned the transient enhances. Yeah. Would a multi-brand compressor do the same thing?

Depending on the multi-brand compressor, yeah. You need one that's able to do expansion and that's able to do site chain as well. So actually many do that.

And then typically, yeah. I mean technically it could be the same thing because a transient designer is a sort of compressor anyway. In a way it's a compressor. They use different ways to detect the signal. Like I know for example that the new AL audio punctuate is a pretty different process because it's basis [00:38:00] detection, not just on threshold, but on like various parametal, you know, it's a bit smarter, but you could achieve that I think with pro B.

Actually I did this with Prime B many times which is a multiple compressor. So yes, you can, depending on the plugin, all you want is like low expansion, right? That's the way to add punch. But yeah, don't jump. I would say don't jump to plugins if the sample is really not good enough. It's, you need to really be sure that, okay, this is going to work.

I have the content there in the base. It's just not quite fat enough, but it's there, you know.

This guys in the audience and girls in the audience. This is absolute gold dust. I hope you completely appreciate what Joel is giving away for free here. This is, there is, this is one-to-one lesson right here.

You know, it's useful, but this is so useful because you don't get taught this stuff. Unless you of course buy your course, you know?

Oh, you can just, I mean, I, you know, I revealed some of this stuff in my YouTube [00:39:00] videos it's not it's not like mega secrets, you know?

No, but it's not, but you have to look for it, and you have to know it to look for it.

Yeah. You know, you have to be told your hit's flabby, you know, for you then to go, well, how do I fix my flabby hit, you know? Yeah,

exactly. Yeah I don't really believe in hiding things in, because you know, that's what you just said. You can know the techniques. You need to know what to correct first.

So you are never gonna replace your mixing engineer because he knows what to what to listen for. You know, he knows what to tell you. Okay, your hit here is flay. Cause you might not even realize it's flabby. And that just takes years. So you can have all the knowledge and all the courses in the world if you don't take the time to really.

Study and, you know, practice this stuff and just train your ears for a while. You won't be able to recognize these things and you might have all the theory knowledge in the world. You won't be able to get good mixes. So I would say courses can really help you get that quicker because you [00:40:00] can learn the theory and the relevant content faster.

You don't have to do YouTubeing as much left and right, that's the value, but then you have to put in the walk and spend the time. Otherwise it's just pointless. So it's like the two things need to be combined to really kind of maximize your progress. Okay,

so I've got one last question about, I, I've gotta jump in cuz I, I know one of the most common issues the trading composers have, and I think I know what you're gonna say to this cause you, I think you've kind of given it away.

But a lot of people say would say to me, how do I fix my muddy mix? Okay. I know. There's a ton of answers to that.

Okay. How do you fix somebody mix? Okay. So you need to kind of process in, you need to think about this in order, eh, with steps. Okay? So why is your mix mad? And so go back to the beginning.

Is it the orchestration? So did you stack too many pointless layers? Do you have a massive wall of drums that's just masking everything? So first of all, orchestration [00:41:00] and figure out if there is useless stuff or if everything is fine. I mean, of course it takes a while to really recognize that, but you know, that's the first step.

Then it's about balance. Okay, so all my voice is balanced properly. So if, even if you have a perfect orchestration, if your wall of drums is just way too loud and covering all the harmony the track is going to feel very in harmonic and very noisy because you have all these. This noisy content of the drums masking all the harmony.

So you're gonna feel like it just doesn't sound as glorious. So if your bra is properly orchestrated, but you have a wall of drums masking it, it's kind of pointless, right? So balance is a massive important step. So once you started out balance, then you can go more in detail. Okay. So everything is good.

The balance is good, the arch is good, but my mix is still muddy. So then it's probably eq, internal balance. So after balance you have what I call tunnel balance. And that's really the more EQ aspect, you know, of the mixing process. Maybe my wall of drums is great and appropriate, but it's just the simple is [00:42:00] so rumbly at 200 or 300 hearts that you have a massive buildup in this range.

It's masking everything. So then maybe you catch six DV in the mid, in the drums, and suddenly the harmony becomes cleverer because that, that mid range is now way more dominated by actual calls and notes and then just like rumbly content. So suddenly it transforms the whole mix, right? But you can't just jump to this step before considering the produce ones.

You have to kind of think about this in order and of course after, with experience you don't have to be so methodical cuz you will just know and not make mistakes. But I think it's important, especially at the beginning to, to kind of ask yourself these questions in order. And if you did tunnel balance, like if you did composition balance, internal balance properly, you already have 80% of your mix and the rest is just rev up to make sure laborists sound a bit bigger and compression to shape the things a bit differently and.

And then saturation is wet. It's like the last 3% that can be a negative 3% if you do it badly. So it's not that important. So you really have to focus internal balance. It's super important[00:43:00] and balance, you know. The really the main ways to fix your madix. But now the good didn't really answer because there is not one way to fix your madix.

It's straight ways. So you need to know where to cut as well, where to cut to achieve that gut tunnel balance and not have a me. Okay, so how do you know where to cut? You see how other people do it. Other people who make mixes you like, you see how they do it. You analyze some of the mixes.

It could be like OSTs from movies like How to Train your Dragon. Great mix. How to Train Your Dragon too. Great mixes by Sean Murphy. So just analyze things you like, figure out, okay, how do these strings sound? How is the issue of these strings compared to my track? You know, where do I need to cut my strings to get to turmoil like this?

And then you will start to realize things and after a while, you know, you will be able to take your own decisions for your tracks and get good results. So it's a lot of practice and analyzing and training your air for a while.

Yeah. It's the same advice for getting better at writing. [00:44:00] Really. Yeah. I

guess that's

true.

Well, yeah. You know, practice listening, practicing, comparing, and just, you know, especially when you're talking about the balance, you are thinking about the balance of your parts, you know, the, yeah. The, you know, I try and simplify everything to four parts if I can when I'm teaching stuff.

Drums included. You think about the drums in essentially four groups, you know? So that they're cov they're not gonna cover each other, and you will then write a balanced part. But yeah. No, it's great. And so ends the masterclass. I do wanna touch on this now as you've basically been teaching us for the last sort of 20 minutes.

Let's talk about your course. What's the course called? Where can people get hold of it? You know, Yeah.

So the course is called Mixing Cinematic Music. It's a master the score, so Mc mcm. And it's a platform that has a bunch of courses about orchestra music. So we have a mixing course, my course, and there's plenty of other courses about you know, composition and stuff like that.

But [00:45:00] In this course, I try to really give people the tools to really be able to make any kind of orchestral mix. So music but also more like scoring stuff, even live orchestra, you know, so it's really kind of a big all in one package to learn how to tackle any kind of orchestral mixing. So the way I split it is in sections.

So I first, I have a section which is more of an introductory theoretical section. So you're gonna have a bunch of videos, I think around 20 to 30, something like that, which are exploring different aspects of mixing. So some of the stuff I talked about, which is balance, total balance you know, compression, mastering all these little topics.

So this is really kind of to give you the theory knowledge in order to be able to tackle real life situations in a way. Then the other sections there is how to EQ section, which also helped with tunnel balance. So tunnel balance is so important that I decided to create an extra section called How to eq, which is a bit of the instrument.

Of how I would approach certain issues. For [00:46:00] example, violin you know, with common spots where these instruments could beed. So now of course it's not always the same cloth for every library, but you have some common sort of pain points by instrument. So I like to elaborate on that because I think this is the kind of thing that.

People at first will try to emulate without really hearing the problem. But after a while, they will, you know, it'll help because they will kind of remember the spots and then they will pay attention to these spots when mixing their own instruments and they will be able to tweak you better. So yeah, that's this section.

But after all of this, I would say the most important section is the mix, the construction section. It really kind of puts everything in context because you have real mixes, which I explore. I go into every track of the session and I show every process so you can see every plugin that I put and why I take these decisions.

And of course I explain what I do and why. And if you watch this, make the constructions with the background of the introductory videos, I think you will really understand why I'm doing these things. And yeah, then you kind of. Get more familiar with [00:47:00] all of this stuff. So I have 20 hours of content.

I would say. I think it's, yeah, 17 or, yeah, around 17, 18 now, because I'm gonna have a trailer music update really soon. Actually, at the time this podcast is out, I think the Trello update is out. Yeah, just trying to explore everything and give people a good a good overall knowledge about our customer mixing.

Yeah.

Oops. There we go. What can us trader music composers look forward to with regard to the trader music update in the course?

Sure. Basically, it's a few videos about troll music specific topics. So there is a big video about mixing hits. Yes, touching on the transient stuff. You know, everything we talked about stacking hits, all that stuff.

So I have a video on hits pulses pads. What else? I need to look, but there is like six that are going to be like six or seven extra videos. The the original course was already covering turtle music in a way and sun design, you know, [00:48:00] but this is really more focused on, okay, if you're trying to make a big fell track, how would you approach mixing some of these elements to maximize the bigness?

That's sort of the idea of this update.

Dude, this is awesome and very exciting for my audience as I'm sure you can imagine. Yeah. That's awesome. So I think you know, I don't wanna take any more of your time. You're an absolute superstar. I would like to end with a quick fire round. Okay. So quick what A quick fire round.

So question, answer. Oh yeah. Nice and quick. Okay. Okay. Right. Okay. I'll shift it a little bit as you are, you know, predominantly a mixing engineer, so we're gonna go plugin heavy. Normally plug-ins is just one of the questions, but we're gonna go plugin heavy here. And I know you're gonna say, well, it depends on the situation, but you're gonna have to get, yeah, you don't need tons of

plug-ins, by the way.

Well, I know. But you know, let's start with the first question. Your go-to multi-band eq

Ah, per q3. I mean, for q3?

Yeah, by far. Nice. [00:49:00] See, I still don't have that that has come up in almost every quickfire round. Why? I don't have that. I'm gotta get that. I'm gonna send an email. Okay. Go to convolution

reverb.

I didn't choose convolution reverb at all. No. Okay. No.

I'm sorry. Well, in that case, go to algorithmic. Okay.

Cinematic rooms.

Nice. Go to compressor.

Oh okay. This is, sorry it's not, I can just say one thing because, okay. If you had to just get one, get track comp, dm, dmg, audio track comp. Cause it has every type of converser in it.

Yeah. What was that? D MG audio track comp. DMD audio has every model of comper in it. But I already have too many compressors, so Yeah.

So you are just basically saying a massive collection of compressors, is that your answer?

Exactly. Is And faith can compressor, I'm just kidding. Don't,

yeah, that's it.

Yeah. Okay. Okay. Well, okay. Let's take it down a notch. So let's just say let's go. We mentioned multi-brand compressors for trailer [00:50:00] hits and I've seen plenty of other trading com trading music composers and beat makers. Use multi brand, multi-bank compressors brilliantly for drums.

So what would be, if you, if someone said to you, you can only choose one multi-brand compressor, Joel, pro B, you can't pro B. Yeah. Hey, good, we've got that one. This is good. Okay. And last one, saturation. Could be distortion, you know. Or tape emulation, that whole room of warmth,

It has to be decapitated still just because you have several styles.

It's the best value. I love decapitated. No, it just sounds good,

Okay. And last, okay, last one. This is actually the last one. This is a setup though. This is a setup. Okay. What about best room Widener? Oh.

By JD Factory. Boom. Easy

one. Awesome. Yeah, easy one. Joel, [00:51:00] thank you so much for coming on the show.

Thanks for having me.

I've had a, I've got a load of info myself out of this and I, I know my audience is gonna absolutely love it. You're an absolute legend. Thanks dude.

Thanks for having me.