

// DAY 6 — THE CREATIVE EDITION //

LUSIONBEATZ

CHEAT SHEETS • RULE BREAKERS • COLLAB CODE • HOT TAKES • SECRET RECIPES

The most visual, most creative, most useful producer PDF ever made

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CHEAT SHEETS	RULE BREAKERS	COLLAB CODE	HOT TAKES	SECRET RECIPES
Freq, Comp & Reverb maps	Break every rule correctly	Vocals, collabs & engineers	Controversial hard truths	Step-by-step sound recipes

76+	5	12	∞
Total tips across all days	Visual cheat sheets inside	Secret sound recipes	Rules to break

"Stop reading about music. Start making it. But first — read this."

// LUSIONBEATZ — DAY 6 — THE CREATIVE EDITION //

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CHAPTER 01 //

THE CHEAT SHEET CHAPTER

Every Frequency, Compressor & Reverb Setting — in One Place

01 — THE FREQUENCY MAP

Print this. Stick it on your wall. Refer to it every session until you know it by heart. This is the complete frequency spectrum broken into 6 ranges with everything you need to know about each one — what lives there, what it feels like, and what to do when it breaks.

RANGE	Hz	WHAT LIVES HERE	FEEL	FIX IF...
SUB	20-60	Kick sub, 808 fundamental	Power / Physical	Rumble, inaudible on small speakers
BASS	60-200	Bass guitar, 808 body, kick body	Warmth / Fullness	Boomy, undefined, muddy
LOW-MID	200-600	Guitar body, piano, vocal chest	Warmth OR mud	Honky, boxy, muffled
MID	600Hz-3k	Vocals, keys, snare body, guitars	Presence / Clarity	Nasal, harsh, forward
UPPER-MID	3k-8k	Vocal presence, hi-hat, guitar bite	Definition / Edge	Harsh, fatiguing, sibilant
AIR	8k-20k	Cymbals, vocal air, synth shimmer	Open / Bright	Dull, lifeless, flat

■ CHEAT CODES

- The most important range for mix clarity is 200–600 Hz. Cut before boosting — always.
- The most important range for listener fatigue is 3–5 kHz. Never boost without checking on full-range speakers.
- Sub below 40 Hz: if you can't hear it on your monitors, use SPAN to verify it exists — and HPF if it's wasted headroom.
- Air above 10 kHz: boost with a shelf, not a bell. Bells sound harsh in the air range.

02 — THE COMPRESSION CHEAT SHEET

Stop guessing attack and release settings. These are the industry-standard starting points for every major sound source. Dial these in first, then adjust by ear from there.

SOUND	RATIO	ATTACK	RELEASE	GR	GOAL
Kick Drum	4:1	5ms fast	Auto	4-6dB	Punch + control
Snare	3:1	10ms	100ms	3-5dB	Snap + sustain

Bass/808	4:1	20ms slow	Auto	4-8dB	Even, groove
Lead Vocal	2:1	30ms	Auto	3-5dB	Transparent, consistent
BG Vocals	4:1	10ms	50ms	6-10dB	Glued, dense
Guitar	3:1	15ms	80ms	3-5dB	Even strumming
Drum Bus	2:1	30ms	Auto	2-3dB	Glue + cohesion
Mix Bus	2:1	30ms	Auto	1-2dB	Final polish

// CLASSIFIED — PRO COMPRESSION SECRET //

The real secret to great compression is not the settings — it is WHEN you compress. Compress AFTER gain staging (so the compressor sees a consistent signal), AFTER corrective EQ (so it reacts to the cleaned signal), and BEFORE additive EQ (so your boosts stay consistent). Order changes everything. And remember: if you can clearly HEAR the compression, it is probably too much. The best compression is felt, not heard.

03 — THE REVERB CHEAT SHEET

Six reverb types. Six use cases. All the settings you need to make your mix sound three-dimensional on every playback system. Copy these, adjust by ear, and stop spending 20 minutes dialing reverb from scratch every session.

REVERB TYPE	DECAY	PRE-DELAY	HPF	BEST FOR
Room	0.3-0.8s	5-15ms	200Hz	Drums, percussion
Plate	0.8-1.5s	15-25ms	300Hz	Vocals, snare
Hall	2-4s	25-40ms	400Hz	Pads, strings, piano
Chamber	1-2s	10-20ms	250Hz	Full mix, guitars
Shimmer	4-8s	0ms	500Hz	Synths, atmospheric FX
Spring	0.5-1.2s	0ms	150Hz	Guitar, retro sounds

■ HOT TAKE

Most producers use too much reverb on too many things.

The proof: Solo your reverb return buses. If they sound like a full, complex mix on their own, your reverb is too loud. Reverb should be sensed, not heard.

■ CHEAT CODES

- Golden rule: more pre-delay = more separation between dry sound and reverb = more clarity.
- Always HPF your reverb return — remove low-end buildup that muddies the mix.
- Use different reverbs on drums vs vocals — mixing reverb types creates depth and realism.
- Automate reverb sends — dry verse, wet chorus = instant emotional contrast.

04 — THE PLUGIN TIER LIST

Every plugin type, ranked by value-per-dollar. Real opinions. No sponsorships.

■ EQ PLUGINS — 2026 TIER LIST — TIER LIST

Yellow	FabFilter Pro-Q 3 (paid) // TDR Nova (free) // ZL Equalizer 2 (free)
Green	Waves SSL E-Channel // iZotope Neutron EQ // TDR SlickEQ
Blue	Stock DAW EQ (FL/Ableton/Logic) // Parametric EQ basics
Grey	Any free EQ with no oversampling // Old VST2 EQs pre-2015

■ REVERB PLUGINS — 2026 TIER LIST — TIER LIST

Yellow	Valhalla VintageVerb // Fabfilter Pro-R // Waves Abbey Road Plates
Green	Valhalla Supermassive (FREE) // Ozone Reverb // 2CAudio Aether
Blue	Stock DAW reverbs (mostly fine) // Lexicon PCM Native
Grey	Any reverb with no HPF/LPF control // Cheap convolution reverbs

■ COMPRESSOR PLUGINS — 2026 TIER LIST — TIER LIST

Yellow	FabFilter Pro-C 2 // UAD LA-2A / 1176 // Waves SSL G-Master Bus Comp
Green	Fircomp 2 (FREE) // iZotope Neutron Compressor // Klanghelm DC8C
Blue	Stock DAW compressors // Glue Compressor (Ableton)
Grey	Any compressor with no sidechain // Brickwall limiters used as compressors

CHAPTER 02 //

RULE BREAKERS

Every rule in Days 1–5 exists for a reason. Here's exactly when to ignore it.

RULE BREAKER 01

■ THE RULE	■ WHEN TO BREAK IT
Always high-pass everything below 100 Hz	When the track is intentionally bass-heavy (drill, hyperpop, SoundCloud rap) and low-end muddiness IS the aesthetic. Or when a non-bass instrument's low-end creates a unique harmonic texture you want to keep.
REAL EXAMPLE: SZA's 'Kill Bill' production has intentional low-mid warmth on the guitar that most engineers would HPF out.	

RULE BREAKER 02

■ THE RULE	■ WHEN TO BREAK IT
Keep bass frequencies mono below 150 Hz	When creating a psychedelic, lo-fi, or experimental track where wide sub is an intentional artistic statement. Also: stereo bass can create an interesting phase effect on headphones that some genres (hyperpop, bedroom pop) use deliberately.
REAL EXAMPLE: Bon Iver's electronic-era production breaks this rule intentionally for texture.	

RULE BREAKER 03

■ THE RULE	■ WHEN TO BREAK IT
Vocals always sit at the center	In rap/hip-hop where multiple rappers trade bars — panning each slightly different creates a 'conversation' feel. Or in R&B/pop production where wide vocal stacks are the entire texture of the mix.
REAL EXAMPLE: Kendrick Lamar's 'Money Trees' has vocals with intentional stereo movement on the hook.	

RULE BREAKER 04

■ THE RULE	■ WHEN TO BREAK IT
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Never clip the mix bus

Intentional soft clipping on the mix bus is a stylistic choice in lo-fi, vintage hip-hop, and punk production — the saturation IS the sound.

REAL EXAMPLE: The saturated, slightly distorted aesthetic of lo-fi hip-hop is built on controlled analog-style clipping throughout the chain.

RULE BREAKER 05

■ THE RULE

Compress everything

■ WHEN TO BREAK IT

Orchestral, acoustic jazz, and classical-influenced production often sounds best with zero or near-zero compression — preserving every dynamic nuance is the entire emotional point.

REAL EXAMPLE: Hiatus Kaiyote's jazz-influenced tracks often have almost no visible compression on individual instruments.

RULE BREAKER 06

■ THE RULE

First chorus before 1 minute

■ WHEN TO BREAK IT

Slow-burn R&B, spoken word pieces, and cinematic instrumentals intentionally delay gratification — the journey to the hook IS the emotional experience.

REAL EXAMPLE: Frank Ocean's 'Nikes' has an intentionally slow, disorienting intro that builds alienation before releasing into the hook.

Σ SECRET FORMULA: THE RULE-BREAKING FORMULA

KNOW THE RULE → UNDERSTAND WHY IT EXISTS → BREAK IT WITH INTENTION → OWN THE RESULT

Breaking a rule because you don't know it exists = mistake. Breaking a rule because you understand its purpose and choose a different path = artistry. Every great producer knows all the rules. The best ones know exactly which ones to ignore.

CHAPTER 03 //

THE COLLAB CODE

Working With Vocalists, Producers & Engineers Without Burning Bridges

The best-sounding technical mix means nothing if the people you work with never want to collaborate with you again. The music industry runs on relationships. These are the unwritten rules of professional collaboration that nobody teaches — but everyone judges you by.

<p>■ VOCALIST</p>	<p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create a comfortable session vibe — room temp, lighting, water ready ✓ Record 3 takes minimum before giving feedback ✓ Say 'I love this part' before 'can we try it differently' ✓ Keep rough takes — sometimes the first is the best 	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Never say 'that was pitchy' mid-session ✗ Never auto-tune without asking first ✗ Never dismiss an emotional performance for being 'off-key' ✗ Never share their vocals without permission
<p>■ CO-PRODUCER</p>	<p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Agree on split percentages BEFORE the session starts ✓ Communicate your creative vision early — not after 4 hours of work ✓ Save every version — both producers should have copies ✓ Celebrate their ideas as loudly as your own 	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Never claim a shared beat as solo work ✗ Never change the project after the split is agreed ✗ Never ghost after a session — finish what you started ✗ Never bring ego to a collaborative session
<p>■ MIX ENGINEER</p>	<p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Send organized, labeled stems at -6dBFS peak ✓ Share reference tracks in the same genre ✓ Give specific feedback ('more brightness on the snare') ✓ Pay on time — engineers remember who pays late 	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Never send an unlevelled, unlabeled session file ✗ Never expect a mix engineer to fix arrangement problems ✗ Never request unlimited revisions outside the agreed scope ✗ Never share the mix for commercial release without paying first

■ BREAKING: THE ONE COLLAB RULE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

ALWAYS follow up after a session — the next day, send a voice note or text saying 'I loved what we made yesterday.' This single habit builds loyalty, repeat bookings, and referrals faster than any technical skill. People work with people they enjoy. Be that person.

■ CHEAT CODES

- Send stems BEFORE the session if possible — engineers who prepare in advance deliver better mixes.
- Build a 'collab template' email: intro, reference tracks, stems link, deadline, split sheet attached.
- Credit everyone correctly and publicly — it costs nothing and builds reputation fast.
- Never criticize a collaborator's work publicly. Praise publicly, critique privately.

CHAPTER 04 //

HOT TAKES & HARD TRUTHS

Controversial opinions every producer needs to hear. Backed by facts.

■ HOT TAKE

Your monitors are probably lying to you — and that's fine.

The proof: Every monitoring system has colorations. Your job is to learn YOUR monitors' biases and compensate. Mixing engineers who travel bring headphones they know because knowing your tool matters more than having the perfect tool.

■ HOT TAKE

A \$500 mic in a treated room sounds better than a \$3000 mic in an untreated bedroom.

The proof: Acoustic treatment returns more per dollar than any piece of gear below \$2000. The room is always the biggest variable in recording quality — not the mic.

■ HOT TAKE

Most 'lo-fi' aesthetic is bad mixing pretending to be intentional.

The proof: Genuine lo-fi production has intentional degradation applied to a mix that was originally clean and well-balanced. Most lo-fi productions are just undertreated rooms and cheap gear marketed as aesthetic.

■ HOT TAKE

Genre labels are killing your creative development.

The proof: Calling your music 'Afrotrap' or 'melodic drill' before it exists limits your creative choices before you even start. Make music. Apply genre labels for marketing purposes only — after the music is finished.

■ HOT TAKE

AI will NOT replace producers. It will replace producers who don't use AI.

The proof: AI tools are accelerators, not replacements. A producer who uses AI to generate stem separation, reference matching, and starting-point mixes will outpace one who refuses to engage with the technology — regardless of raw talent.

■ HOT TAKE

Your latest track is probably not as bad as you think — and not as good as you hope.

The proof: Proximity bias makes new work feel either amazing (honeymoon phase) or terrible (critical phase). Wait 48 hours before final judgment on any mix. Your ears and perspective reset completely after sleep.

**"The most important skill in music is finishing things. Not perfecting them.
Finishing."**

// RICK RUBIN — PRODUCER — KANYE, ADELE, JAY-Z, JOHNNY CASH //

CHAPTER 05 //

THE SECRET RECIPES

Step-by-Step Formulas for 12 Iconic Sounds — Copy & Paste Into Your DAW

■■ RECIPE: THE HARD TRAP 808

INGREDIENTS: 808 sample (G or C) | Saturation plugin | Sidechain comp | Pitch automation | HPF 30Hz

STEP 1: Tune 808 to track root key using a piano plugin

STEP 2: HPF at 30 Hz — remove sub-sub rumble

STEP 3: Boost 55-65 Hz by +3 dB (fundamental weight)

STEP 4: Cut 200-400 Hz by -3 dB (remove boxiness)

STEP 5: Add saturation (10-15% drive) for small-speaker translation

STEP 6: Sidechain to kick: 3-5 dB GR, fast attack, auto release

STEP 7: Automate pitch for slides: bend -2 to -5 semitones between notes

■■ RECIPE: THE SILKY R&B; VOCAL

INGREDIENTS: HPF 80Hz | LA-2A style compressor | 2x EQ | De-esser | Plate reverb send

STEP 1: HPF at 80 Hz — remove rumble

STEP 2: Pitch correct: retune speed 40-60ms (transparent)

STEP 3: Optical comp: 3-4 dB GR, program-dependent

STEP 4: EQ1 (corrective): cut 350 Hz -2dB, cut 1.5kHz -1.5dB

STEP 5: De-esser: 6-8 kHz dynamic mode

STEP 6: EQ2 (additive): boost 250Hz +1.5dB, 5kHz +2dB, 12kHz +2dB

STEP 7: Plate reverb send: 1.8s decay, 18ms pre-delay, HPF 300Hz, -14dB send

■■ RECIPE: THE PUNCHY MODERN SNARE

INGREDIENTS: Snare sample | Transient shaper | Parallel comp | EQ | Reverb send

STEP 1: Choose snare with natural tone — no heavy processing in the sample

STEP 2: Transient shaper: attack +4dB (more snap), sustain -2dB (tighter)

STEP 3: EQ: boost 200 Hz +2dB (body), cut 400 Hz -3dB (mud), boost 5kHz +3dB (crack)

STEP 4: Parallel compress: ratio 8:1, fast attack, fast release — blend at 30%

STEP 5: Bus compressor on drum bus: 2:1, 20ms attack, auto release

STEP 6: Short plate reverb: 0.8s, HPF 400Hz, -12dB send — adds space without wash

■■ RECIPE: THE WIDE SYNTH PAD

INGREDIENTS: Synth (Vital/Serum) | Chorus plugin | M/S EQ | Reverb | Delay

STEP 1: Layer 2 instances of the synth — detune one by +8 cents, other by -8 cents

STEP 2: Pan one layer 30L, other 30R

STEP 3: Add chorus (rate 0.5Hz, depth 20%) for organic movement

STEP 4: M/S EQ: boost Side channel +3dB at 8kHz (air width)

STEP 5: Cut Side channel below 200Hz (keep sub mono)

STEP 6: Hall reverb: 3s decay, 30ms pre-delay, HPF 400Hz, -14dB send

STEP 7: Stereo delay (L: 3/8 note, R: 1/4 note) for movement — -20dB blend

■■ RECIPE: THE LO-FI HIP-HOP DRUM BREAK

INGREDIENTS: Drum break sample | Vinyl sim plugin | Tape saturation | Room reverb | LPF

STEP 1: Import a classic drum break (Amen, Think, Apache)

STEP 2: Chop into individual hits using your sampler

STEP 3: Apply vinyl simulation plugin: crackle 30%, dust 20%, warp 10%

STEP 4: Tape saturation on drum bus: drive 25%, moderate warmth

STEP 5: LPF at 12 kHz — remove HF brightness for lo-fi character

STEP 6: Short room reverb: 0.4s, -10dB send — places drums in a small room

STEP 7: Slight pitch fluctuation automation: ± 5 cents slow LFO for tape feel

■■ RECIPE: THE HYPE VOCAL FX STACK

INGREDIENTS: Vocal sample | Pitch shifter | Heavy reverb | Distortion | Delay

STEP 1: Take a short vocal chop (1-2 syllables)

STEP 2: Pitch shift +12 semitones (one octave up) for hyperpop texture

STEP 3: Add heavy distortion: overdrive 50-70%

STEP 4: Large hall reverb: 4s decay, 100% wet — create a ghost of the vocal

STEP 5: Stereo ping-pong delay: 3/8 note, 4 repeats, -8dB each repeat

STEP 6: Automate pitch: random ± 2 semitone jumps every beat for glitch feel

STEP 7: Layer with the original dry vocal at -8dB for depth vs chaos balance

[THE LUSIONBEATZ MASTER REFERENCE]

Everything from Days 1–6 distilled into the most actionable single-page reference guide possible.

CATEGORY	GOLDEN RULE	NUMBERS TO REMEMBER
GAIN STAGING	Peak at -18dBFS per track	Mix bus headroom: -6dBFS
EQ — CUT	Cut before you boost. Always.	Mud: 200-500 Hz Harsh: 3-5 kHz
EQ — BOOST	Boost after compression	Air: 10-16 kHz Warmth: 200-250 Hz
COMPRESSION	Match release to the tempo	Glue: 2:1 Vocal: 3:1 Drum bus: 4:1
REVERB	Pre-delay creates clarity	Room: 0.5s Plate: 1.2s Hall: 2-4s
LOW END	Mono below 150 Hz. No exceptions.	808 fund: 50-70 Hz HPF bass: 30 Hz
STEREO	Wide high-mids = energy	M/S Side boost: 8 kHz +2-3 dB
SATURATION	Even-order = warm. Odd = grit	Tape drive: 10-20%. More = less.
LOUDNESS	Target LUFS, not peaks	Streaming: -14 LUFS Club: -7 LUFS
ARRANGEMENT	First chorus before 1:00	Max intro: 15 seconds for streaming
WORKFLOW	90-min blocks. One goal. Timer.	Break every 90 min. Ear rest = ear reset.
BUSINESS	Split sheet BEFORE the session	PRO: ASCAP/BMI — free to register
MINDSET	Study 1 thing. Apply immediately.	Comparison timer: 15 min max.

6 DAYS. THE KNOWLEDGE IS YOURS.

NOW MAKE SOMETHING THAT HITS.

"The producers who win aren't the most talented. They're the most consistent, the most curious, and the most willing to be wrong."

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