

# LUSIONBEATZ PRODUCTION TIMES

ISSUE 007

THE FINAL EDITION

2026 // VOL. 7

## THE COMPLETE PRODUCER BIBLE

A-Z Mixing Guide • The Diagnostic Table • Budget Studio Builds • Music Theory Cheat Sheets • The Final Exam • Your 5-Year Roadmap

### 26 A-Z TIPS

One essential tip for every letter of the alphabet. Rapid-fire. No filler.

### 15 PROBLEMS SOLVED

Muddy? Harsh? Disappearing kick? Every symptom, cause & fix in one diagnostic table.

### 4 STUDIO BUILDS

\$200 to \$14,000 — complete gear lists for every budget level with real prices.

### MUSIC THEORY FOR PRODUCERS

Major keys, minor scales, chord progressions — every table you need to write better melodies today.

10 questions. Answer them all. Then map your career from beginner to elite with the LusionBeatz producer roadmap.

**"The producer who reads, applies, and ships consistently beats the producer who only studies every time."**

— LusionBeatz Production Times — Issue 007

lusionbeatz@gmail.com // @lusionbeatz // lusionbeatz.com

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26 rapid-fire tips — one for every letter of the alphabet

### **CHAPTER 2 // THE DIAGNOSTIC TABLE**

15 mix symptoms with causes and instant fixes

### **CHAPTER 3 // BUDGET STUDIO BUILDS**

\$200 to \$14,000 — complete studio setups for every budget

### **CHAPTER 4 // MUSIC THEORY CHEAT SHEETS**

Major keys, scales, and chord progressions for producers

### **CHAPTER 5 // THE FINAL EXAM + 5-YEAR ROADMAP**

Test your knowledge + your complete career path

CHAPTER 01 //

## THE A-Z OF MIXING

*26 essential mixing truths — one for every letter. No filler. No padding. Just the facts.*

Every concept you have ever needed in mixing, compressed into 26 unforgettable statements. Read once. Memorize the ones that hit hardest. Return every time you feel stuck.

**A**

### Arrangement is Mixing

Plan your frequency landscape before touching a plugin.

**B**

### Bounce Often

Export a reference bounce every session. Never judge WIPs cold.

**C**

### Context is Everything

Never EQ, compress, or solo in isolation. Mix in context always.

### Dynamic Range is Emotion

Loudness wars are over. Dynamic mixes FEEL more. Protect your dynamics.

**E**

### Ears Before Eyes

Close SPAN. Close the meters. Close your eyes. What do you HEAR?

**F**

### Frequency Masking Kills Mixes

Every clash in the 200–800 Hz range costs you clarity. Carve ruthlessly.

**G**

### Gain Before EQ

Set clip gain before every plugin chain. Consistency = better plugins.

**H**

### Headphones Are Not Enough

Always verify on speakers. Headphones exaggerate stereo and distort bass.

**I**

### Intentional Silence

What you leave OUT of the mix is as important as what you put in.

### Just Finish the Track

A finished 70% mix beats an unfinished perfect one. Ship it.

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|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
| <b>K</b> | <b>Key-Tune Your 808</b><br>An out-of-tune 808 makes the whole track feel wrong. Always tune.             |  |
| <b>L</b> | <b>LUFS Not dBFS</b><br>Target integrated LUFS for streaming. Peak meters lie about loudness.             |  |
| <b>M</b> | <b>Mono First</b><br>If it sounds good in mono, it sounds great in stereo. Mono is truth.                 |  |
| <b>N</b> | <b>Never Stop Learning</b><br>Every session teaches you something. The producers who stop growing, stop.  |  |
| <b>O</b> | <b>One Element Per Sub Range</b><br>Kick or 808 — not both playing hard simultaneously. Own the sub.      |  |
|          | <b>Pre-Delay Creates Depth</b><br>Add 15–35ms pre-delay to every reverb. It separates source from space.  |  |
| <b>Q</b> | <b>Quality Over Quantity</b><br>One great mix a week beats 7 mediocre ones. Depth over speed.             |  |
| <b>R</b> | <b>Reference Constantly</b><br>LUFS-match a commercial track. A/B every 20 minutes. Reality check.        |  |
| <b>S</b> | <b>Sidechain is Groove</b><br>Kick into bass sidechain = rhythmic energy that makes listeners move.       |  |
| <b>T</b> | <b>Templates Save Time</b><br>Every minute on routing is stolen from creativity. Build once, use forever. |  |
| <b>U</b> | <b>Uncleared Samples = Liability</b><br>If you didn't create it or clear it, don't release it. Period.    |  |
|          | <b>Vocals ARE the Track</b><br>Everything else exists to frame the vocal. When in doubt, turn it down.    |  |

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|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
| <b>W</b> | <b>Width Is Earned</b><br>A wide mix with no mono center sounds hollow. Build wide from a strong mono core.       |  |
| <b>X</b> | <b>X-Check on Every System</b><br>Phone speaker, laptop, car, headphones, monitors. 5 systems = 5 reality checks. |  |
| <b>Y</b> | <b>Your Sound Is Your Brand</b><br>Stop chasing trends. Develop a signature sound and protect it obsessively.     |  |
| <b>Z</b> | <b>Zero Guessing</b><br>Use SPAN, Youlean, and your ears together. Data + instinct beats either alone.            |  |

CHAPTER 02 //

## THE MIX DIAGNOSTIC TABLE

*Something sounds wrong. Here is exactly what it is and how to fix it — in under 30 seconds.*

This is the table every producer should have open during every session. 15 of the most common mix problems, their root causes, and the fastest possible fix. Stop guessing. Diagnose. Fix. Move on.

| ■ SYMPTOM                              | LIKELY CAUSE                  | ■ INSTANT FIX  |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Mix sounds muddy                       | Low-mid buildup 200-500 Hz    | HPF every non-bass element. Cut 300 Hz on 3+ tracks.           |
| Mix sounds harsh                       | 3-5 kHz excess energy         | Dynamic EQ at 3.5 kHz, max -3dB GR. Cut snare 4 kHz.           |
| Kick disappears on laptop              | No click layer                | Layer a punchy 4-8 kHz transient click under the sub kick.     |
| 808 sounds out of key                  | Not tuned to root note        | Pitch-correct 808 to track root. Check with tuner plugin.      |
| Vocal sounds buried                    | Masking from guitars/synths   | Cut 2-4 kHz on all non-vocal elements. Boost vocal 3 kHz.      |
| Mix sounds wide but hollow             | No mono center element        | Add a mono center element (vocal, kick, snare). Keep sub mono. |
| Everything sounds the same level       | No dynamic contrast           | Automate chorus +3dB louder than verse. Strip verse down.      |
| Mix sounds great on monitors, bad on T | Too much sub, not enough mids | Saturate bass for harmonic translation. Boost 800Hz on bass.   |
| Reverb sounds muddy                    | No HPF on reverb return       | HPF every reverb return at 200-400 Hz. Shorten decay.          |
| Hi-hats too loud but sound thin when   | Need EQ not volume            | Boost 12 kHz on hats, reduce overall level. HPF at 8 kHz.      |
| Mix is loud but sounds flat            | Over-limited, no dynamics     | Reduce limiter gain reduction by 2dB. Let transients breathe.  |
| Snare sounds like cardboard            | No transient attack           | Transient shaper: boost attack +4dB. EQ boost 5kHz snap.       |
| Stereo image collapses in mono         | Phase cancellation            | Check with mono button. Remove Haas delays below 30ms.         |
| Track sounds amateur vs reference      | Headroom issue                | Check LUFS match. Drop reference to same integrated LUFS.      |
| Session CPU overload                   | Too many heavy plugins        | Freeze CPU-heavy tracks. Use offline rendering for reverbs.    |

### ■ BREAKING: MOST MIX PROBLEMS HAVE A PATTERN

After studying thousands of student mixes, one pattern emerges: 80% of mix problems come from one of four root causes — (1) gain staging errors, (2) low-mid buildup at 200–500 Hz, (3) insufficient frequency separation between competing instruments, and (4) reverb applied without pre-delay or high-pass filtering. Fix these four and you eliminate most problems before they start.

CHAPTER 03 //

## BUDGET STUDIO BUILDS

*Four complete studio setups from \$200 to \$14,000 — with real prices and real gear.*

The gear does not make the producer. But the right gear for your budget makes the work easier, faster, and more accurate. Here are four complete setups — each one a full, professional-grade studio at its price point. Start where you are. Upgrade intentionally.

### ■ THE STARTER SETUP // \$0–200

DAW: GarageBand (Mac) / LMFL Fruity (free demo) — FREE

Interface: Focusrite Scarlett Solo 3rd Gen — \$120

Headphones: Audio-Technica ATH-M30x — \$70

Mic: Behringer BM-800 (budget condenser) — \$30

Plugins: SPAN + Youlean + Valhalla Supermassive — FREE

Treatment: Thick curtains + bookshelf diffusion — FREE

Total: Ready to make professional-quality demos — ~\$220

### ■ THE SERIOUS SETUP // \$500–1,000

DAW: FL Studio Producer / Ableton Intro — \$100-200

Interface: Focusrite Scarlett 2i2 3rd Gen — \$170

Headphones: Sony MDR-7506 (industry standard) — \$100

Monitor: 1x Yamaha HS5 (mono reference) — \$200

Mic: Audio-Technica AT2020 — \$100

Plugins: iZotope Elements Bundle — \$200

Total: Mix and release professionally — ~\$970

### ■ THE PRO HOME STUDIO // \$2,000–5,000

DAW: Ableton Live Suite / Logic Pro — \$450-750

Interface: Universal Audio Volt 4 / Apollo Solo — \$400-900

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Headphones: Beyerdynamic DT 880 Pro — \$200

Monitors: Yamaha HS7 (pair) — \$700

Mic: Rode NT1-A (large diaphragm condenser) — \$270

Treatment: GIK Acoustics bass traps + panels — \$500

Plugins: Waves Gold + FabFilter Total Bundle — \$600

Total: Indistinguishable from professional studio — ~\$3,820

## ■ THE ELITE SETUP // \$10,000+

DAW: Pro Tools Ultimate (industry standard) — \$799/yr

Interface: Universal Audio Apollo x8 — \$2,999

Headphones: Sennheiser HD 800 S — \$1,700

Monitors: Focal Trio6 Be (pair) — \$4,500

Mic: Neumann TLM 103 — \$1,500

Treatment: Full room acoustic design + build — \$2,000-10,000

UAD Plugins: Full UAD collection — \$1,000-3,000

Total: Professional mixing studio at home — \$14,000+

## [ CLASSIFIED ] THE GEAR TRUTH NOBODY TELLS YOU

A \$150 Audio-Technica M30x headphone used in a TREATED room gives better mix decisions than a \$1,500 pair of studio monitors in an UNTREATED room. Before buying any gear upgrade: spend \$200–400 on acoustic panels for your mix position first. The room is ALWAYS the biggest variable. Gear comes second. Priority order: Acoustics → Interface → Monitors/Headphones → Mic → DAW → Plugins.

CHAPTER 04 //

## MUSIC THEORY CHEAT SHEETS

*Keys, scales, chord progressions — everything you need to write better melodies and harmonies today.*

You do not need a music degree to make great music. You need to understand three things: what key you are in, which notes work in that key, and which chord progressions create the emotions you want. These three tables give you everything.

**TABLE 1 — MAJOR KEY CHORD CHART**

| KEY | I  | II | III | IV | V | VI  | VII   |
|-----|----|----|-----|----|---|-----|-------|
| C   | C  | Dm | Em  | F  | G | Am  | Bdim  |
| G   | G  | Am | Bm  | C  | D | Em  | F#dim |
| D   | D  | Em | F#m | G  | A | Bm  | C#dim |
| A   | A  | Bm | C#m | D  | E | F#m | G#dim |
| F   | F  | Gm | Am  | Bb | C | Dm  | Edim  |
| Bb  | Bb | Cm | Dm  | Eb | F | Gm  | Adim  |

**TABLE 2 — SCALE GUIDE FOR PRODUCERS**

| SCALE            | NOTES         | MOOD                             |  |
|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Major            | W-W-H-W-W-W-H | Happy, bright, uplifting         | Pop hooks, upbeat R&B;, feel-good trap |
| Natural Minor    | W-H-W-W-H-W-W | Sad, emotional, dark             | Emo rap, dark R&B;, drill              |
| Pentatonic Major | W-W-m3-W-m3   | Timeless, universal, simple      | Melodic hooks, gospel-influenced R&B;  |
| Pentatonic Minor | m3-W-W-m3-W   | Soulful, bluesy, expressive      | Blues, hip-hop samples, soul beats     |
| Dorian           | W-H-W-W-W-H-W | Mysterious, jazzy, sophisticated | Jazz rap, neo-soul, alternative R&B;   |
| Phrygian         | H-W-W-W-H-W-W | Dark, exotic, intense            | Afrobeats, drill, dark electronic      |

**TABLE 3 — CHORD PROGRESSIONS BY MOOD**

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| PROGRESSION   | CHORDS (in C)      | MOOD                       | USED BY                         |
|---------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The Classic   | I – V – vi – IV    | Emotional, universal       | Literally thousands of hits     |
| The Sad Bop   | i – VII – VI – VII | Melancholic, nostalgic     | Drake, Juice WRLD, Lil Peep     |
| The Emotional | i – VI – III – VII | Epic, cinematic, powerful  | Bryson Tiller, SZA              |
| The Trap      | i – i – VI – VII   | Dark, tense, hard          | Young Thug, Travis Scott        |
| The Neo-Soul  | Imaj7 – IVmaj7     | Sophisticated, lush        | Frank Ocean, Sade, H.E.R.       |
| The Gospel    | IV – V – vi – I    | Uplifting, powerful        | Kanye, Kirk Franklin influences |
| The Afrobeats | I – IV – V – IV    | Bouncy, optimistic, groove | Burna Boy, Wizkid, Davido       |

## ■ PRODUCER TIP: YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW THEORY TO USE THEORY

Load any of these chord progressions into your DAW using your piano roll. Play them in different octaves, with different voicings, at different tempos. Add a bass note on beat 1 of each chord. That is music theory in practice. The I-V-vi-IV progression alone has been used in thousands of hit records — from pop to R&B; to hip-hop to Afrobeats. Start there.

CHAPTER 05 //

## THE FINAL EXAM + YOUR 5-YEAR ROADMAP

*Test everything you learned across 7 days. Then map exactly where you are going.*

You have completed 7 days and 83+ tips of music production education. This final exam tests whether the knowledge stuck — or whether it's time for another read-through. Answer each question before looking at the answer. Be honest with yourself.

### ■ FINAL EXAM — TEST YOURSELF

**Q: What is the correct gain staging target for individual tracks?**

A: Peak at -18 dBFS — gives plugins 18dB of headroom before hitting 0.

**Q: Name the 10-slot mix bus chain order.**

A: HPF/Mono check → Corrective EQ → Glue comp → Tape sat → Additive EQ → M/S width → Dynamic EQ → Clipper → Limiter → Metering.

**Q: What LUFS target should you aim for on Spotify?**

A: -14 LUFS integrated. Club masters: -7 to -9 LUFS.

**Q: When should you NOT high-pass filter a sound?**

A: When low-end energy IS the artistic intent (e.g., intentional sub-bass texture in hyperpop, lo-fi, or experimental music).

**Q: What is the first chorus rule for streaming?**

A: First chorus must hit before the 1:00 mark for optimal completion rate and algorithmic reach.

**Q: What is parallel compression and why use it?**

A: Run a heavily compressed copy alongside the dry signal. You get density and sustain while keeping natural dynamics of the original.

**Q: What is the Loudness War and why is it over?**

A: Labels competed to make records louder. Streaming platforms normalize to -14 LUFS, so louder masters just get turned down — losing dynamics for no gain.

**Q: Name 3 documents every producer needs.**

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A: 1. Split sheet (ownership). 2. Beat license agreement (usage rights). 3. PRO registration (performance royalties).

**Q: What is frequency masking and how do you fix it?**

A: When a louder sound at one frequency hides a quieter sound nearby. Fix: narrow EQ cuts in competing instruments while listening to full mix.

**Q: What is the correct reverb send level for a lead vocal plate reverb?**

A: -12 to -16 dB send. Reverb should be felt as space, not heard as a separate effect.

|   |          |                  |                        |
|---|----------|------------------|------------------------|
| 10/10   | 8-9/10   | 6-7/10           | Below 6                |
| ELITE   | ADVANCED | RE-READ DAYS 1-3 | START AGAIN FROM DAY 1 |
| You are ready. Go mix something and release it. Re-read any tips you missed. Solid base. Focus on application over memorization. Start is how mastery is built. |          |                  |                        |

## YOUR 5-YEAR PRODUCER ROADMAP

Every professional producer went through these phases. There are no shortcuts — only consistent work, applied knowledge, and the courage to release imperfect work while you improve. Find where you are on this map. Focus only on that phase.

| PHASE        | TIMEFRAME   | FOCUS  | MILESTONE  |
|--------------|-------------|--|--|
| BEGINNER     | Months 1–3  | Gain staging, EQ cuts, basic compression, on/off           | Final 4 tracks. Mix 1 for a vocalist.                      |
| DEVELOPING   | Months 4–6  | Reverb/delay, vocal production, reference mixing           | Release 2 tracks on streaming. Build basic brand.          |
| INTERMEDIATE | Months 7–12 | Bus routing, parallel processing, genre blueprint          | 6 release tracks. 1 collab placement.                      |
| ADVANCED     | Year 2      | Mix bus chain mastery, AI tools, advanced FX               | Consistent mixing income (\$50-150/mix). Growing audience. |
| PROFESSIONAL | Year 3+     | Personal sound, client workflow, sync licensing            | 5+ hours/week. Named sound. Industry relationships.        |
| ELITE        | Year 5+     | Signature techniques, brand authority, label relationships | Major placements. Team. Multiple income streams.           |

# LUSIONBEATZ PRODUCTION TIMES

## THE COMPLETE LUSIONBEATZ SERIES

| DAY          | TITLE               | TIPS        | FORMAT             | KEY TOPIC  |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------|--|
| 1            | Foundation          | 30          | Dark purple        | EQ, Compression, Reverb, Vocals, Loudness        |
| 2            | Advanced            | 16          | Violet pink        | Saturation, 808, Automation, Vocal Chains        |
| 3            | Master              | 14          | Cyan neon          | Genre Blueprints, Creative FX, Live Examples     |
| 4            | Resources           | 9           | Fire orange        | Free Plugins, YouTube, AI Tools, Brand           |
| 5            | The Edge            | 7           | Hot pink           | Psychology, Mindset, Mix Bus, Business           |
| 6            | Creative            | Many        | Cyberpunk          | Cheat Sheets, Rule Breakers, Recipes, Hot Takes  |
| 7            | The Bible           | 83+         | Newspaper          | A–Z, Diagnostics, Budgets, Theory, Roadmap       |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>7-Day Series</b> | <b>160+</b> | <b>Multi-style</b> | <b>The Most Complete Free Producer Education</b> |

### [ CLASSIFIED ] WHAT COMES AFTER DAY 7?

The answer is simple: you go back to DAY 1 and apply everything you now know with fresh ears and new experience. The second read-through of any great learning material reveals things invisible on the first pass. Then you make music. Then you release it. Then you repeat. The loop never stops — and the producers who keep looping are the ones who win. See you in the sessions. — LusionBeatz

## 7 DAYS. 160+ TIPS. ONE GOAL.

**MAKE MUSIC THAT HITS.**

**"The study ends here. The work never does. Every session from now on is Day 8."**

*— LusionBeatz Production Times — Issue 007 // The Final Edition*

| WEBSITE   | EMAIL  | SOCIAL                       |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| <a href="https://lusionbeatz.com">lusionbeatz.com</a> | <a href="mailto:lusionbeatz@gmail.com">lusionbeatz@gmail.com</a> | <a href="#">@lusionbeatz</a> |

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