

How to collab effectively

Collab etiquette / best practices

Why collab?

PROs

- Opportunity to grow / share audiences
- Learn from your collaborator
- Super fun to combine styles and experiment together
- Increases hype for fans
- Well-liked in the bass music scene

Why collab?

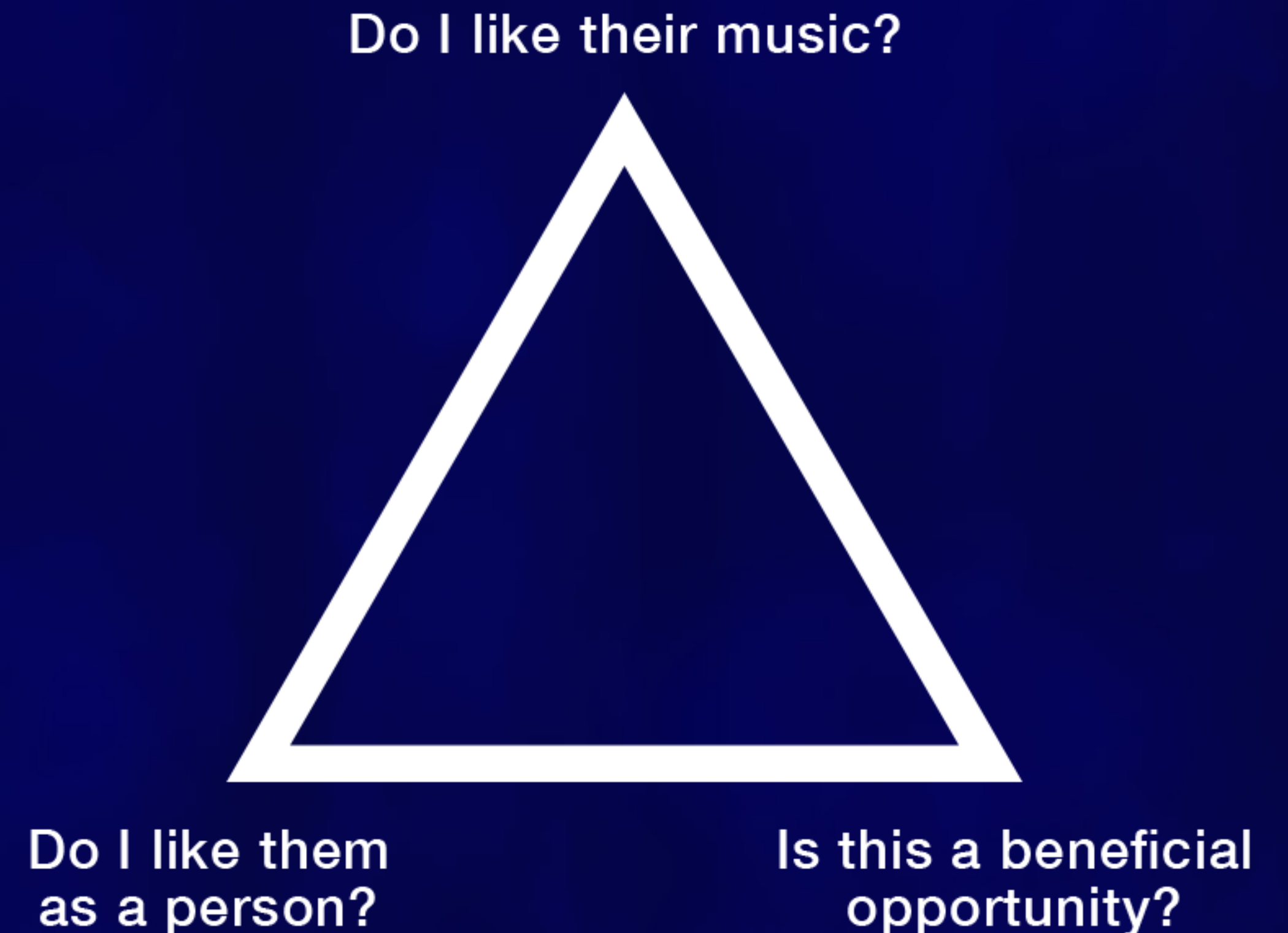
CONS

- Tracks can take longer to be finished due to conflicting schedules or ideas not sparking
- Shared revenue (not super important early on)
- One or more artist can end up overshadowed (rare)
- Ideas can get stuck in purgatory
- You may prefer working alone

Who should I collab with?

Things to keep in mind

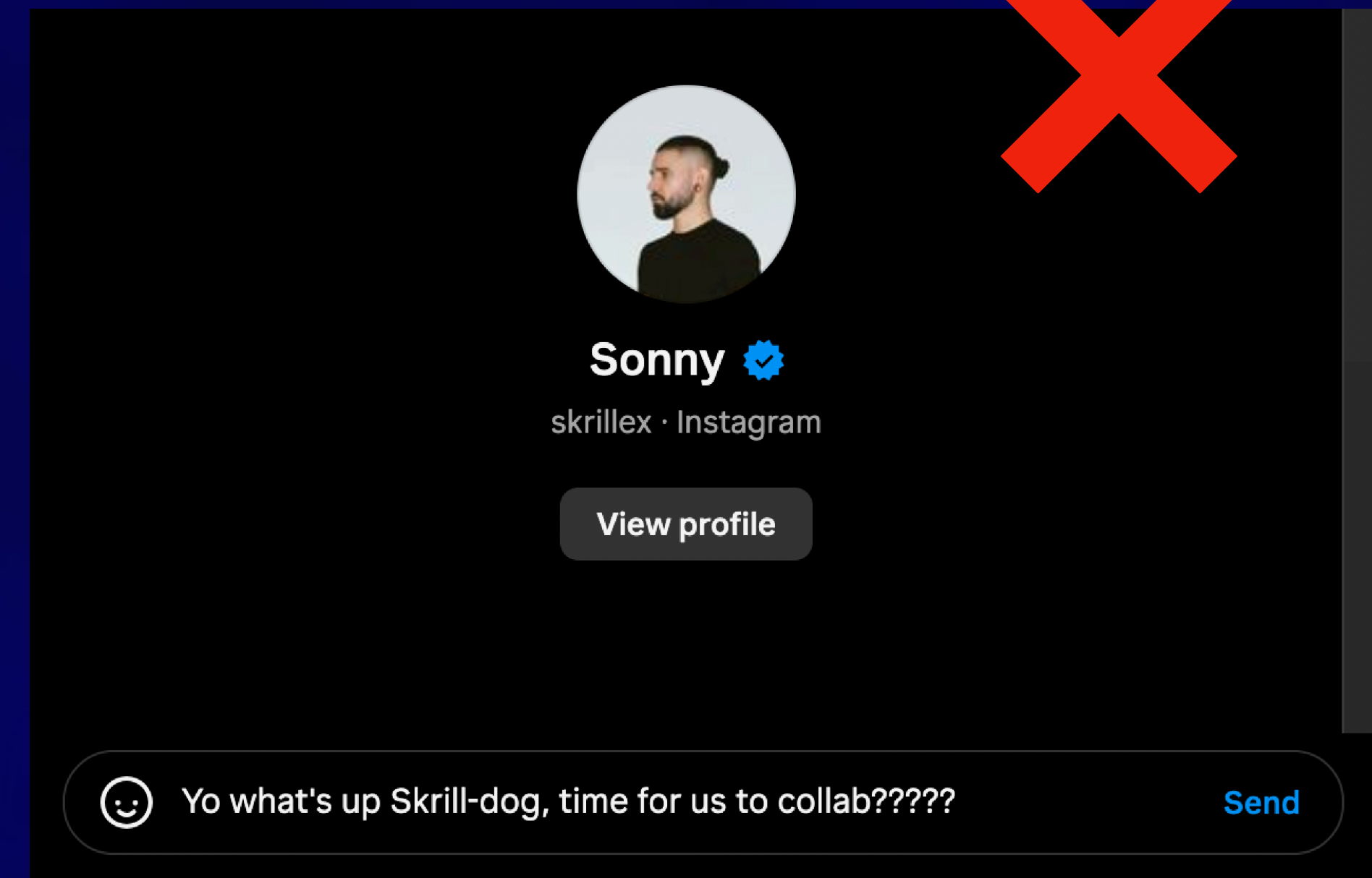
- Do I like their music?
- Do I like them as a person?
- Would this benefit me?
- Would this benefit them?
- Will it be FUN?
- Will it be a challenge I can learn from?



Approaching a producer

Essential

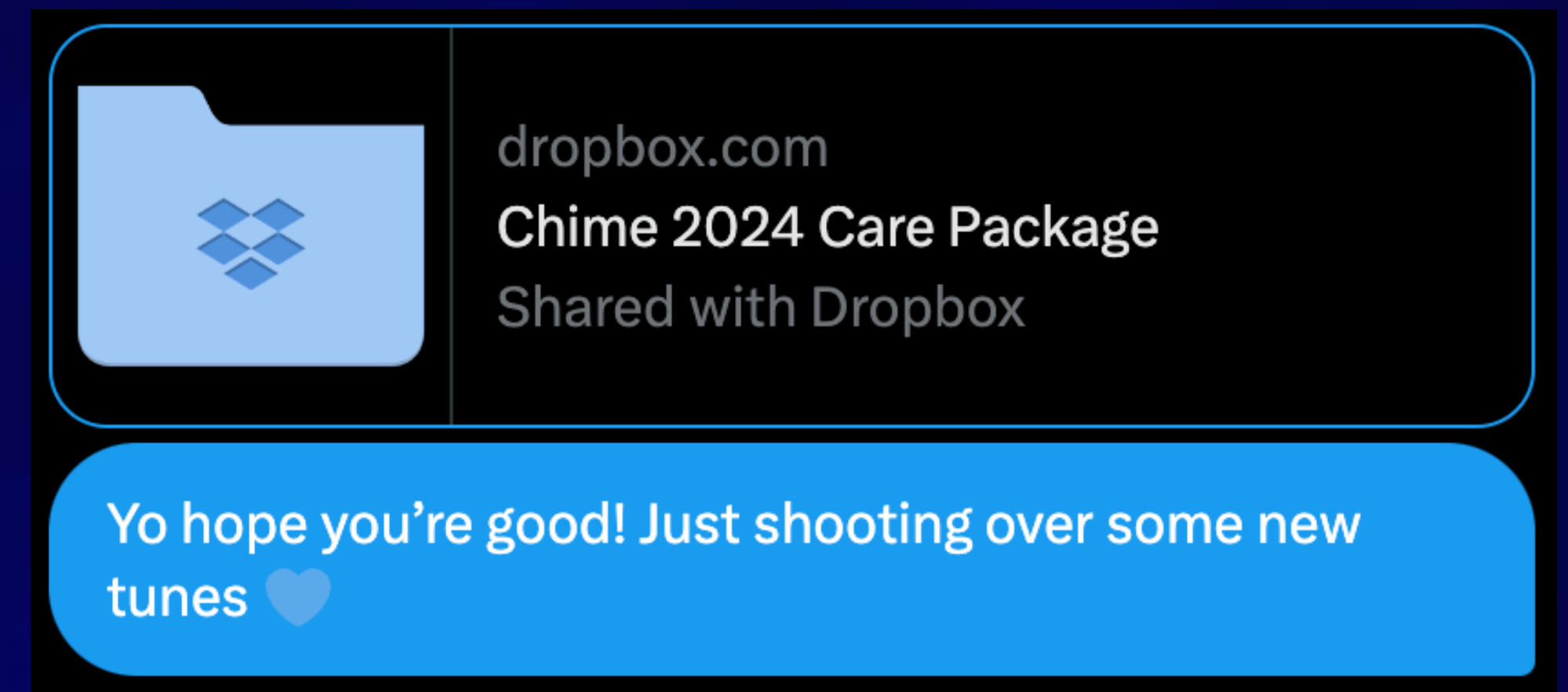
- Make sure they are aware of you and your music
- Even better if you have confirmation that they like your music
- **DON'T** open immediately with a collab request
- **"Collab bro???"** is a meme for a reason
- Bigger artists get these kind of messages almost every day



Approaching a producer

First steps

- Be mindful: on which platform are they most responsive / prefer to receive DMs?
- Good openers don't pressure the artist: "thanks for the follow!", send over some unreleased music, compliment something they've worked on (don't force this though)
- Expect radio silence - producers are busy!
- An ignored message can be for a variety of reasons



Approaching a producer

Be mindful of their position

- Are they a bigger artist than you?
- Even if they are, they are human too!
- No need to self-deprecate or treat them like a deity
- The benefit to collaborating with a smaller artist is artistic, not business-related
- Managers can often discourage this since their artist will be spending time on something that doesn't necessarily advance their career
- The best collabs are always between producers passionate about each other's music regardless of size
- Long messages require more effort to read through - keep things short

Approaching a producer

Be mindful of YOUR position

- Are you completely confident in your music?
- Are your skills fairly comparable to the other artist?
- Asking a big artist to collab too early in your skill development can show a lack of awareness in your abilities

Sending / receiving ideas & demos

Best practices

- Having multiple draft ideas prepared allows the collaborator a few to choose from (more likely to make something happen)
- Present these as mp3s on a private **SoundCloud**, **DropBox** or **Google Drive** link (viewable on mobile)
- The best point to jump into a collab is about a quarter / third progress through an idea
- Find a connecting thread between your styles - there always is one

Sending / receiving ideas & demos

KEEP TRACK OF WHO YOU SENT IDEAS TO

- You don't want to accidentally have two collaborators working on the same idea unknowingly
- If it has been a while and there has been no response, it's okay to send out the idea to others
- Just be aware if any progress is likely to be made on each idea you send

Should I send stems or the project file?

Stems **PROs**

- They will always translate correctly between DAWs
- Necessary if using different DAWs
- Preferred by some artists

Should I send stems or the project file?

Stems **CONs**

- Can take a lot of time and effort to send back and forth correctly

Should I send stems or the project file?

Project files **PROs**

- Provide fine control to all parameters
- Gives collaborator insight into your process for making certain sounds etc.
- Preferred by some artists

Should I send stems or the project file?

Project files **CONS**

- Not always preferred since producers can work / organise things very differently to each other
- Can make it difficult for collaborator to find certain elements
- Can break if plugins are not shared between artists - bounce in place / freeze tracks to audio in these cases

Other options

For collaboration

- In-person
- Splice project-sharing
- Over Zoom or Discord

Exporting stems

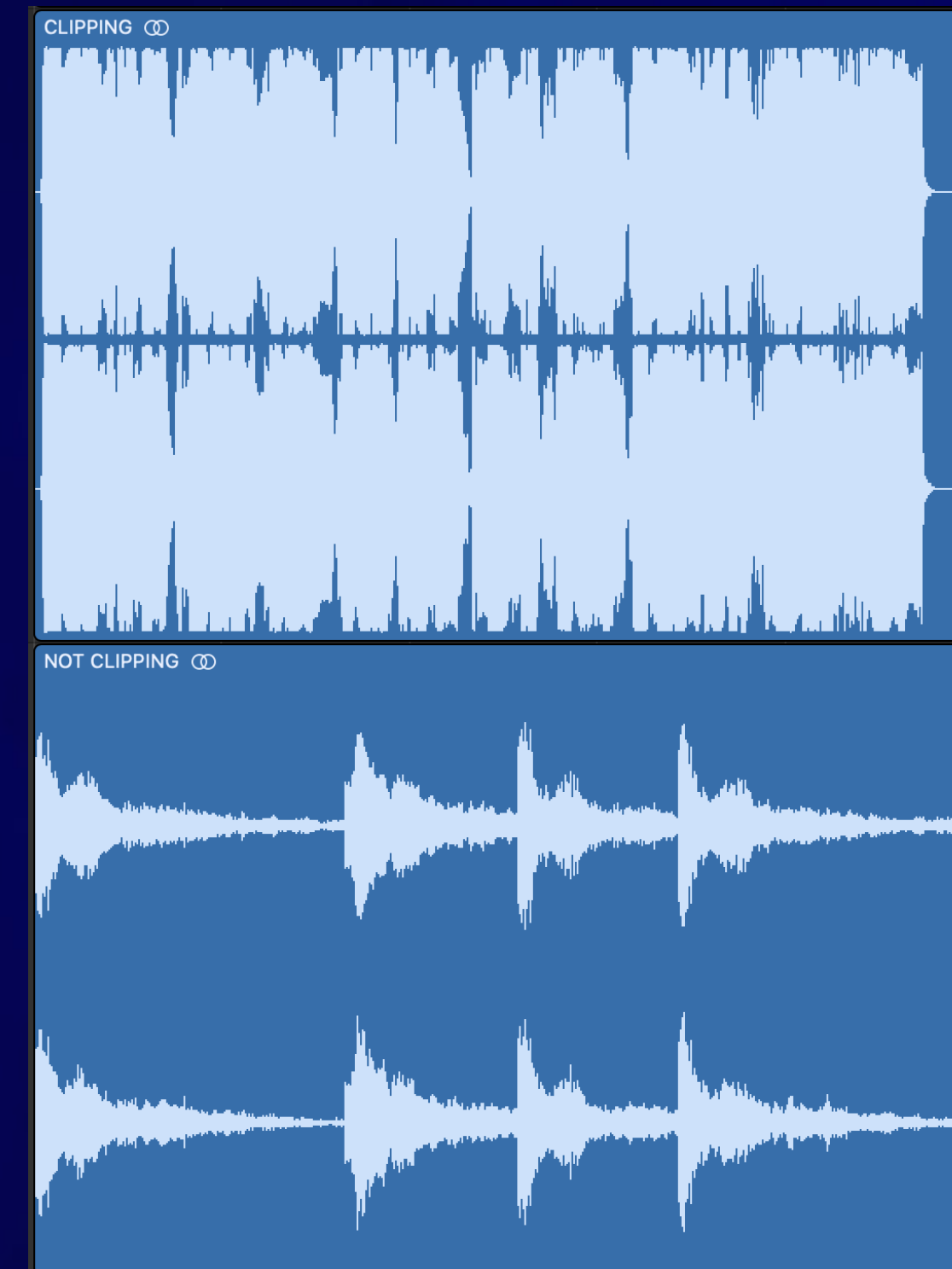
Before exporting

- Organise your project
- Categorise sounds into groups when not overlapping (limits number of stems - more easily digestible)
- Separate groups only when overlapping (ex. "Basses Layer 1" and "Basses Layer 2" for layered midrange bass sounds)
- Intuit when overlapping layers may not be a problem and group them

Exporting stems

Before exporting - include clipping?

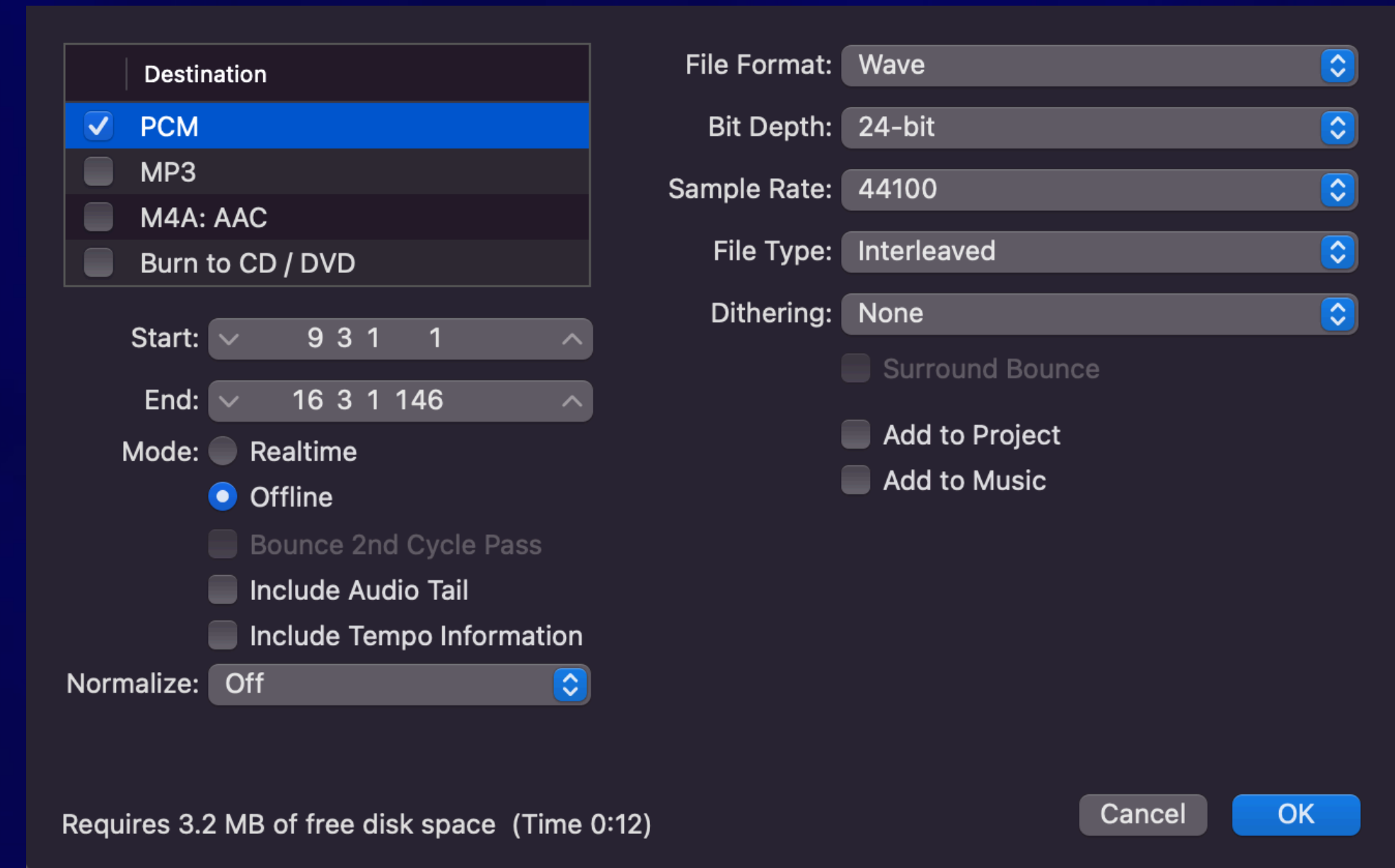
- Clipped stems are okay as long as it doesn't degrade audio quality or introduce unwanted distortion
- Bass music tends to be mixed with soft clipping applied at multiple stages of the mixdown
- Stems without clipping are also okay
- As long as the levels of each channel are balanced correctly to one another you're good to go!





Exporting stems

DO THIS: Export settings

- Ideally should be able to drag-and-drop into DAW and immediately start working
- 24-bit or 32-bit .wavs
- 44.1khz / 48khz
- Bonus points: including stems both with and without side-chaining



-  With Side-Chain
-  Without Side-Chain



Exporting stems



Chime & Skrillex - Collab Stems (150bpm / F#min) [DATE]


DO THIS: Folder naming

- Naming the stems folder clearly will help your collaborator find it easily on their system
- Both artist names
- Name of collab (if there is one)
- Tempo and key info
- Including the date can help sort through multiple instances of sent stems

Exporting stems

DO THIS: Ordering

- Allows stems to land in the project file in their intended order


- 
- 1 Kick.wav
 - 2 Snare.wav
 - 3 Tops.wav
 - 4 Perc.wav
 - 5 FX.wav
 - 6 Vox.wav
 - 7 Melodics.wav
 - 8 Leads.wav
 - 9 Basses Layer 1.wav
 - 10 Basses Layer 2.wav
 - 11 Basses Layer 3.wav
 - 12 Sub Bass.wav


Exporting stems

DO THIS: Ordering

- Kick
- Snare / Clap
- Tops
- Crash
- Fills/Perc
- FX (Risers etc.)
- FX (Samples)
- Instruments
- Synth Melodics
- Basses
- Sub Bass
- Vox

Examples:


- 
- 1 Kick.wav
 - 2 Snare.wav
 - 3 Tops.wav
 - 4 Perc.wav
 - 5 FX.wav
 - 6 Vox.wav
 - 7 Melodics.wav
 - 8 Leads.wav
 - 9 Basses Layer 1.wav
 - 10 Basses Layer 2.wav
 - 11 Basses Layer 3.wav
 - 12 Sub Bass.wav

- 
- 1 Kick + Clap.wav
 - 2 Tops.wav
 - 3 Crash.wav
 - 4 Perc.wav
 - 5 FX.wav
 - 6 Arp.wav
 - 7 Pad.wav
 - 8 Glisteners.wav
 - 9 Piano.wav
 - 10 Main Bass Lead.wav
 - 11 Main Bass Harmony.wav
 - 12 Basses.wav
 - 13 Sub Bass + Reese.wav
 - 14 Vox.wav

Exporting stems

DON'T DO THIS

- **DON'T** hit "export all stems" (or equivalent) and call it a day
- Really challenging for your collaborator to work through
- Passes the effort of organisation over to the collaborator
- Doesn't include clear names for the collaborator to have a picture of where elements are
- Contains completely silent stems that take up space and need to be deleted
- Contains duplicate channels and groups that need to be deleted to regain correct gain balancing
- **Sending lazy stems can signal a lack of enthusiasm and will actively make it more difficult for artists to work with you**

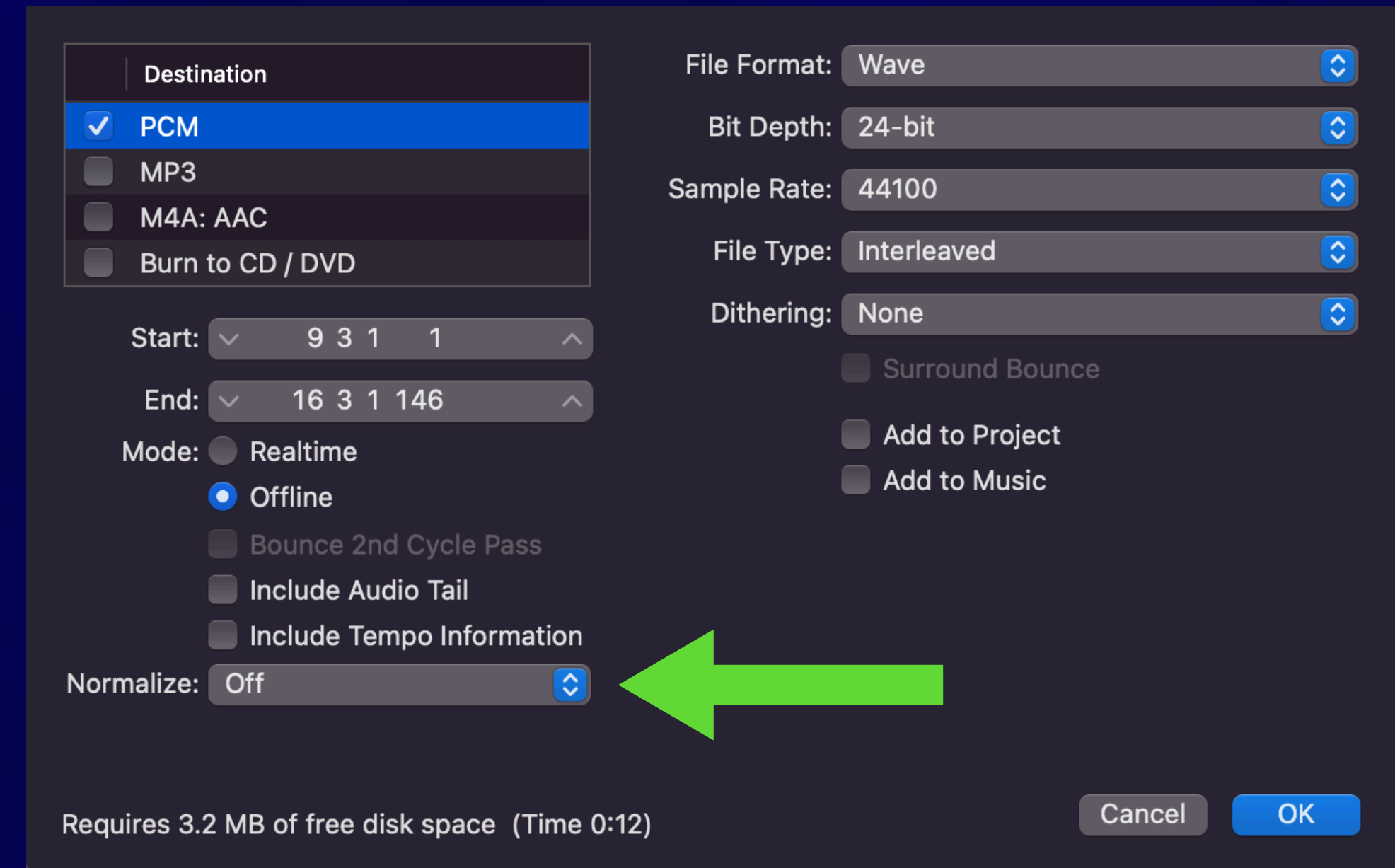


```
drop 2 untitled 411 1-Group.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 2-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 4-Group.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 5-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 6-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 8-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 10-Nexus.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 12-Group.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 15-Operator mixed.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 15-Operator.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 16-Operator.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 17-drop 2 untitled 4 v3.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 23-Serum mixed.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 23-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 24-Lev_Riser_128_8_Noise mixed_01.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 24-Lev_Riser_128_8_Noise_01.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 25-KSHMR_808_01_Clean_C.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 26-KSHMR_Percussion_High_Ethnic_02_C mixed.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 26-KSHMR_Percussion_High_Ethnic_02_C.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 27-KSHMR_Percussion_High_Ethnic_02_C.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 28-KSHMR_Hip_Hop_Snare_12_D#.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 29-808 Mafia Hi Hat (7) mixed.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 29-808 Mafia Hi Hat (7).wav
drop 2 untitled 411 30-808 Mafia Percussion's (6) mixed.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 30-808 Mafia Percussion's (6).wav
drop 2 untitled 411 31-Group.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 32-KSHMR_Ride_02.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 33-RIDDIM.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 34-KSHMR Shaker Loops 128 01.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 35-VEC4 Impacts 07.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 36-Massive.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 37-Group.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 38-Operator.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 39-Massive.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 41-Cymatics - Terror Hi Hat Loop 007.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 42-Boo Worm Break.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 44-Audio.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 45-Group.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 46-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 47-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 48-Keyscape.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 49-Cymatics - Breathe 8.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 50-Addictive Drums 2.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 51-Group.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 53-Serum.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 55-808 Mafia Hi Hat (7).wav
drop 2 untitled 411 Nexus 3-1.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 Nexus 3-2.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 Nexus 3.wav
drop 2 untitled 411 Operator.wav
```


Exporting stems

DON'T DO THIS

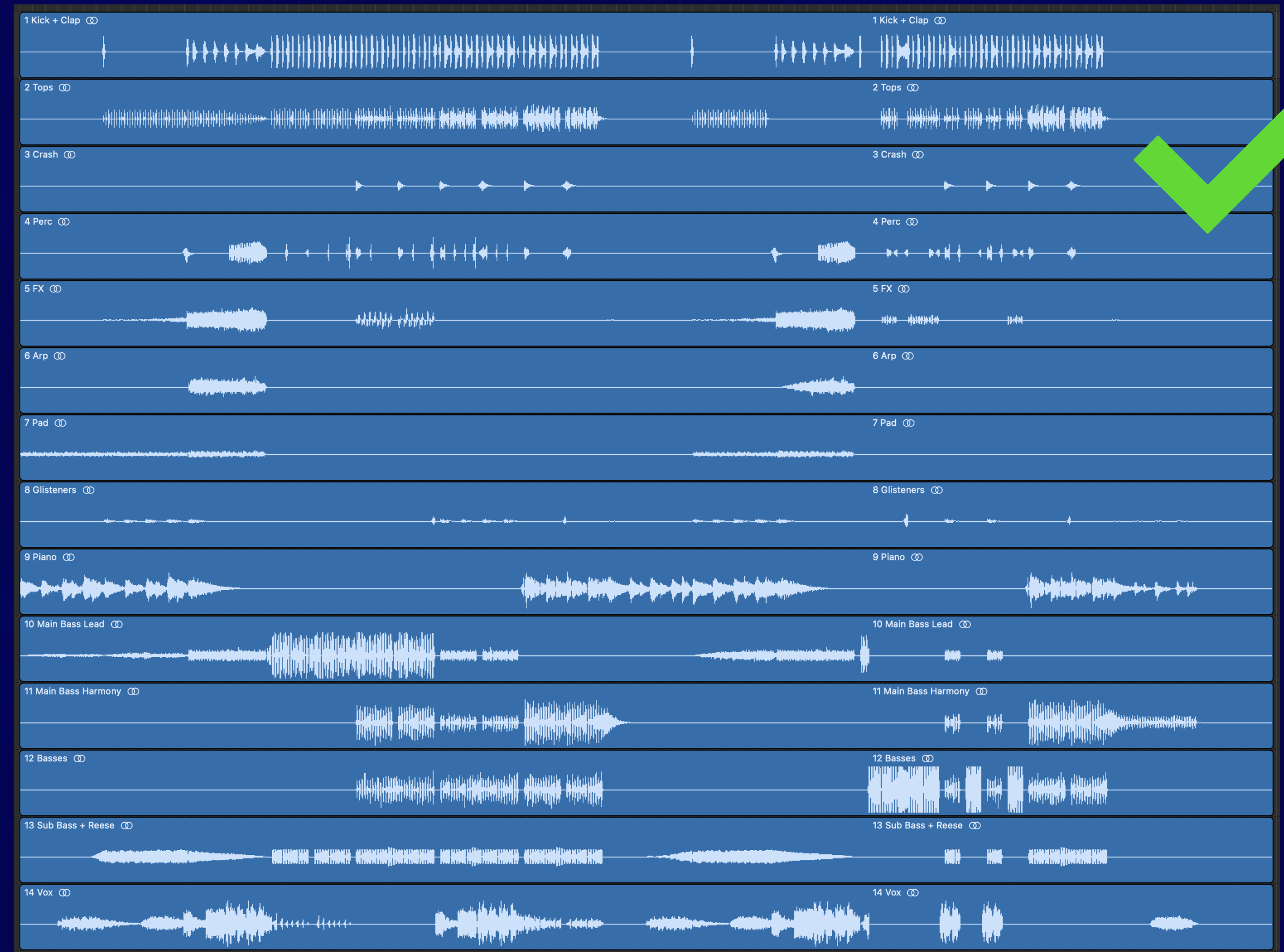
- **DON'T** normalise your stems
- Normalising your stems will change the levels of each channel in order to have them all peak at 0dB
- This means your collaborator will have to re-balance everything on their end



Exporting stems

Before sending

- Ensure all stems align correctly from the same start point
- Check through exported stems for errors before sending
- Remove any completely silent files from stems
- BONUS: Drag-and-drop into your DAW to ensure they translate correctly



Should I include side-chaining in stems?

WITH side-chaining PROs

- The project will translate identically when the collaborator imports the stems
- Slight differences in side-chaining won't need to be recreated by collaborator

Should I include side-chaining in stems?

WITH side-chaining **CONS**

- Difficult for collaborator to change drum patterns
- Difficult for collaborator to reuse side-chained elements in other sections of the project

Should I include side-chaining in stems?

WITHOUT side-chaining **PROs**

- Complete control for the collaborator

Should I include side-chaining in stems?

WITHOUT side-chaining **CONs**

- Originally side-chained elements will have to be recreated each time the project is passed over
- Depending the method of side-chaining it can be very difficult to remove completely when sending

Should I include dry exports?

Dry = no FX

- Can be helpful for certain elements to be included without delay / reverb etc.
- If the FX are intrinsic to the sound leave them on
- Place dry copies into a separate folder

Should I include MIDI?

When it can be helpful

- Can be handy for chord sequences and lead melodies
- Place in separate folder to audio stems
- No need to include all MIDI
- Makes it easier for the collaborator to immediately match your harmony with their own elements

Sending the files

Best practices

- **DO** use permanent, trusted file-hosting services: **DropBox, Google Drive**
- **DON'T** use platforms that delete files after a while like **WeTransfer** - this pressures collaborators to download stems in a time-limit

During the collab

COMMUNICATE!

- Find out how your collaborator likes to work
- Discuss your own strengths and weaknesses
- When sending files for your idea communicate what you think the weaknesses are / what you're feeling more attached to
- Discuss who will do the final mixdown and master early on if possible
- Discuss how both artist's styles can come through

During the collab

Things to keep in mind

- Be ready for things to change!
- Prepare to **wait** - some producers have upwards of 10 collabs on the go at once
- **50/50** collabs always get the best results

During the collab

What if I dislike what they did?

- Point it out as soon as possible
- Suggest a way it could work better
- Push towards a solution rather than simply pointing out flaws
- Make sure to also point out positives in what they have done

During the collab

What if I'm struggling to work on their idea?

- This is okay!
- Ask them to work on the idea a little more before you jump on
- Ask if they have any other ideas they'd like to try
- Offer some of your own new ideas to work on
- Having a collab not work out is fine, you can always try again another time

During the collab

Following up

- Give them some time!
- Try to follow-up only once between received messages
- “Hey just checking if there’s been any progress on our tune?”
- Don’t pressure! This can lead to the opposite of progress
- Too many messages and nudges can become annoying and sour the experience
- Nobody wants to feel like they're letting someone down by not responding

During the collab

Following up goes both ways!

- If it's your turn to work on the project keeping your collaborator informed of where you're at can be reassuring
- It's okay if you're taking a while, just let them know you still intend to work on the idea

During the collab

Getting ghosted - what do I do?

- This can and does happen
- Not necessarily a reflection on you - countless reasons why an artist might disappear on you
- Allow the collaborator time to come back to you
- Follow-up after a few months or so only once
- No response for a long time? Move onto other projects **OR**
- **IT IS OKAY** to finish the track on your own (ensure to remove all of their elements from the project)

During the collab

Collabs with multiple artists on one track

- Nominating one artist to control the main project can help keep things organised
- Each artist having some time on the project is also good before this
- From there the other artists can work on sections of the track and send them as stems to include in the "hub" project



Final stages

Tips on finishing a collab

- Often the most difficult part
- Communicating intricate mixdown adjustments is tough
- Be as clear as possible - avoid subjective language
- **DON'T SAY** “The kick doesn't feel warm enough”
- **DO SAY** “I think the kick could use a boost at 100hz of about 3dB to help it feel as punchy and present as the basses”
- Providing a justification really helps motivate the change and aids discussion
- Hopping on a call can really help to clarify and communicate more complex feedback notes

Final stages

If you have the final project

- Try to be accommodating to your collaborator's wishes (it's their track too!)
- You want to complete the track with both artists as close to 100% satisfaction with the final as possible
- Be open to suggestions even if you feel the track is complete
- Try out suggestions for changes that you initially disagree with (you might end up liking it more after all)

After finishing the track

Name ordering - yucky but inevitable

- The order of names on collabs unfortunately can matter
- The name in first position is seen to be "largest" artist - this is similar with positioning on line-ups
- Some show promoters and industry folks pay attention to these small details to gauge offers etc.
- Spotify only shows the first artist name on some occasions (which is dumb)
- Listeners are more likely to pay attention to the first name
- Sometimes a name is placed in first position as they connect more with the audience of a label
- Sometimes a name is placed in first position since it's part of the smaller artist's EP or bigger project
- Another good thing to discuss early on if at a similar level

The Takeover

Chime, The Living Proof

Motion

Dr. Ozi, Chime, Trinergy

The Other Side

Au5, Chime

Sleepless

Pixel Terror, Chime, Teminite

Water Elemental

Sharks, Chime



After finishing the track

Release and promotion

- Collabs don't stop when the track's finished!
- Discuss each other's target labels and where the track would fit best during the collab
- People love collabs in the dubstep scene - capitalise on that with promo!
- Having pics / videos together really help for promotion
- Communicate with collaborator during the release process to align post times etc.

Managing multiple collabs at once

Tips for keeping track

- Keep a list of all collabs in progress so you don't forget any
- Separate into progress categories
- This helps you keep track of what YOU need to work on currently and who might need a nudge

COLLABS ONGOING

Set to release:

- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)

Complete - waiting for release date:

- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)

WIP:

- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)

WIP - waiting on collaborator:

- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)

COLLAB OPTIONS

Waiting on idea / response:

- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)

Interested (follow up or prepare idea):

- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)

Possibilities / goals:

- [Chime](#)
- [Chime](#)
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- [Chime](#)
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Final thoughts

- Don't be too pushy
- Be kind and considerate to other artists
- Have fun with collab projects!