

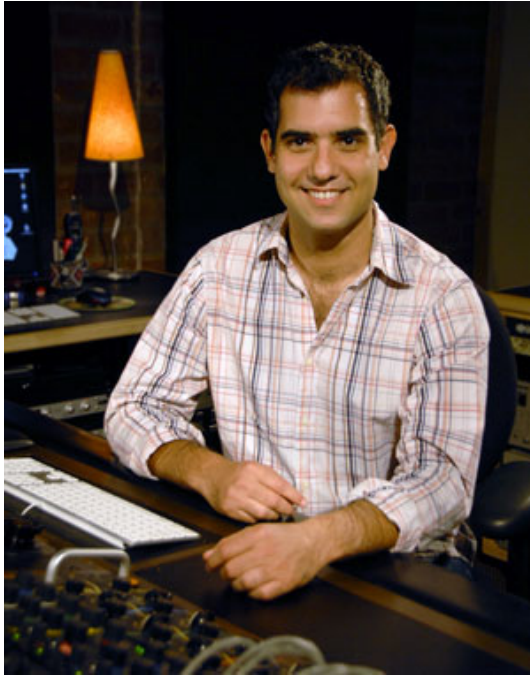
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Gabriel Wallach

Engineer at Lurssen Mastering talks about restoration in the digital age



Hailing from the vibrant musical streets of Uruguay, Gabriel Wallach has made his impact felt with credits like Motley Crue, Yung Berg, Reik, Dave Koz, and most recently Jorge Celedón's Latin Grammy winning album "Son... Para El Mundo." Mastering engineer and restoration specialist at the prestigious Lurssen Mastering, Wallach sat down with iZotope to discuss restoration in the digital age and how RX has fit into his daily audio routine.

"RX gets us where we want to be with no limits"

- Gabriel Wallach

Tell us a little bit about your musical background coming from Uruguay. What influences did you have growing up that pushed you towards becoming a musician?

Uruguay is a very musical country with a potent mixture of South American and European influences. The streets are alive with music, and we are constantly surrounded by genres within the numerous venues that exist there. In addition, as a teenager I was captivated with the different sounds of music I heard from all over the world. My friends and I were crazy for the blues and rock icons of the 50s, 60s and 70s. This led to picking up the guitar, and as soon as I did, I never looked back. I've been playing ever since, which ultimately led me to college and a career in audio engineering.

At what point did you decide to focus on the technical side of music?

Since I can remember, I've always had a strong connection with technology, especially gadgets that made and manipulated sound. As a kid I played around with my family's turntable and home stereo, tweaking all the knobs I could get my hands on. As I grew older and more musical, I became interested in every piece of sound recording

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equipment I could find. This developed into recording and mastering.

My fascination and experimentation with audio became more serious while in music school, when I enrolled in the engineering program to become a full-fledged sound engineer. This fueled the next step, which was my passion for the record-making process and in particular, the treatment of recorded music.

How did you first get into becoming a mastering engineer? What was interesting to you about the mastering process?

During my years at Berklee College Of Music in Boston, MA, I took a class that talked about mastering techniques. We were given the chance to master a lot of material in the studio, and I immediately clicked with the process. It was a wonderful sensation to participate in music at that point in the chain. Mastering records for a living seemed like a perfect fit once I was out of college.

To me, mastering goes far beyond just enhancing the sound of a mix. This last process in the record-making chain brings the best out of a performance, and a mix and helps deliver the message of the song. This includes the ability of knowing the art of gain structure and knowing when to stop processing. We accomplish this by carefully manipulating the different sonic tonalities within a mix or set of stems. It's a matter of finding the delicate balance of the mixes' frequency spectrum and dynamic range to boost the musical experience for the end listener. Knowing what is going to happen in the chain of events during manufacturing and the way a digital file is played back and decoded for the end listener is a part of this sentiment.

I strongly believe that objectivity is the most important asset that a mastering engineer can bring to the table. We don't have enough time to get too emotionally attached to the project, which leads to a large gain in sonic balance perspective in the end. We connect to the record with a fresh set of ears and quickly identify with what needs to be done to take it to the next level.

In what way do you feel your strong musical background has influenced your decisions and process as a mastering engineer?

Having a musical background plays an important role every time I sit down to master a record. At Lurssen Mastering, all the engineers are musicians with experience at many stages of making records. Having said this, mastering is a fine balance between one's own musicality and knowledge of audio technology. Without any doubt, knowing what's going on under the hood contributes to the process. Ultimately, we're engineers in service to the song with discriminating ears for creating the ultimate sound.

How has digital technology and software changed the way in which you would approach a master/restoration project?

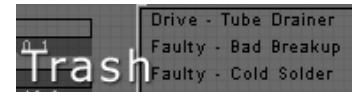
For us, digital technology helps us achieve goals today that were just impractical or even unthinkable years ago. Just think of the copious amount of hard disk space that is available today. This has brought the possibility of recording, mixing and mastering at higher sampling rates



Complete audio restoration.



Precision mastering suite.



64-bit distortion, amp modeling, filters and delay.



Spectral effect processing with morph, pan, delay and filters.



Natural time and pitch control for Logic Pro and Soundtrack Pro.



Play your loops any way you like.



Virtual drum machine for Mac OS X and Windows.



2,057 new beats for iDrum and Garageband.



Analog modeled vinyl simulator.

and bit depth without worrying about space. For example, just A/D and DA converter technology alone has exponentially improved the overall record-making process in the last 25 years.

Now we have more horsepower if needed to help us make recordings sound even better. I am still amazed that, with just a click of a mouse and a couple of keystrokes, we can accomplish outstanding results; however, everything we process is in the analog domain and digital processing technology is adopted as soon as it is developed to further enhance the listening experience if needed.

Digital technology and software are key components in our daily routine at the studio, in combination with the analog chain that has been carefully and thoughtfully designed by Gavin Lurssen. Whether assembling a master for the manufacturer or flawlessly removing a cough or a squeaky chair from a recording, today's software and digital technology get us from a starting point to the finish line not only faster but also more effectively.

As the restoration specialist at Lurssen Mastering, what problems do you typically run up against in your process?

In restoration there are never two projects that are alike. Each one has its own set of challenges. When we approach a restoration project, we start by identifying what elements in the program material we need to tackle. These elements typically are responsible for making the recording lose its focus. Through special treatment, we restore the overall focus assuring that the listener experiences the recording without any distractions. We accomplish this by knowing how far we can push the limits by using one's musicality and having a deep understanding of the analog and digital tools available at Lurssen Mastering. How they will interact together creates an end result where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

We make sure to remove the distracting elements without introducing artifacts in the process also. Where to draw the line correctly is the key to assuring that the recording sounds natural, as if the imperfections were never there. We are talking about record production in this interview, but I would also like to point out that we get into audio forensics quite a bit and are able to work magic to bring focus to what needs to come out of any recording, no matter the purpose of the recording.

In what way has RX been incorporated into your routine?

Lurssen Mastering's workflow involves a delicate interaction of all of our gear digital and analog. RX found its way in and quickly became part of our arsenal. The main reason for its inclusion is that it is very comfortable and has very powerful features that help me achieve the goals we look for. One of the best elements is the Spectral Repair feature. This tool has been outstanding at accomplishing phenomenal results without a compromise in quality. RX gets us to where we want to be without any limits.

Thanks for spending time with us today, Gabriel.

It was my pleasure. Thank you.



For more information on Gabriel Wallach visit Lurssen Mastering.

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