

Your name: Chaz

Song name: Held

- FIRST IMPRESSIONS (30-sec snap judgment A&R listen)
 - True to style, big, warm sound with an acoustic vibe too.
 - I love that it's sparse and based mainly on piano as a real instrument instead of generic or dated synths or loops. That makes for a timeless sound.
 - Dig the minor chords, and overall harmonic color feels uncommon.
 - Love that most of the record, the rap is not doubled all the way through, gives it intimacy and urgency, used only in the chorus for a slightly more expansive color.
 - Needs more grit overall.
 - It's hard to figure out where you are in the song. Verses and choruses are too linear with too little differentiation.
 - OVERALL THOUGHTS ON THE MIX
 - Very well balanced and love the bottom end, big and fat and warm, nicely done!
 - It is very smooth on the ear, which is a nice feat engineering-wise, but it could use more grit and midrange feel and vibe-wise. The midrange can come forward with some presence and snap in the snare, hi-hat, and vocal.
 - The piano has a great vibe, can stay the anchor for the whole song, and the sound is good. But if we move snare, hi-hat, and vocal more forward, we're gonna get a more intentional focus to the record.
 - To shift this balance, the 808 bassline could go down by 0.5-1db. You'll feel the change in energy.
 - Needs to focus vocal. I would turn it up about .7db, make it a little dryer in the verses, darken the reverb and play with a longer pre-delay, so we get a more in-your-face sound while still feeling some space.
 - The biggest concern is that because of the hypnotic repetitive nature, the song and production need to contract and expand more to delineate verses and choruses more clearly and make me feel like the energy is pushing towards the payoff (chorus) while you're still in the verse.
 - It feels too linear, which makes me lose attention halfway through.
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Your song/mix feedback was done by Richard Furch

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- IDEAS FOR THE VERSES

- Dryer, slightly louder, more present vocal.
- Spot delays to emphasize the end of lines, here and there. Keep it interesting and subtle because the vibe of the performance is dope. The second verse works better because of the spot doubles.
- Work on the swoosh from verse to chorus. I hear the extra effect build, but it's too subtle. Possibly double vocal on the last line and fade that in or increase the effect between verse and chorus. I want to feel like something big is about to happen. This is not easy because there is no instrumental change, but it can help with mix improvements.
- I dig the hat coming in halfway through the verse. It's effective in giving an energy change.
- You could drop the beat for a bar or two beginning of the second verse while keeping the piano for an open moment.
- You can interrupt piano progression for a bar or half a bar before the chorus to give it a moment. It needs a shift of energy and pull towards the chorus.

- IDEAS FOR THE CHORUSES

- Create a feeling of expansion with multiple doubled vocals panned out of the center and use delays to make it sound fuller, different from verse.
- Find an effect to go back from the chorus to the verse that feels final: a backwards verb that stops, for instance.
- Pan vocal screams, one left, the next right, to create interesting moments in the mix when you only have sparse production. Find a different space for the scream because it's a special effect.
- The new hi-hat could be louder, and another percussion instrument and a crash or similar sound in the chorus would change the energy too.
- Listening to the first chorus at the top of the song, the beat comes in powerfully because it comes out of space and openness. Use this feeling to go from verse to chorus. Right now, it doesn't happen again in the song.

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SONGCHECKS

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- IDEA FOR A BREAKDOWN

- It's an opportunity for a different vibe and push. For instance, gradually open the verb on the clap and then drop it into the outro effect. Movement is the key to keeping attention. Dry up/find more presence for the strings to contrast more with the piano space.

- OTHER NOTES

- I understand the background moment at 2:10, but it's too loud.

WHAT RULES (things you nailed)

- The vibe of the song and performance intrigues me. I think it's dope

WHAT DOES NOT (things we need to work on)

- Optimizing the impact of the performance in the moment and over time via the ideas I listed above.

WHAT WOULD I REFERENCE IF I WERE MIXING THIS SONG?

- Different sound, but as an example of excellent energy movement between sections, I'd listen to the way Lose Yourself (Eminem) pulls you from the verse to the chorus. You just feel that it's about to hit even though the overall guitar part stays the same. Massive Attack has long songs that change little over time, but it feels like the energy moves along.

OVERALL MIX RATING: 1 - 10 (1 = remix it, 10 = Grammy time)

- I'd like to give this record two ratings. Sound-wise, I think you did a good job, and sonically, it SOUNDS good (8/10). But for the mix as part of the overall vibe and contribution to the song, I think there's work to do (4/10).

FINAL THOUGHTS

- This is an excellent example of how a great, evolving mix could improve and change the feel of a record. There is a lot of creative opportunity here and multiple solutions to the energy issue. Music lives in the ebbs and flows of the performance and arrangement, and if it's static in production, it can be enhanced with clever mixing. Have fun with different versions, and I can't wait to hear what you come up with!

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