

The Dolby Atmos Readiness Checklist for Artists, Labels and Catalog Owners

How to know whether a song, album or catalog is ready for a Dolby Atmos release, and what to fix first.

I have mixed catalog and new releases in Dolby Atmos, including my Dolby Atmos mixes for the KISS Dressed to Kill and Rock And Roll Over 50th anniversary box sets and Diana Ross's I'm Coming Out. I also mixed the first 5.1 DTS surround music CD in 1995. The projects that go smoothly are the ones where the rights, the multitracks and the delivery requirements were sorted out before the first mix session.

There is also a business reason to do this now. Apple Music pays up to 10 percent more in sound-recording royalties for tracks available in Spatial Audio, whether or not each listener hears the Atmos version. Use this checklist to see where your project stands.

David Frangioni

1. Source material: the deal breaker

Apple Music requires every Dolby Atmos track to be built from the original multitracks, or from stems created from those multitracks. Upmixing a stereo release, extracting stems from a finished stereo mix, or placing the stereo mix in the sound field with added ambience are not allowed.

- ☐ Locate the original multitrack sessions or tapes for every song.
- ☐ Confirm the sessions open and play, or plan transfers and restoration.
- ☐ If only stereo masters exist, the track is not eligible for an Apple Music Atmos release.

2. Rights and approvals

- ☐ Confirm who controls the master and who must approve a new mix.
- ☐ Check artist and producer approval rights in existing agreements.
- ☐ Confirm sample and guest clearances carry over to the new version.
- ☐ Agree on credits for the Atmos mix and mastering.

3. Delivery specifications (Apple Music)

- ☐ File format: Broadcast Wave Format Audio Definition Model (BWF ADM).
- ☐ Audio: 24-bit linear PCM at 48 kHz or 96 kHz (96 kHz is converted to 48 kHz for output).

- ☐ Integrated loudness no higher than -18 LKFS, true peak no higher than -1 dBTP, measured per ITU-R BS.1770-4 and per track.
- ☐ No full-frequency content in the LFE channel.
- ☐ Conformed and synced to the stereo reference; for gapless albums, each track boundary within 0.5 seconds of the stereo version.
- ☐ Binaural Render Mode (Off, Near, Mid or Far) set for every bed channel and object.

4. The mix room and the mixer

Most listeners will hear your Atmos mix on headphones, so the mix has to work on speakers and translate to binaural. That takes a calibrated immersive room and a mixer who respects the original record.

- ☐ Work in a calibrated room with at least a 7.1.4 speaker layout.
- ☐ Ask the mixer for references: catalog titles and new releases they have mixed in Atmos.
- ☐ Agree up front on how closely the Atmos mix should honor the original stereo balance.

5. Quality control before delivery

- ☐ Check the binaural render on several pairs of headphones, including AirPods.
- ☐ Listen on a soundbar, in a car and in a living room system.
- ☐ Compare against the stereo master for level, tone and arrangement.
- ☐ Run the loudness analysis on every track before export.

6. Release planning

- ☐ Confirm your distributor accepts Dolby Atmos delivery and its fees.
- ☐ Deliver Atmos with the release when possible; some distributors cannot add Atmos after upload.
- ☐ Plan the story: an Atmos release is a reason to bring a catalog back to fans and press.

Planning an Atmos release or a catalog program? Book a consultation with me at davidfrangioni.com/services/consulting. I work with artists, labels, estates and catalog owners.

Further reading

[The state of immersive audio in 2026 \(davidfrangioni.com\)](#)

[How a classic album gets remixed in Dolby Atmos \(frangionimedia.com\)](#)

Sources

[Apple, Video and Audio Asset Guide: Immersive Audio Source Profile](#)

[Dolby, Dolby Atmos Music Delivery Playbook](#)

[Interspace Music, Apple Music pays up to 10 percent more for Dolby Atmos tracks](#)