

What's Wrong With My Mix #3

Fall TD Fex - "Chances R"

Reviewed by Ted Perlman

Let me start out by saying that I really like this record. Lines like *"one more drink makes it harder to think"*, and *"beat me with your bass drum"* are very memorable. They're the kind of catch phrases that listeners remember, and are part of that mystery as to what makes up a hit record. Fall TD Fex are definitely onto a certain sound that, if allowed to develop over time, may become individualized enough so that we'll all know it's Fall TD Fex when the first beats come blasting over the radio.

Fall TD Fex have definitely done their homework as far as sonic placement of instruments. The levels of all the instruments are quite good - the bass is solid, the drums are phat, the keys are kicking, and the vocals sound great. There's a great high snare drum that plays fills throughout the song. It's eq'd in a nice way so that it cuts through the mix without being turned up too loud. It also gets a few great fx treatments as the song goes on. That type of *"ear candy"* are great embellishments to keep up a listener's attention as the song progresses. There's also an awesome old-old-old skool Farfisa-type organ that plays some lines and rhythm figures. I loved that. It really caught my attention because Fall TD Fex used it instead of the standard B3 Hammond organ sound. Using at least one sound that nobody else would have the guts to use is great. Get people's attention - make them nervous - piss them off, or upset them. But they won't forget you.

Okay, let's talk about a few ways to make this record even better. Perhaps *"better"* is not the best word, because this could be a hit as it is. But I'm here to try and improve the record, so here goes. On the verses a snare that is a combination of snares comes in, and it really shouldn't. It's way too big against the way the rapper/singer is hitting the words, and causes the balance to get out of whack. Just one snare would have been enough. The snare sound before the verse started was fine - it could have continued right through the verse. There's also a few key vocal lines that get lost - for example the last lines of the chorus - starting from *"...high's still growing as you slip into your trance..."* - are mixed too low, and hard to hear. Use the automation on your software if you find yourself missing that part when it goes by. It's okay to bury the verse vocals a bit because they don't contain the key words, but the chorus is the all important element in a hit. I always try to add a slight boost at 2k to the lead vocal to let it cut through without overwhelming the music. A few more breakdowns at the

end of sections would also let those key lines cut through without having to turn the vocal up too loud. The chorus' in general are balanced great, a really nice mix.

I thought the record didn't end too well. It sounded like nobody really knew how to end it, so Fall TD Fex simply let it run out and then stopped it with a cymbal crash and hit. As innovative as the rest of the record was, it was disappointing to hear such a lame ending. But that's an easy fix. I would make a breakdown and just have the vocals singing the chorus once against either a kick or other instrument, or even let the vocals end the record by themselves. That way the ending would reinforce the listener's memory of the song, and the ending would kick butt.

The artist says they used a P3/650. That's not a really powerful machine, so Fall TD Fex must have done some tricks to get all the parts and effects to play on that machine. I started out using a Fostex X15 cassette deck, so I respect anybody that finds ways around equipment shortcomings, rather than complain about "*I'll really be able to make great records when I buy this and that andetc*". Use what you have, because the music is in YOU, not your equipment. Fall TD Fex have made a great record that probably wouldn't sound any better even it was mixed in ProTools HD. Wavelab was listed as one of the software apps used, and I'm assuming that the artist mastered this mix in some manner. I'd be curious to hear the mix before it was mastered, because maybe the vocals on certain lines would have cut through better before any mastering compression was applied.

Fall TD Fex have done a great job. I really can't tell them what's wrong with their mix because there is nothing really wrong, just my opinion regarding certain mix decisions they made. I'll definitely buy it when it comes out, because I liked it a lot.

PS - You guys should probably make a radio-ready mix, and leave out the reefer references and expletives. If you don't, the radio stations will make their own "clean version", and your mix will sound like a video game - beep, beep, beep, etc.