

THE PRO STANDARD

Top Approaches for Any Style of Psytrance

By Sonic Species · Joe Markendale

What every producer has to get right to work at a professional level, whatever subgenre you make. Your sound stays yours.

20+ YEARS · 120,000+ MONTHLY LISTENERS · 500+ SHOWS ACROSS 43 COUNTRIES

SONIC SPECIES

READ THIS FIRST

This is not a formula

Every subgenre of psytrance has its own rules. What works in full-on may not work in twilight. What works in a festival track may not work in a club track. This guide is not a one size fits all formula. **There is no single formula that works across the whole genre**, only best practices that take you to the finish line whatever style you make.

What follows is not a template for how your tracks should sound. It is how I work: how I choose what to start with, how I protect what makes a track mine, and how I get it to the finish line without stalling. **Your sound stays yours.** The approach is the part most producers are missing.

I have split it into three stages, the same three whether you write prog, full-on, twilight, dark psy or any other style of psytrance.

1 · SOURCE

Take your time to pick the absolute best source material before you start any detailed mix work.

2 · SIGNATURE

Recognise what makes a track sound like you, then double down on it.

3 · FINISH

Develop your pro-level benchmark, then follow the method that gets you there.

SONIC SPECIES

1 Source

START FROM BETTER INGREDIENTS

Select good source material.

Kick, bass, synth presets, quality drum samples, a good hardware synth, well-recorded vocals. Starting with the best ingredients you can find, and spending the time to find them, is the equivalent of the Italians cooking simple world-class meals from the best produce. **You do not need to overcomplicate things when you start with good quality.**



Split creative sessions from technical sessions.

Writing the music is one job. Designing kicks and basslines, building percussion, gathering presets and hunting for vocals is another job entirely. Give each its own session and you can enjoy all of them fully, instead of rushing and getting stressed hunting for samples while you are supposed to be writing. You get better results and you have more fun.

YOUR MOVE

Your next two studio sessions: make one a writing session only, and one a sound-building session only. Do not let them bleed into each other. Of everything in this guide, this is the change producers feel fastest.

2 Signature

MAKE THE TRACK YOURS



Create and understand your hook.

Whether it is an underground roller or a commercial track with vocals and drops, understanding the most heavy-hitting elements of your track and leaning into them can turn it into a piece of music that stays with people long after they hear it. This is not about being cheesy. It is about finding what hits hardest and using it to build a strong identity and impact.

Let the track be one thing.

Often we try to fit too many ideas and vibes into one track. It is far more effective to let the track be itself. Some of the best tracks hold the same vibe the whole way through. Artists try to cram everything they love into one track and it dilutes the identity. **Save the next idea for the next track.** Give the listener space to appreciate one moment without another crammed down their throat.

STAGE TWO, CONTINUED

Be yourself



It is easy to get lost emulating the artists you love, and that is part of how you learn. The trick comes when your tracks start becoming cohesive, that is when you lean into your sonic identity, even if it is still a blend of a few artists you love.

The moment you notice there are things you naturally do, a way of making melodies, a track structure, a drum fill, a kick and bass style, **that is a good thing, not a rut.** That repeated flavour is exactly what makes your music an identity people trust, in listening and in booking you. Making a different style every time is the riskier game, because your sound keeps shifting and no one can rely on it.

Influences and consistency.

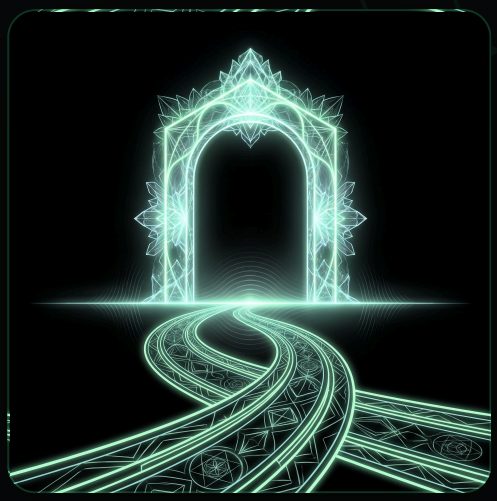
Bringing sounds and best practices in from other genres keeps your psytrance fresh and contemporary. And once you find your sound, keep making and releasing so you reinforce it. People want good music, and the music does the talking.

YOUR MOVE

Name one thing you naturally do in your tracks, a melody move, a kick-and-bass style, a fill, and lean into it on purpose in your next track instead of hiding it.

3 Finish

WHERE TRACKS DIE, AND HOW TO GET THEM OUT



Yin and yang production.

Find the sweet spot between intensity and minimalism, and find the intensity inside minimalism too. The most minimal moments in a psy track are often the most powerful on the floor. Even in a full-power track, a stretch of just kick and bass is a refreshing breath before you kick back into the intense sections. Light and dark, melody and abstract, each accentuates its opposite.

Understand how to deliver a moment.

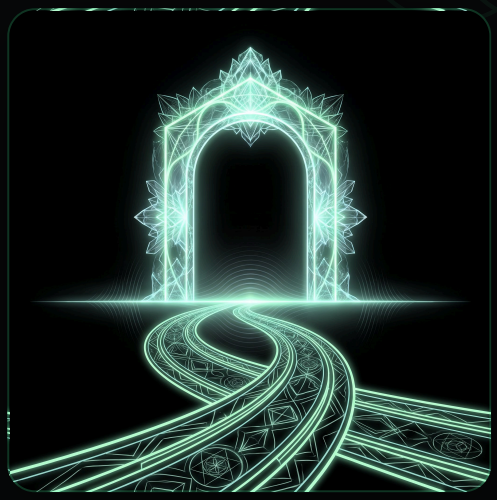
Whether it is a drop or a long continuous psychedelic section, know the mode you are writing in. When you get stuck, study how the artists you love deliver those moments. Being inspired by how their music is built is different from copying it.

Trim the fat.

So many tracks take too long to reach the exciting moments. Make sure **every single 8 bars is justified**. If a section drags or does no real job, cut it and go straight to the next. You will be surprised how much more exciting the track becomes.

STAGE THREE, CONTINUED

Finish the track



Keep moving.

If you are stuck on a kick and bass, a synth line or a drop, change course. Try a new patch, a new structure, new kick samples. Anything in your way needs to be fixed, finished or changed so you can keep moving. And do not sit on one track for weeks with no progress, sometimes it is more efficient to start a fresh one closer to what you want.

But stick with one track until it is finished.

If you keep jumping ship you will never learn the art of finishing. At some point you pick a track and say I am finishing this no matter what, to the highest level I can, even if that means replacing every sound or reshaping the whole structure. Forcing yourself through that once teaches you what finishing really takes, and it informs every track after.

Give yourself a deadline.

A label release date is the best deadline you can get. Commit that whatever happens, you deliver by that date. Having no timeline is what leads to spending far too long on things that need scrapping anyway.

YOUR MOVE

Pick the track closest to done and commit to finishing that one to your highest standard, no jumping ship, with a real deadline on the calendar.

My finishing loop



This is the part I run on every release, and it is the single thing that takes my tracks over the line. In the finishing weeks:

Bounce the track at the end of every session. Take it out and listen on as many systems as you can, for me that is AirPods, the car, the phone speaker and studio headphones. That night, before you sleep, write the list of what needs fixing for this to be a Pro track by your own standard, without any doubt.

Next session, work through those points as a matter of urgency. Fix them all before anything else. Then bounce again, listen again, note again. Do this day after day, and one day there is only one thing left on the list. You fix it, and the track is officially finished. It takes weeks, but it works every time.

Do not stop until it is genuinely Pro.

Build your own standard through critical listening to the tracks you love, until you can hear what a Pro drum fill or transition really is. Notice what this is not: it is not my opinion of how your music should sound. **The standard is the one you build yourself.** The loop is just how you hold your track against it until it clears the bar.

KEEP THIS ONE

The Pro Standard, on one page

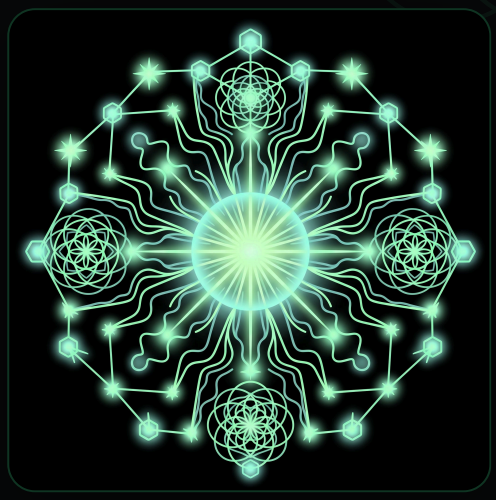
Print it. Pin it next to your screen. Run it on the track you are working on right now.



- ✓ **Source** — Am I starting from the best ingredients I can find? Is this a writing session or a sound-building session, not both?
- ✓ **Signature** — Do I know which element hits hardest, and am I leaning into it? Is this track trying to be more than one thing? Which of my own habits should I lean into?
- ✓ **Finish** — Where is the minimalism that makes the intensity land? Does every 8 bars earn its place? Stuck? Change the patch, sample or structure and keep moving. What is my deadline?
- ✓ **The Loop** — Bounce at the end of the session. Listen on the car, phone, earbuds, headphones. Write the list tonight, clear it next session. Repeat until one item is left, fix it, done.

FINALLY

Where to go from here



Everything in this guide is the approach. You can run all of it on your own, starting with your next session, and plenty of producers do exactly that.

What it cannot do is tell you what **your specific track** is missing this week. That takes someone listening to your music and telling you honestly.

That is what the weekly calls inside Sonic Mentorship are for. You bring a real track, I take it apart section by section, and we run this same approach on your music until it crosses the line. Tracks come back a second, third and fourth time and get there step by step.

150+ producers are already inside, getting their tracks broken down on the weekly calls.

Step inside the community →

and start making tracks people do not just hear, they feel.