Panning Instruments In A Mix

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In this article you'll learn about panning instruments in a mix.

It's a really simple step in our mixing process but panning improves our mix tremendously.

Let's see first what panning actually is.

What Does Panning Do?

In the stereo field we can place the instruments **all the way to the left – Center – all the way to the right** and of course **between these values** like "a little left" or "a little right".

It's impossible to tell our program "a little bit to the left" or "a little bit to the right" so for this reason we created the values below:

- **100%L** (Left) means that we order the sound to be played with 100% Volume on the Left speaker and no volume on the Right speaker (0%).

- **100%R** (Right) means that we order the sound to be played with 100% Volume on the Right speaker and no volume on the Left speaker (0%)

- **80%R** (Right) means that we order the sound to be played with 80% Volume on the Right speaker and 20% volume on the Left speaker.

- **80%L** (Left) means that we order the sound to be played with 80% Volume on the Left speaker and 20% volume on the Right speaker.

- **Left** can also be displayed as **-**. For example **40%L** and **-40%** is the exact same thing.

How To Pan Instruments In A Mix

Everything that you are going to read below are just some good starting points. You can and **you should** change anything if the mix asks for it.

Don't follow blindly the starting points. The wonderful thing about music mixing is that you can experiment and create awesome sounds. Now let's start 😃

Bass

I always place the bass dead center (0%). The low frequencies should have the same volume between the 2 speakers.

Electric Guitars

I like to record 2 takes and pan them 100% left and right. You can also record 2 extra takes (4 in total) and pan then 75% Left and Right. This is called quad-tracking.

Never duplicate/copy paste the tracks. You need to record new takes even if you play the same riff.

Vocals

Vocals dominate the mix and I almost always place them dead center (0%). I sometimes experiment and move them around -10% to 10%, depending on the mix.

Backing Vocals

You have more freedom mixing backing vocals. You can move them between 70%L to 70%R.

I mostly place them at 60% Left and Right, I kinda like this separation in the stereo field.

Panning Drums

There are 2 ways of panning the drums. The **Drummer Perspective** and the **Audience Perspective**.

The drummer perspective is the view of the drummer, sitting behind the drums and the audience perspective is the view of you watching the drummer during a live concert.

Drummer Perspective

Kick: Centre (0%)

Snare: 20%L to Centre.

Toms: Left to Right. You can experiment a lot here fro -50% to 75%.

Hi-Hat: A bit left (until 60% maximum for me).

Overhead / OH: I usually pan them 80% Left and Right or 100% Left and Right.

Room Mics: 100% L and R.

Mono Room: 0%

Cymbals: This kind of panning depends on the Overhead mics. You can experiment a lot here too and you can pan them from 60% Left and Right.

China: I usually pan it right from 50% to 75 or even 80%.

Ride: 0% to 70% depending on how you want to hear the ride in the mix. Some producers like to hear it "next to" the mix while some like to hear it in front of the mix and in your face (dead centre). I like it around 40% to 60%.

Audience Perspective

The audience perspective is the exact opposite of the drummer perspective.
(Ride on the left, Hi Hat on the right, China on the left etc…)

It's up to you to choose what perspective you like the most!

Happy mixing!