How To Mix Overheads

Paschalis

On 12.21.13, In Full Signal Chains For Each Instrument, by

Hello again everybody, this time I will show you how to mix overheads.

There are more than 1 way to mix it, depending on the genre, so I will show them all just to make sure I didn't forget anything and then you'll be able to decide what suits you best.

As always, **use this guide as a reference but let your ears make the last choice** about the settings you are tweaking.

The 2 Approaches

Some people love to use the Overhead mics **using the whole kit sound** (including kicks, toms, snares) but some people prefer the OH mics to **play the role of the high end spectrum** (using a high pass filter and keeping only the hats and cymbals).

If you choose to use the "high end" approach make sure to use a **Limiter** if there's too much **snare bleed**, just to keep the snare from popping and annoying the mix.

For the "high end approach" the high pass filter should be set so high that you can keep only the cymbals (and unfortunately the snare's bleed that can be dealt with a limiter).

I use this approach in heavier genres especially in **metal music**. I find that there's no need to keep the lower end of the OH mics since the direct mics would be enough for metal along with some artificial reverb.

The other approach is for "easier" genres just like **rock music**, ballads, acapella or **anything that is smoother** and the **low end of the OH mics will be useful.**

As we said in metal and in heavier genres along with the more **dense and quick mixes**, we get **mud**. And **that's why we use less to no low end/mids from the OH mics**.

For the gentler approach use the high pass filter at around **80Hz** to **270Hz**.

Time For An EQ

The EQ mics are a pain in the @ss to record right and if you don't spend some time recording correctly – or if you get these tracks via the Internet from a client, then **prepare for some serious surgical EQ**.

Now that you've decided what you need let us go **surgical**. Really surgical. If you use the "hard approach" high-passing drastically, then just ignore some of the frequencies that you've already cut.

If you use the "gentler approach" then feel free to use a **low shelf** and boost some dbs, it's wise to "steal" some more low end for the OH – **if the low end is worth to steal**… unless it's been recorded with a sh**ty mic.

Now **remove some mud** using a **normal to wide Q** from **300Hz to 800Hz**.

Remove some dbs around **3Khz to 4Khz**. This is an area where the vocals should live. Use a **normal to wide Q** and cut to make room for the vocals. Make sure to not destroy the OH sound.

8Khz to 10Khz is a nice spot to boost. Use a **high shelf** and be gentle.

Now depending on the recording material start creating small **notch filters** (narrow Q bands for cutting resonances). Feel free to add as many as you need to take away the tiny resonances. **Q must be really narrow**.

If after all these settings your OH seem harsh and weak then use **a low pass filter.** Yes it seems weird but it works cause it **allows the lows to be heard more**. Cutting too much may cause the mix to sound dark, so be critical and gentle.

Compression VS Automation

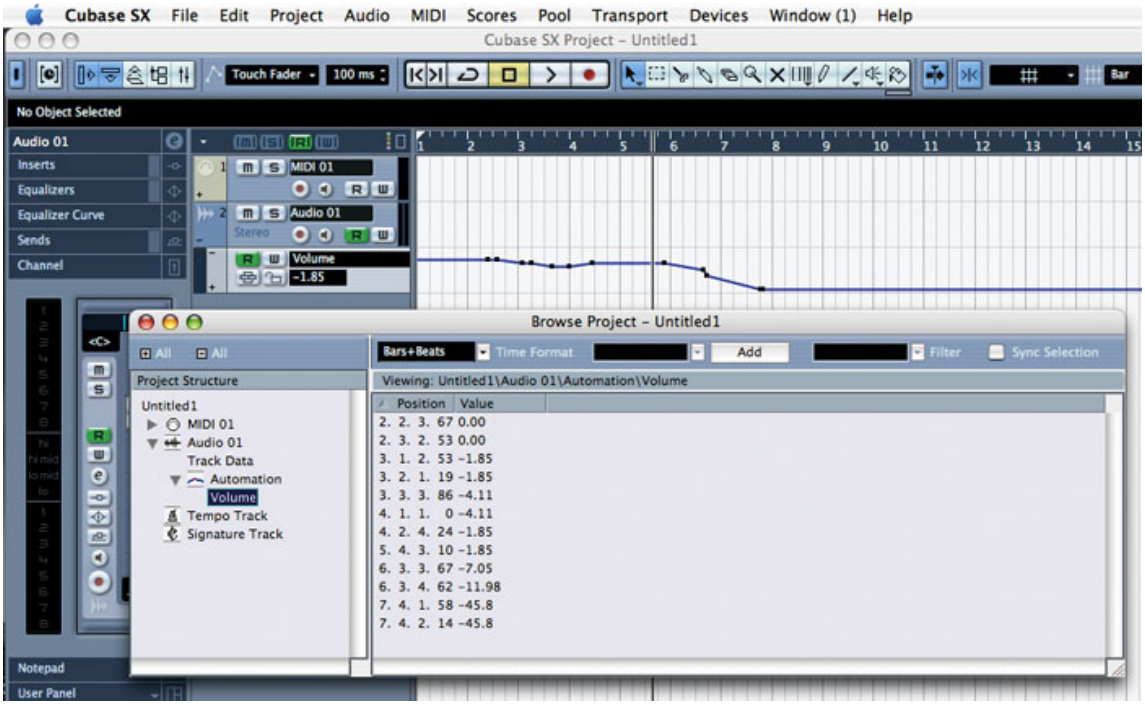
I love compression. But not on the OH mics.

You've done a hard work to remove the resonances so by compressing hard you will only make these resonances louder.

I start by **compressing really gently.** Just a couple of dbs **Gain Reduction** with **2:1 Ratio** or maybe less. The attack is **medium** to **slow** too.

Then I prefer to **Automate the volume of the OH mics**. Yeah it's boring and tedious but it sounds like they are compressed without the negative effects of the compression, like pumping and revealing the resonances.

In short… **compress manually using Volume Automation**.



Reverb

As I've mentioned before cymbals are hard to record correctly. Most of the time, when you'll receive OH mics from clients, chances are that the OH will sound "dead" cause of the room they've used to track the OH.

It's 100% logical because it's hard to own a Studio Room with a perfect studio verb. So… We will use **Reverb VSTs** to add some **widness** to our drums.

2 Top Reasons That Reverb IS GREAT on the OH Mics:

- We get some **"wetness"** to our drum kit. Since it's hard to find clients with large rooms for recording, our solution is to add some verb to these OH mics!
- **Increased sustain.** The cymbals have increased sustain meaning that they take more time to **fade out** which results in a more natural sound.
- Feel free to use **Room, halls** and **plates**. Everything from early to medium **decay time** can work.

Conclusion

That's all for now guys! Hope you liked this guide. I would really appreciate it, if you could spend 2 seconds to share this content!

Leave your comments below so I can get to know you better and know your thoughts.
Don't forget to follow me on the social media below too

Take care!

Related Posts: