

Reverb and Delay

Recording, Engineering, and Mixing

Almost every commercial song you hear includes a couple of effects designed to give the song “ambience”. These effects are reverberation (reverb) and delay. Because both of these effects can use a lot of a computer’s resources, and in order to create the impression that the song is being performed live, these effects are usually added to a project in a different way from compression and other effects – they are usually added as a “send effect”.

Here’s how you do it. In Reaper, add a new track to your mix and call it “Reverb”. Click on the “fx” button for that track and choose which reverb you want to use (the one Reaper comes with is called ReaVerbate, but you can download dozens more for free). This brings up the reverb parameters for you to play with. One adjustment you’ll want to make is to pull the “wet” (reverb-y) level all the way up and turn the “dry” (non reverb-y) level all the way down.

At this point, you won’t hear any difference in your music. That’s because when you use a send effect, you have to specifically pick which tracks will take advantage of that effect. To do this, click on the “io” button of one of the existing tracks in your mix. In the window that appears, click on the pull-down menu that says “Add new send”. Choose the “Reverb” track you just added. This will add the reverb effect to that track. You can do this for any track in the mix you want to add reverb to. Typically, some tracks won’t have any reverb – bass guitar, sometimes kick drum, or any tracks you want “dry” for dramatic impact. You can choose how much reverb to add by adjusting the send level from the “io” panel of each track.

You can use the same technique to add delay to your mix. Delay usually sounds best when added to lead vocals, snare drum, and sometimes guitars. Click on the “fx” button for the delay send track and choose which delay you want to use – the default delay special effect is ReaDelay. This brings up the delay parameters for you to play with. Use different levels of the Wet and Dry sliders to change the sound of the original track and increase the Length values (both Time and Musical) to increase the amount of delay.