3.
BUILDING YOUR HOME STUDIO

"You don't need to spend a lot of money to make decent-sounding tracks."
—Armin van Buuren

SUBCHAPTERS

- Turn Limitation Into Inspiration
- Creating a Vibe
- The Basics
- Where to Start With Software
- Monitoring and Acoustics
- The Sine Wave Test
- Working With Your Acoustic Limitations

CHAPTER REVIEW

In Armin's early career there was no such thing as a do-it-all DAW for the home computer, and making dance music was a very expensive hobby. Today, you don't need to invest a lot of money to make great music. You don't need to have every piece of gear and software on the market. You do, however, need to invest time in learning your DAW and your plug-ins inside and out. Find a DAW and a few plug-ins you like and focus on learning everything you can about what they do and how you like to use them. This is how you can begin to focus on your signature sound as a DJ and artist.

Spend time thinking about the acoustics of the room where you're making your music. Armin demonstrates how you can use a sine wave to test which frequencies are louder or quieter in your workspace. Try to work in a sweet spot where the sound is relatively even across the frequency spectrum and watch out for areas that cancel out your bass. Blankets can help you with higher frequencies, but usually the bass will be your issue, and the bass is incredibly important in dance music. A tip for making the right choices for your mix is to road test your tracks. Listen to them in your studio, in the car, on your friends' speakers, and on different pairs of headphones. You want your tracks to sound great on dance floors and on little laptop speakers.

If you're working long hours in the studio (wherever that may be), prioritize your comfort. Don't sit in the dark for hours on end. Don't be hungry. Don't forget to take care of your needs. These things can break your concentration and distract you from your creative flow. Pay attention to when and how you're most creative and try to set yourself up with working conditions that will help you be your best.

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EXPLORE THE PLUG-INS

For the gearheads out there, here's a list of every plug-in Armin's going to use in this class.

- **Software Synths:**
    - Serum
    - Massive
    - Sylenth1
    - Omnisphere 2
    - Nexus 2
    - Kontakt 5
    - Vengeance Producer Suite (VPS) Avenger

- **Effects and Processing:**
    - iZotope Ozone 8
    - FabFilter Saturn
    - FabFilter Pro-Q 2
    - FabFilter Pro-MB
    - LFOTool

- ValhallaRoom
- ArtsAcoustic Reverb
- Dimension Expander
- Kick 2
- Bark of Dog
- H-Delay
- L1 Limiter
- Little Labs Voice Of God
- Noveltech Character
- G Bus Compressor
- Invisible Limiter
- The Glue
- VSC-2 Compressor
- Antares Auto-Tune Realtime

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- Armin uses a controller keyboard to play MIDI notes into his DAW. His favorite is the Yamaha CP300, because it has internal speakers which can be helpful when you don't want to wait for the plug-in to finish loading.

- You don't see it on camera, but another crucial part of Armin's studio setup is his DAC, or digital-to-analog converter. This piece of hardware converts analog audio signal to digital information and vice versa, so he can transfer hi-res audio in and out of his computer over USB. Armin's DAC of choice is the Apollo Twin.

- Armin recommends using Beatport.com and Splice.com for building your sample libraries.

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- The studio monitors you can see above Armin's mixing console are Yamaha NS-10s. These are popular, professional-grade speakers, which are great for producing music across almost any genre. For producing dance music in your at-home studio, more affordable options include the ROKIT series by KRK.

ASSIGNMENT

- Evaluate your room acoustics. Use a sine wave generator and listen for which frequencies are exaggerated or dampened by your studio. Move around and find your room's sweet spot. If you haven't been sitting in that spot, reconfigure your space.