

# **THE 28 STEPS TO ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC PRODUCTION**

**AN EASY WAY TO GET OUT OF THE CREATIVE  
BLOCK AND FINISH YOUR MUSIC.**

**MELHEM MAROUN**

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The 28 Steps to Electronic Dance Music Production (2017)

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The 8-Bar Loop is the first thing to do when creating your track. Knowing the best practices and the elements of its foundation is crucial to your success as an artist.

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## MIXING

Mixing is the most talked-about subject in music production, with forums on mixing everywhere. That's because it's an art on its own, and learning how to mix as an EDM Producer is critical.

# A Quick Word

Hi, everyone, this is Melhem Maroun, and I'm delighted that you've downloaded my step-by-step Electronic Dance Music production book! This book is one of a kind and is the result of years of experience and know-how. It will help anyone create and finish tunes in the fastest, easiest and most efficient way possible.

We are all musicians, and we all want to see results from our well-spent hours in front of our computer. There are many companies offering tutorials and videos on every single subject in electronic music production, and there are also expensive universities offering training and multiple courses. However, what if you just need to finish your tracks fast using simple, easy-to-do steps whether you are just beginning music production or are a more experienced producer? What if there was a book that will guide you through the entire track creation process and contains all the samples used and audio examples for you to explore and learn from? That is what this eBook package is all about.

What will you learn from this book?

- You'll learn how to create an electronic dance music track from scratch.
- How to make the best use of your time and achieve track completion.

How will this book help you?

The reason this book was written was to simplify the track creation process. Some technical stuff related to music production is skipped to leave space for actionable steps. The primary purpose of this book is to help you finish your tracks in the fastest way possible by using the easiest steps. This book will undoubtedly enhance and speed up your production process.

So without any further delay, let's begin!

# Introduction

Before writing this book, I had the same problems you have: lots of video tutorials, tens of magazines, and audio plugins and VSTs. I was searching for the best “method” that could summarize for me the most productive way to create my own tracks from scratch without all the technical difficulties, especially in the beginning of my journey. There are lots of tutorials and videos online, but I needed a planned curriculum. And because electronic music production is a relatively new subject, there are no levels of difficulty, and no curriculum except for when you enroll in expensive universities. The reason I have written this book is to finally be able to help you create a track from scratch using a simple well-written guide, and then I’ll share my results with you. So I created a track and

then created this book. You can follow it or get inspired by it.

**After completing this guide, you'll be able to:**

## Finish your tracks

The first benefit of following this guide is track completion. It is a well-known fact that struggling with finishing tracks, especially in the beginning, is a common issue among music producers. That's why there are many blogs out there in music production, arrangement, and mixing. Now, online articles and videos are beneficial for solving the direct problem they're trying to explain and contain articles about mixing, creativity and workflow in general. But they need a simple tweak - they need to be connected to create a simple all-in-one guide that can help any music producer to finish their track in the fastest and easiest possible way. That's what this guide is all about: results.

## Explore new ideas

You will certainly have fun in following the steps because this guide will help you through different steps of electronic dance music creation. In fact, it can be your guide if you have problems finishing your tracks, or are experiencing “writer's block” and cannot finish your track. It is much more like a unique workflow book that includes many actionable steps so you can finally complete your record. It can also be used with a wide variety of electronic dance music genres.

## Save Time

My method is result oriented. It's not about theory and ideas. It was written with the word “fast” in mind. That's why remembering what the next step is while producing your track is essential in the production workflow. And with tons of plugins and a few music production guides, it can be challenging for someone just beginning their journey as an artist. It might even cause them to abandon the journey altogether. That's what this book tries to solve: Achieving quality results in the least amount of time possible.

# Questions & answers

The process is straightforward and is the result of years of experience and practice. The primary purpose of this book is not to talk about technical stuff that magazines talk about, but offering easy-to-follow steps to finish your track (at last).

Here is a quick Q&A about this book:

**What's this book all about?**

This book is not about making you a better producer technically. The reason it was written is to guide you through the different steps of track creation from my perspective, to make your track creation process easier and faster.

**How can it help me then in finishing my tracks?**

This book is like a guideline consisting of certain actionable steps. They might not be steps; you can change the sequence and replace them with whatever you like. You can do step 25 before the 23 and so on. But this book will help you eliminate difficulties and struggles along the way.

**Do I have to be experienced with my DAW in order to be able to use this book?**

You must have some knowledge in your DAW of choices you could achieve the best results and ensure that technical stuff won't stand in the way so that you could follow along.



“

SEEK GOD'S WILL IN ALL YOU DO. AND  
HE WILL SHOW YOU THE PATH TO  
TAKE. PROVERBS 3:6

”



# Dedication.

*STOP comparing yourself to other people; you are an original. We are all different and it's okay*  
*- Joyce Meyer.*

Congratulations, you're a music producer! Every creative person has highs and lows if they want to accomplish a lot with their life.

I thank God for what I've accomplished until today. I am an engineer and music producer, wrote this Book and am building my own business as a music producer and teacher. All of this requires time. Time is needed for everything in life.

I wanted to create something that was unique to help music producers in their genuine struggle. I created easy-to-follow steps, not just talking about theories or

general audio knowledge. This is all about action and helping you in your creative effort.

Even though you need years to become a professional in any field, this length might be greatly reduced with proper education and help from mentors, tutorials, and books like this one. The correct resources will immensely simplify your learning process.

Your love for music production must be your motivation toward your goal. And don't forget to take care of your ears! Lower the volume and don't place too much stress on them :P



# LOVE, PASSION, AND DEDICATION WILL HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR DREAMS IN MUSIC PRODUCTION

The following is a mindset you must adopt if you want to make it as a music producer

1

## Dedication

As in any form of art, dedication is a must to become a “professional.” From the first day, it’s critical that you have fun while training and spend time perfecting your craft (while learning from the right material, not everywhere on youtube). You might create a number-one Hit Music from the first day, but gaining technical knowledge along the way is essential to your progress.

2

## Training Time

Training time significantly varies if you follow a properly structured education system or just surf youtube here and there. This book is a part of this system, and that’s because the “trial and error” phase that you might encounter has already been solved by professionals. So why not use their experience and save your precious :)

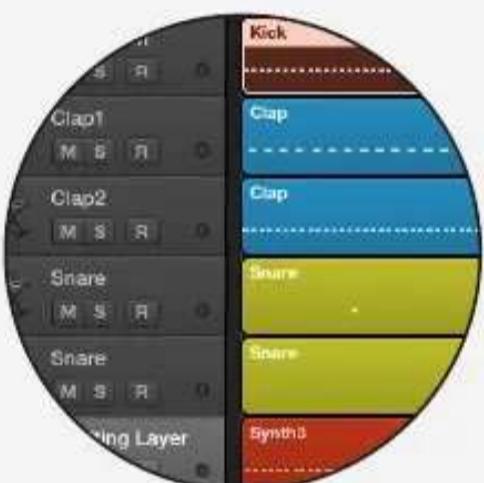
3

## Love

You must love what you’re doing, and that’s obvious if creating and sharing music is your passion. People will feel that!

# Welcome to The parts

Whether you're a beginner or a more experienced producer, these three parts contain the sequential steps to help you create your track from scratch!



## 8 BAR LOOP

Difficulty:



- ✓ In this part, you'll create the foundation of the track.
- ✓ The 8 bar loop is the first big block of the arrangement.

The 8-bar loop is the first big block of the arrangement and the foundation of your track. Perfecting it and adding more elements to it will help you in the arrangement part of the production.

In this easiest section, creating your first 8-bar loop demands creativity on your part to be able to lay down essential elements and the foundation of your track and choosing the right sounds.

A person listening to your 8 bar loop must immediately recognize the track because it will contain the most recognizable elements of your track.

After completing this part, we'll continue to our arrangement.



## ARRANGEMENT

Difficulty:



- ✓ Use the 8-Bar Loop to create a Full Arrangement.
- ✓ Subtractive arrangement method.

In this second part, we'll create a whole track by using our 8 bar (or 16) loop as our foundation. We'll add then more elements to create a complete ready-to-be-released record.

In the arrangement part of our record, we're going to use the 8-bar loop created in the previous step and create a full record out of it.

In this book, we're going to use the subtractive arrangement method.

We'll also cover how to build your breakdown, the importance of transitions, build-ups, and how to layer your elements. You will have your arrangement completed quickly and easily, ready for the mixing stage.



## MIXING

Difficulty:



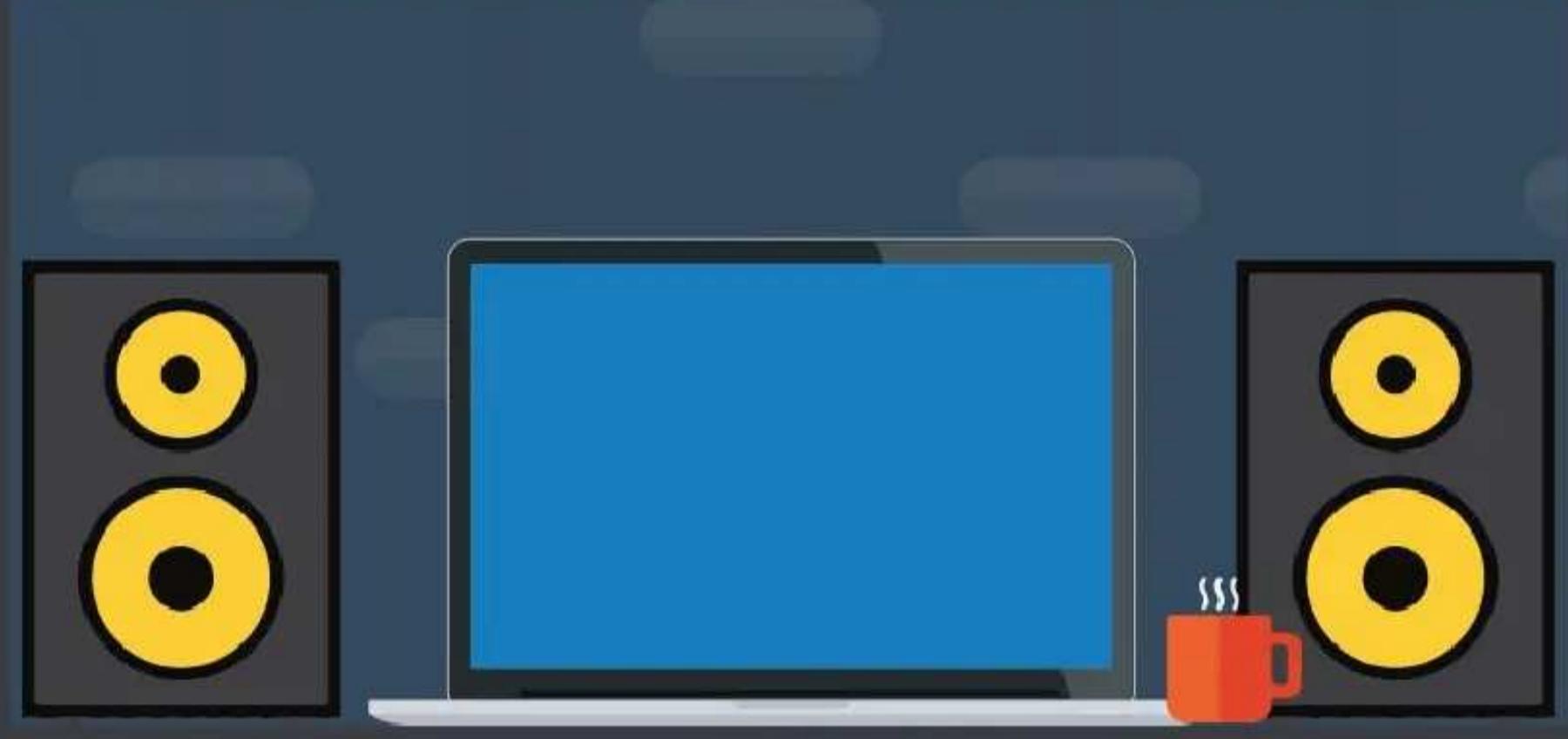
- ✓ Learn the steps needed for a basic mix
- ✓ Even without experience, you can follow along

Mixing is an art on its own: Perfecting your mix might take more practice and experience than the previous two steps.

Mixing is the last step before mastering. Mixing will ensure the clarity of every single instrument of your track and make sure that every channel is audible.

Having a great mix is essential. It will make an excellent impression on audiences, label owners, and DJs. A right mix will translate to multiple systems and monitoring environments. We'll cover mixing with its various steps in part 3, and our track will be ready for mastering!

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN



**Preparation is vital in electronic music production. Have the habit of preparing so you would have a clean desk and clean desktop at the same time.**

Preparation consists of downloading, installing, and speeding up your MacBook or desktop computer. So make sure to take your time to do the following essential steps:

1-Make sure that your computer is fast enough so it won't cause you headaches and leave you frustrated while producing your track. Your workstation must have enough RAM, equipped with an SSD and your files must be well structured in specific folders so you can find whatever you're looking for in no time.

2-Get used to the DAW of your choice (FL Studio, Ableton Live, Logic Pro, Cubase, Pro Tools, Reason..). Having fun with different DAWs is a quite good experience, but make sure to choose and then stick to it to learn it inside out.

3-Make sure that all the plugins you've installed are in a 100% working condition so you won't be interrupted with expired demos, licenses, or plugin incompatibility. This is a critical step as it will ensure a seamless music production experience.

4-Install and download samples and organize them in ready-to-use folders so you will find them quickly and easily.



# THE 8 BAR LOOP

STEP

1

# KICK DRUM



The kick drum is one of the most important elements in electronic dance music. It's like a first impression, so choosing (or synthesizing) the best-sounding kick drum for your track is essential. It must talk to all the elements and be in key, be punchy and loud. It's simply a league of its own.

Each genre has some characteristics regarding the way the kick drum is structured and built, how long it is, and how much sub-bass it contains. You can choose a punchy bass that gets along a deeper sub bass line or the opposite. Keep in mind that each element must have its place in the mix. If you want to prevent a conflict between the kick and sub bass, use sidechain compression on the sub-bass to create a time-space for the kick drum.

For now, let's begin with the step. It's effortless, after choosing the kick drum, just create a four to the floor kick pattern. In most electronic dance music genres, a 4 to the four rhythm is used. That means putting a single midi note on each beat on the piano roll, or a whole midi note on every beat.



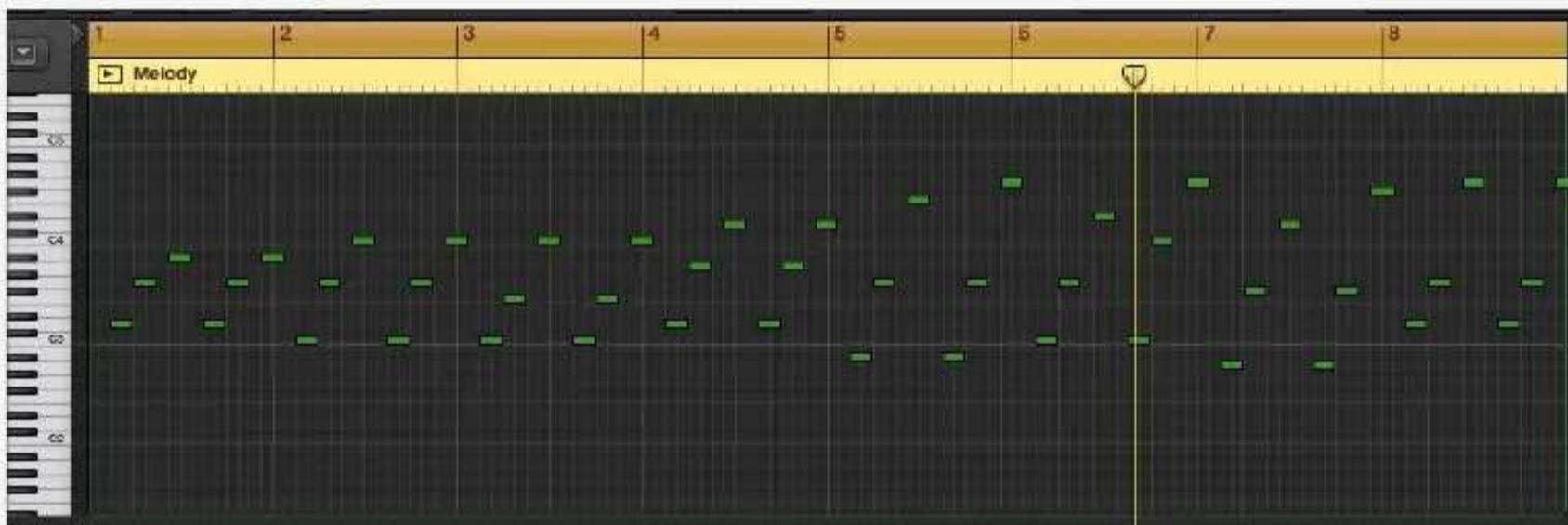
## Should I create my kick drums or use sample packs?

If you're in the early phases of electronic music production or even if you are a more advanced user, layering kick drums might be somewhat difficult to nail. I recommend using a dedicated synthesizer for kick drums. On the other hand, if you want a simple option you can use samples. Professional sound engineers who've spent years in sound design create professional sample packs containing the best kick drum samples that are already polished and ready for you to use in your track. I personally like Vengeance Samples and Freshly Squeezed Samples. So, even if it might take some time to listen and choose from tens of kick drum samples, those professional sample packs are well worth the price and the wait. Top professional sound designers have created these kick drums, and they will be the best ones you can use in your track. However, that doesn't mean that you can't experiment in creating your kick drums. I recommend Vengeance Metrum or Sonic Academy Kick 2.

STEP 1 - KICK DRUM.MP3



## STEP 2 MELODY



**The melody is the heart and emotion of the track. It is the heartbeat of the record and must be easily remembered if you want people to sing your music again and again.**

In this second step, and for our particular track, I chose a pluck for one of the melodies (You can create different melodies and variations). You can listen to it under Step 2 - Melody.

### Should I choose the kick or melody first?

This choice depends on many factors. You can get inspired outside your studio and instantly record that melody with your voice on your cell phone. After that and when you are ready to create the track, you can return to your studio and begin working on the record.

However, if you're setting up a studio session, you might prefer to choose a kick drum first and use your midi keyboard to input notes or your mouse to lay down notes on the piano roll. It's somewhat subjective whether you should begin with

the melody or kick drum or even using the keyboard or the mouse. It all comes down to your personal preferences regarding the choice of how to create patterns: whether you play it on the midi keyboard or input the notes using the mouse. I like using the mouse to input notes into the piano roll because I like the flexibility this method offers, and you can loop the part and make changes to the notes on the fly. Both methods work, and if you are creating great music, it doesn't matter. You can even record your voice and convert it to midi notes later on.

Music theory and harmony knowledge would immensely help you. It will give you the required knowledge to create those notes in the first place while avoiding key and harmonic clashes. A book you could refer to is Michael Hewit - Music theory for computer musicians.



[STEP 2 - MELODY.MP3](#)

[STEP 2 - MELODY\(+KICK DRUM\).MP3](#)



STEP 3

# CLAP OR SNARE



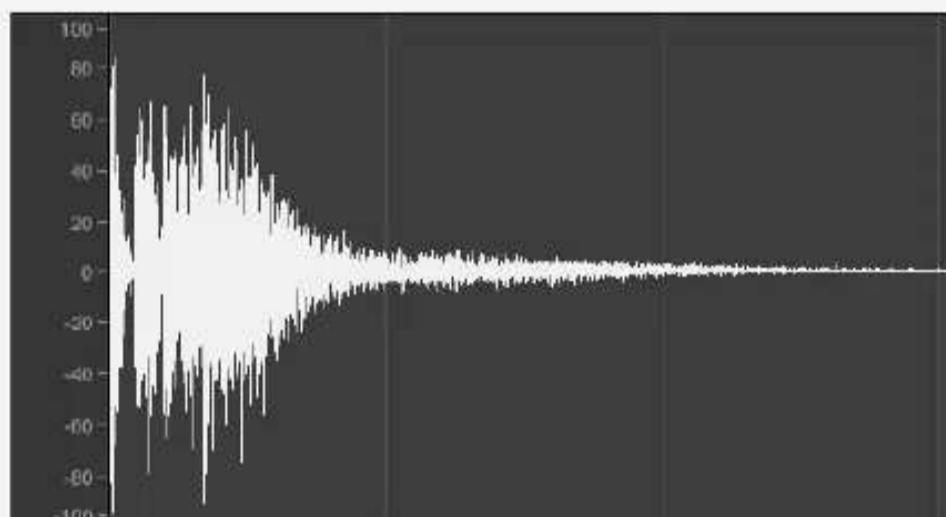
You can hear claps and snares in nearly all dance music tracks. In this step, layering is essential and helps your Clap/Snare sound unique.

Layering, in general, gives your sounds a unique touch because it stacks sounds on top of the other and creates new ones. Layering samples are necessary to inject uniqueness in your tracks, although it is not required. If it sounds good, it is good. Don't add just to add.

In most dance music tracks, claps occur on the second and the fourth beat. However, in some genres, claps might have a different timing position. In this track, we are going to put the claps on the second and fourth beat of the bar. Choosing your samples is crucial because the clap is a part of the groove, and it gives balance to the rhythm of the track.

### About layering samples:

Uniqueness and sound quality are important in your artistic journey. One of the ways to differentiate yourself from other accomplished artists is to create your unique combination of samples.



By layering two different claps/snares, you'll end up with a third not-heard-before sample that consists of at least 2-3 different samples from your sample pack. Therefore, you must carefully choose the right samples and timbres to work with. At first, you may go through a trial and error process, but as you become increasingly better, it becomes easier for you to choose the right samples for your tracks.

Again, layering is not required, but it can inject uniqueness in your music.



[STEP 3 - CLAP.MP3](#)

[STEP 3 - CLAP \(+EVERYTHING\).MP3](#)



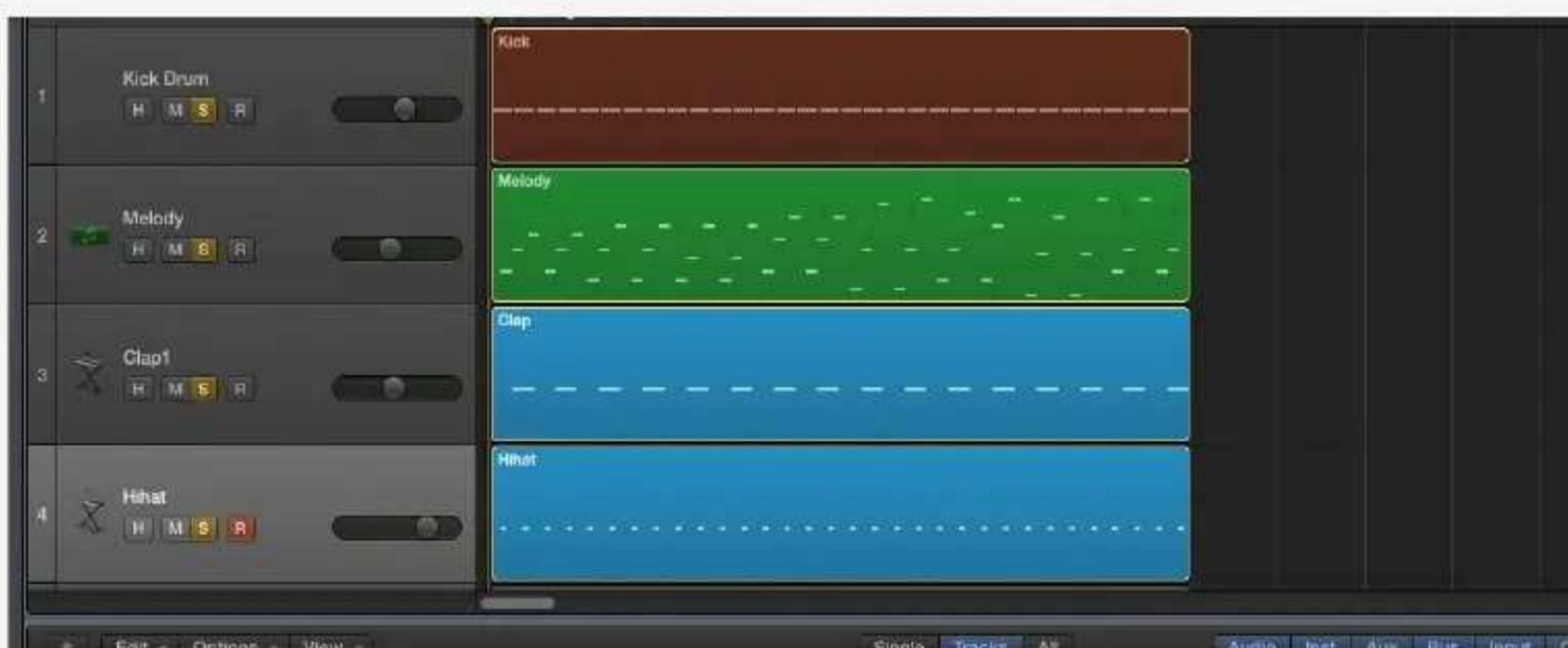
## STEP 4 HI-HATS



**In electronic music, hi-hats are required in most cases, because they play an important part in setting the groove.**

You can use delay units on Hihats especially EchoBoy and some sidechain compression to give them a “pumping” effect.

Hi-hats are without a doubt one of the signature sounds of electronic music. In most dance tracks, you can hear the open hi-hat sounds taking place between two consecutive kick drums. You could use quality sample packs, or you could create your hi-hats by recordings your samples if you like. You could also layer Hihats if you like, and modify the samples to suit your music.

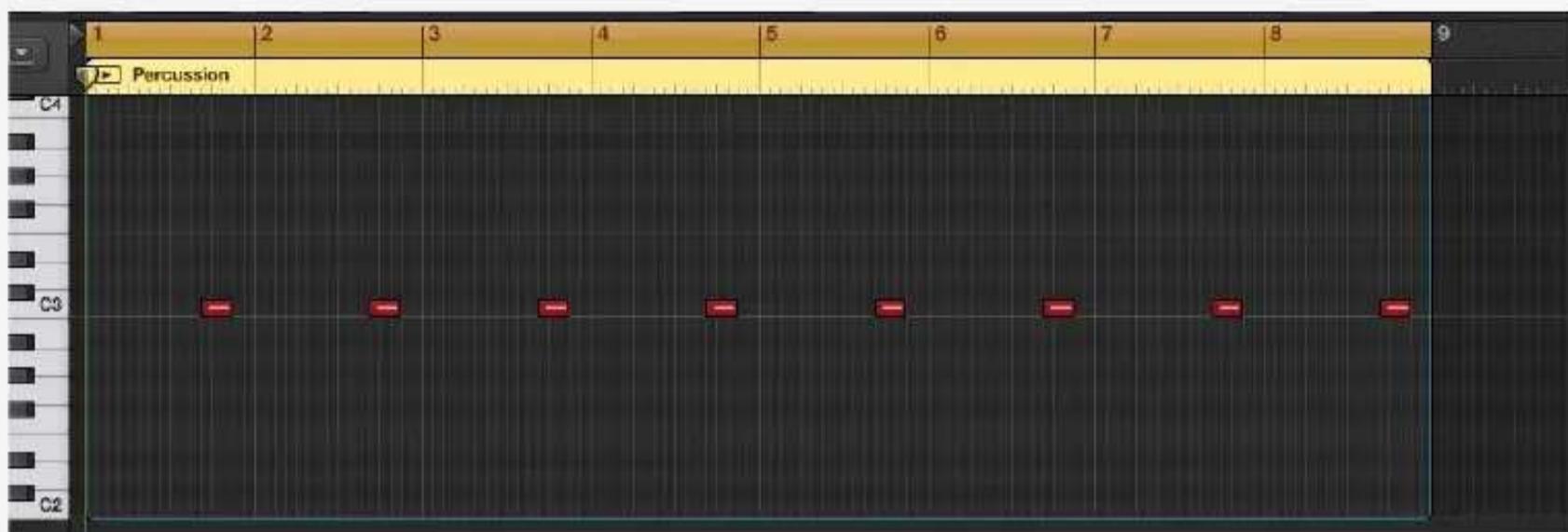


🔊 [STEP 4 - HIHAT.MP3](#)

[STEP 4 - HIHAT\(+EVERYTHING\).MP3](#)



## STEP 5 PERCUSSION



**The 8-bar loop section is the foundation of your track. Perfecting it and adding more elements will greatly help you later on in the arrangement section.**

In dance music production, percussion offers you variation and uniqueness. That's because there are many choices of percussion samples. You can be as creative as you like with percussion, and use any digital or acoustic percussion elements. You can also record your samples too.

Below are a few tips that you can use to have an excellent percussion part and make it sound more natural, so the samples won't look like a computer program is playing them:

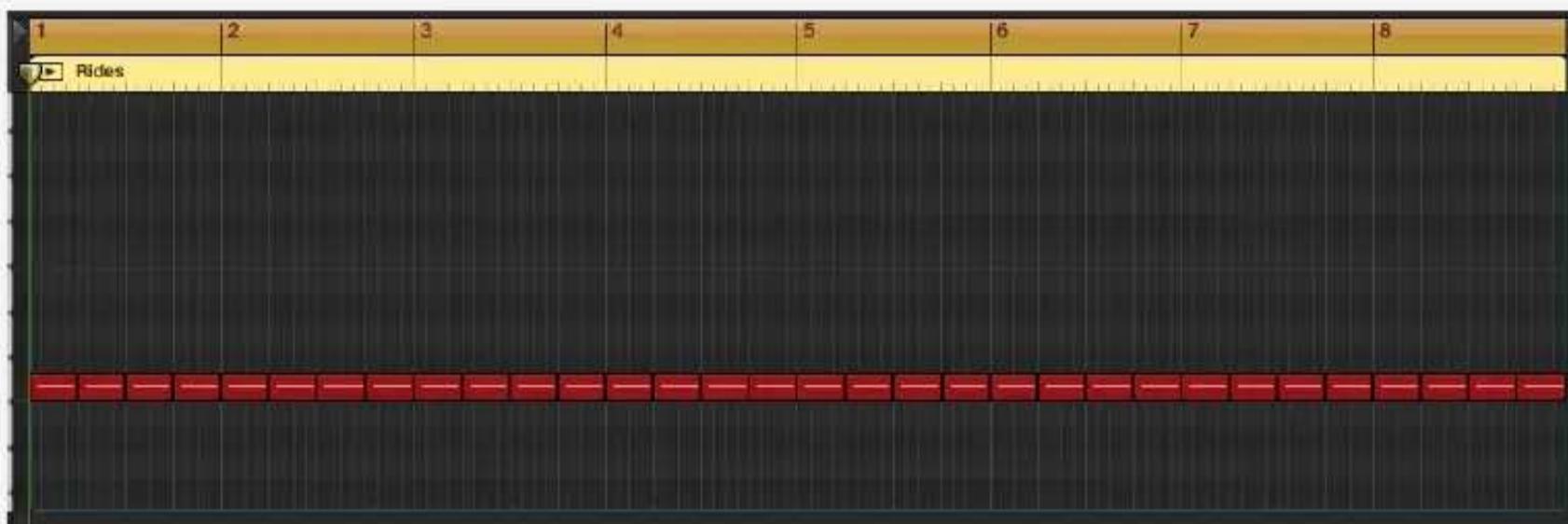
- 1-Do not put all of the samples exactly dead on the beat; instead, carefully choose some of them and move them slightly off the beat for a few milliseconds. Alternatively, you can use the swing option in your DAW.
- 2- Use an automated auto filter to change the frequency of the element automatically in the duration of the percussion bar.
- 3- Use different samples for one part; for example, select different hi-hat samples and use those interchangeably (or use the round robin built into a popular sampler like NI Kontakt).
- 4- Dynamically change the pitch or volume of the element to make it sound different.

The key here is to create a percussion part that doesn't sound monotone and "robotic" (like a computer played it). By using any of these tricks, you will have variation in your groove. You could also use the humanize function in your DAW, and see how the midi notes sound, and replicate or imitate that humanized function manually to your taste.

[STEP 5 - PERCUSSION.MP3](#)  
[STEP 5 - PERSUCCION\(+EVERYTHING\).MP3](#)



## STEP 6 RIDES



Rides help in lifting up the energy during different parts of your track. Since tension and release are the essential building blocks of dance music, using rides will add a layer to the drums group that will make the record progress by adding more energy to it.

Rides add power, especially when you need to raise the tension after you've used most of your drum patterns. You probably need to add something every 8-16 channels in your track, and that is where rides come to play. You can also use rides as a kick drum layer to give the kick drum a crispy top end. You could use shakers instead of rides if you like too. In our case, rides will be used to add tension and energy in the arrangement.

Put rides samples on each beat like in the example below:



[STEP 6 - RIDES.MP3](#)

[STEP 6 - RIDES \(+EVERYTHING\).MP3](#)



**STEP****7****THE RYTHM LEAD**

The main lead is introduced after the intro. By choosing the right synth preset, sample, or programming your own, you will set your track apart from the rest.

The lead timbre will make your track unique. You can either use processing or layering to shape your sounds. Processing plugins include delays, reverbs, compressors, and distortion units. Those will alter your sound dramatically and add movement to your instruments.

**NOTE:** This main lead might be a duplicate of step 2, melody. Because of the genre of the track built in this tutorial, I've chosen to add this lead as another element that adds spice and originality to the record. So, keep in mind that this part might be interchangeable with step 2.

### TIPS FOR LAYERING:

- 1-EQ: Using EQ when layering will help each part have its spectrum in the frequency range.
- 2-Different octave: Use a +12 octave when layering a lead on top of another. This will ensure that each lead plays in a different octave (C2 and C3 for example). So, when each part plays in a different octave or frequency range, frequency masking is minimized.
- 3-Compression: The reason for using compression is to “glue” the 2-3 leads together, and that's only because each lead might come from a different synthesizer or sample. Doing that to the leads group will help us create the impression of a single big layered lead.
- 4-Reverb: This will greatly assist the lead layers to sound like they all come from the same place. To create that, choose a reverb setting for your lead group. For example, the decay time you find suitable for your lead. You will hear that it will almost immediately change your perception of the leads layer group, making it sound bigger, wider and glued together.
- 5-Timing: Make sure to layer sounds that have an attack with another one that has a body. You need each layer to help the other one in creating bigger and larger sounds. So, for example, you might feel that your instrument lacks an attack part. You'd add an instrument or program one, that has an audible attack and layer it on top of the first one.

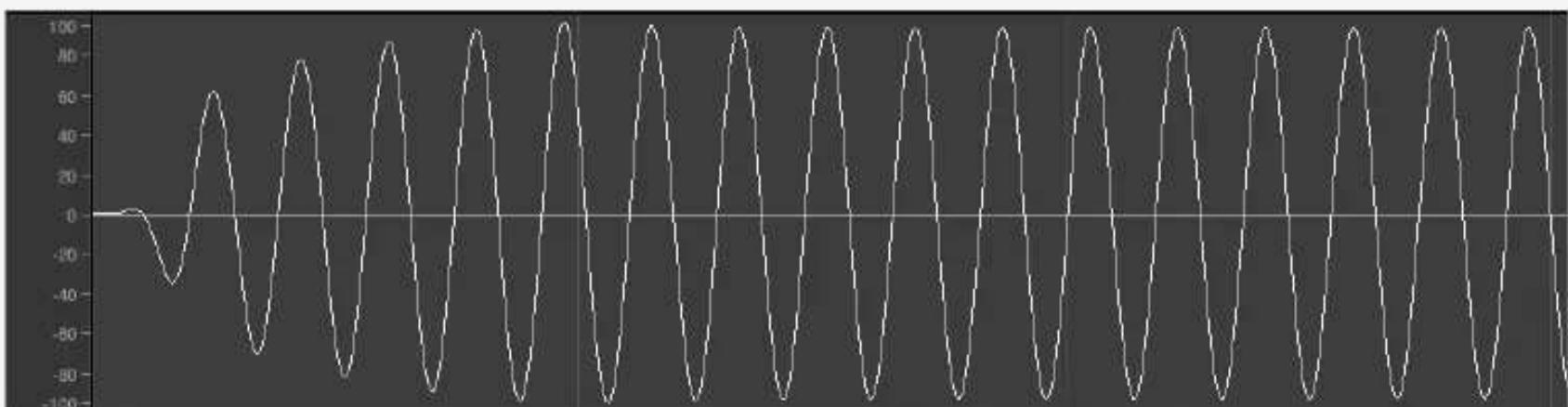
**STEP 7 - MAINLEAD.MP3**

**STEP 7 - MAINLEAD (+EVERYTHING).MP3**





# WHERE IS THE BASS?



**Bass is one of the most important elements in electronic dance music. It contains the lowest frequencies of the spectrum and is the best friend of the kick drum.**

**Please note: Due to the genre of the track we are creating, I bypassed the bass creation because sub-frequencies are already present in the long tail kick drum. So, in this track, no sub-bass complementing the kick was added but only used in the breakdown to supplement the pad. However, because this guide is a general guide, I have to talk about the bass layer that's present in every dance music track.**

The bass complements the kick drum. Most of the time only these two parts give your track its low-end energy. Some genres are founded on bass that is, in those cases, the center of importance in the track.

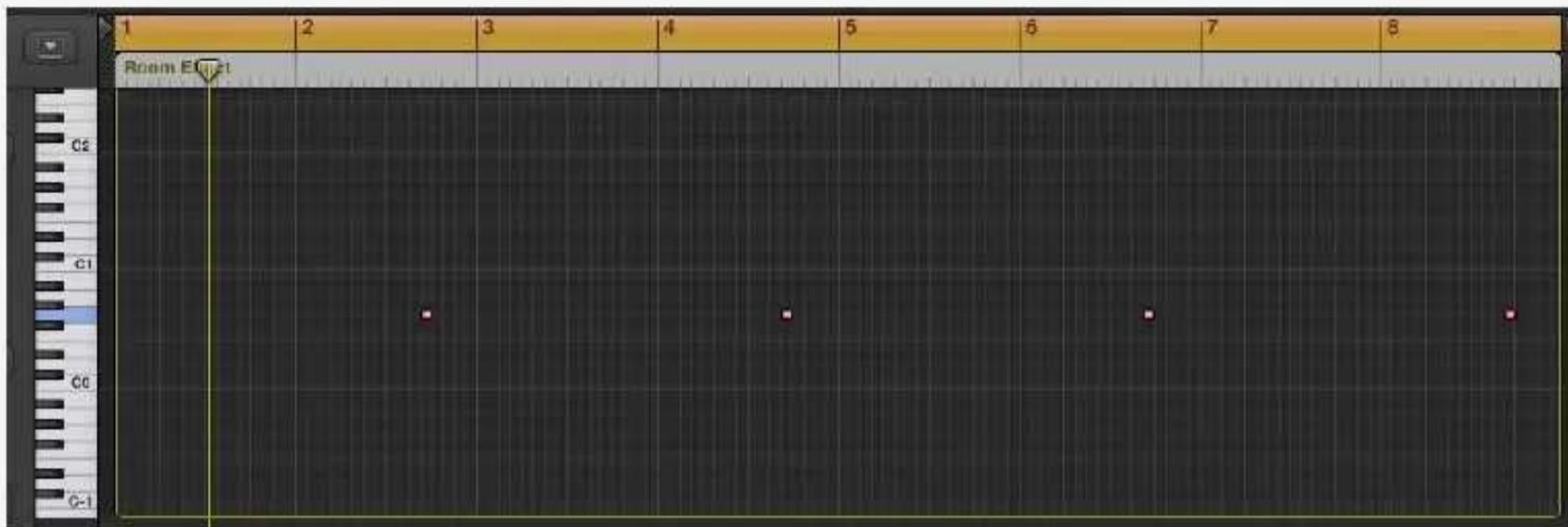
The bass layer gives weight to the record. It's vital to let the kick and sub bass complement each other by letting each one play at its own particular time. In our track, the kick drum has a long tail containing sub-bass, and that's why I have skipped adding another layer of sub-bass. Sub-bass is used in the pad section in the arrangement part of this tutorial.

**1-Frequency:** While creating your sub bass section, make sure that the frequency is around 35-80hz. Why? Because if you go too low, the sub will just sound like low-end rumble. If you go above 90hz, it will not "feel" like a sub-bass but more like a lower mid bass and won't have the same impact. So what will you do if your notes go above 90hz or under 40hz? You can just change the note of the bass to another note that's an octave higher or lower. Moreover, if it does not work, you can then alter the note of the bass to another harmonically pleasant bass note. That note must, however, complement the main melody and not cause dissonance or note clashing (studying music theory and harmony can help with this task). So make sure to let the sub-bass occupy that particular range (around 40-50hz) so it will be felt and audible. (You can learn music harmony that is quite essential in creating your track, especially in the interaction between multiple instruments, including the bassline).

**2-Singularity:** Make sure that the sub is playing alone, and only alone. Don't ever stack two sub-bass layers or anything that contains low frequency and think that it boosts volume because phasing issues will occur, and they will cancel each other out. On the other hand, use side-chaining on the sub-bass to make it "pump" with the beat, especially if there is frequency conflict between the kick drum and bass line.

**3-Compression:** Try not to use compression too much because it changes the timbre of the sub bass. To control the volume just lower or raise the volume fader of your sub-bass.

## STEP 8 MORE ELEMENTS



This section is down to your personal preferences. You can add as many channels as you like if you find that it helps in adding more variety to your track.

Please note that at this stage you can have an excess of elements (everything added in the DAW can immediately be removed whenever we want, right?). So, having lots of parts is like having lots of bricks to use later on in the production process. This will help you later in the arrangement. Imagine that you have a bag full of LEGO; some you might use and some you might not, but you will certainly have more choice in the building process. Having an abundance of elements will prevent writer's block later in the arrangement.

However, you do not have to add everything here because we are not finished with building the track yet. You can have an excellent idea while you're arranging the track and even come up with a better lead version while you're mixing. That's because inspiration can strike at any moment of the production process and you might feel that your record is missing "something." For now, though, we'll add a pluck that we'll call room effect and another clap that plays on each beat. More elements will be added later on during the track production.

[STEP 8 - ROOM EFFECT ADDITION.MP3](#)

Other ideas of elements that you can add to use later in the intro section of the track will be discussed in Step 16: Intro effects.



# ARRANGEMENT

## STEP

9

**"COPY PASTE"**

	1	9	17	25	33	41	49	57	65	73	81	89	97	105	113	121	129	137	145	153	1
Arrangement	Intro1				Intro2				Breakdown				Drop				Outro				
1	M	S	R	Kick Drum	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	Kick	
2	M	S	R	Melody	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	Melod	
3	M	S	R	Clap1	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	
4	M	S	R	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	Hihat	
5	M	S	R	Hihat Loop	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	Hihat.1	
6	M	S	R	Percussion	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	Percus	
7	M	S	R	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	Rides	
8	M	S	R	Big Room Lead	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro	Big Ro					
9	M	S	R	Clap2	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	Clap	
10	M	S	R	Room Effect	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	Room	

**Creating a full track using only 8 bars will involve copying your parts, carving out places by removing non-required blocks in your track, and then adding the required sound effects. In the first step, we'll make sure that our first loop covers the whole length of the track.**

The arrangement is without a doubt a systematic process that you must study and learn. In fact, trial and error in this part will cause you to lose time instead of being productive. Fortunately, a subtractive arrangement is the easiest way to finish your track, and it is an easy process.

To begin with, our arrangement, take your 8-bar loop section and copy it across the whole length of the track. In our case create an intro and outro of 32 bars, a breakdown, and drop sections. In this track, we will have 5x32 bar sections so that you could copy your 8-bar loop 20 times. As you might have noticed, creating a simple track yet following a strict guideline will help you head in the right direction.

In the next step, we're going to carve out space in our arrangement.

This is the 8-bar loop section we've made so far, multiplied x20 along with the whole track length.



X 20



## STEP 10

# EMPTY ELEMENTS



Here we must begin sculpting our track, create some space and delete the parts we do not want: that's why it is called a subtractive arrangement.

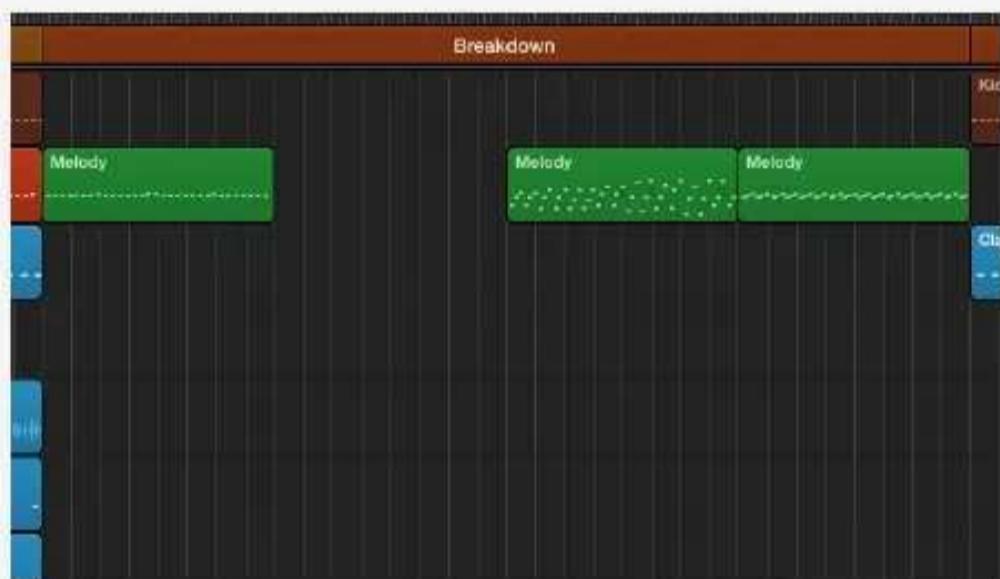
After having the track look like a big rectangle, we must now sculpt this rectangle to create the different sections of our track. In other words, these are the general steps which will guide you in the right direction:

1-Remove the bass, main melody and some of the percussion in the intro and then them add gradually (reference the picture below).

2-Remove some of the percussion when the sub-bass begins playing in the second part of the intro to give the bass more power.

3-Remove almost all of the elements from the breakdown (the breakdown can be created from scratch anyway and can be independent of the rest of the track instrumentation-wise).

4- Before the drop, leave some space for a buildup and an uplifting layer. These are essential for creating tension and anticipation, preparing for



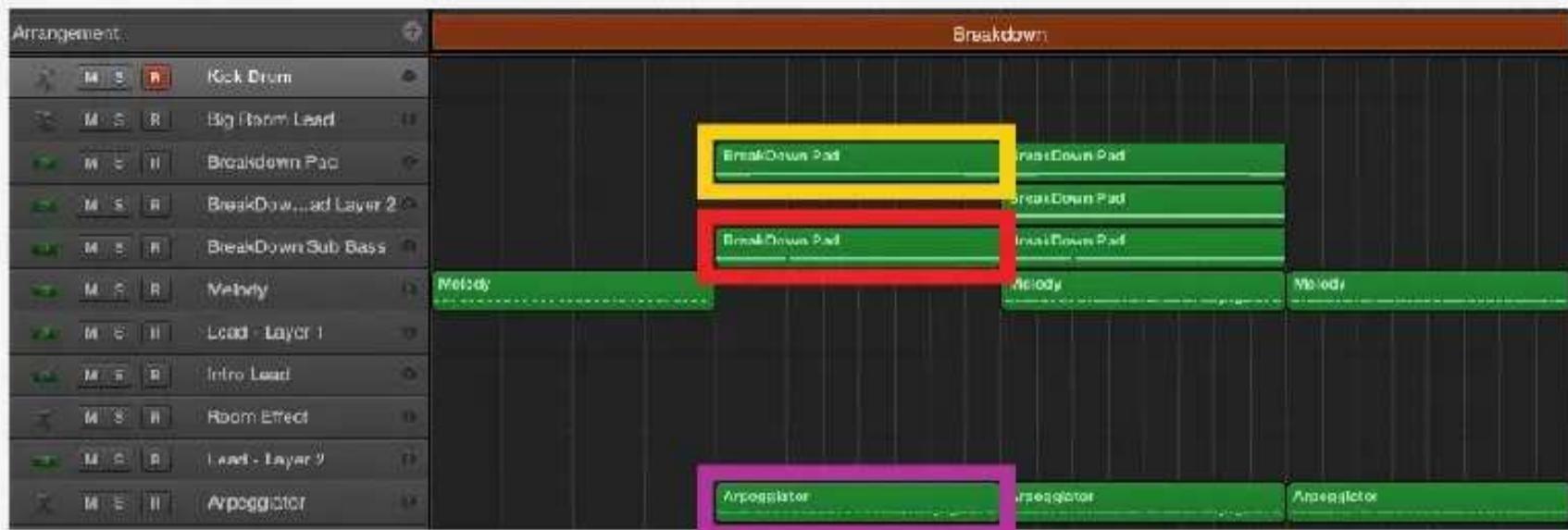
the release.

5-Keep in mind that the drop must be the most energetic part of the track, and that's where the energy can be raised even further when adding more elements in the course of the drop.

6-Finally, begin lowering the energy by creating another place for a small breakdown for a length of around 16 bars to prepare for the outro, where the DJ will mix your track with another one.

## STEP 11

# BREAKDOWN



The breakdown, as its name suggests, is having a break from the high energy that the track has been through until that moment. You can be as creative as you like here and use any variations of instruments you desire.

The breakdown is room for creativity and giving the listener a big break to prepare for the drop. You can fit in orchestral sounds, pads, guitars, pianos - whatever you like.



[STEP 11 - BREAKDOWN PAD1.MP3](#)

[STEP 11 - BREAKDOWN PAD2.MP3](#)

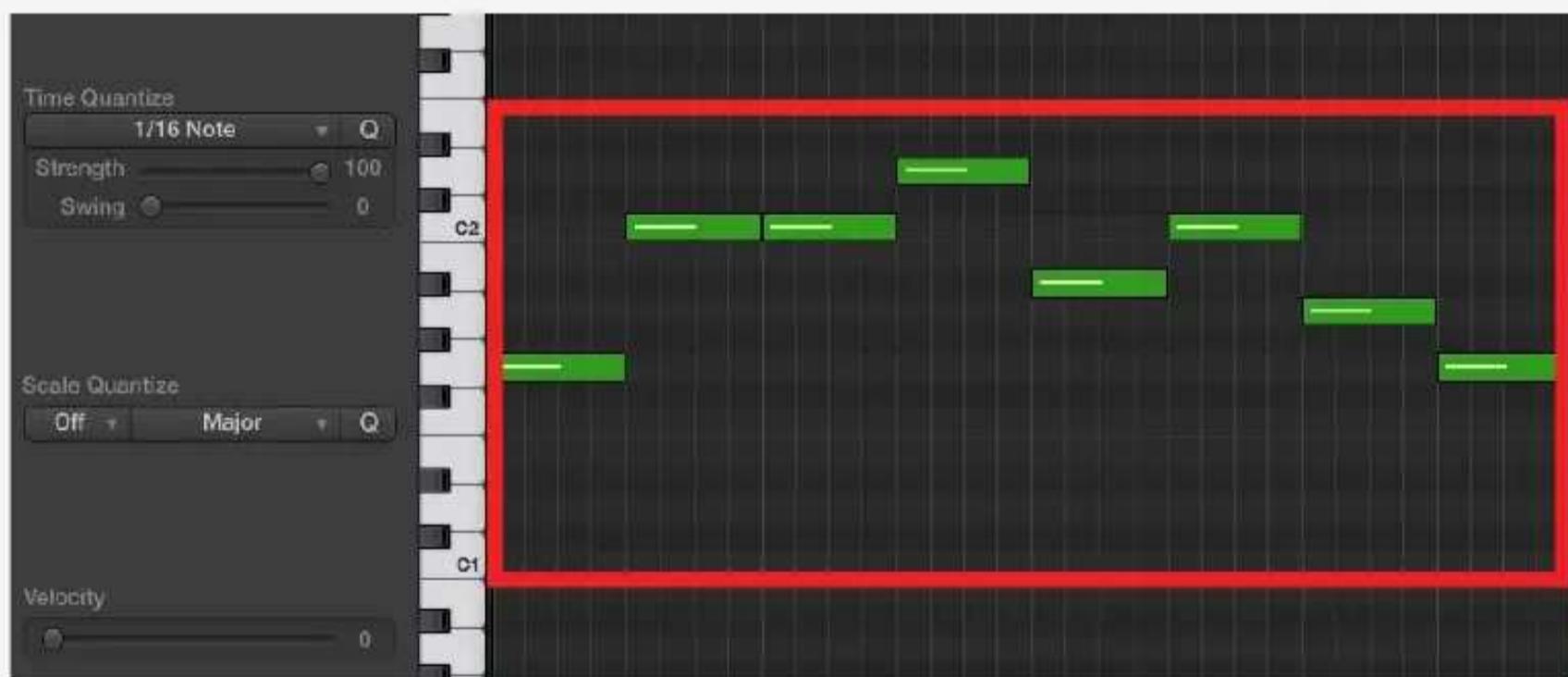
**STEP 11**

# BREAKDOWN (2)

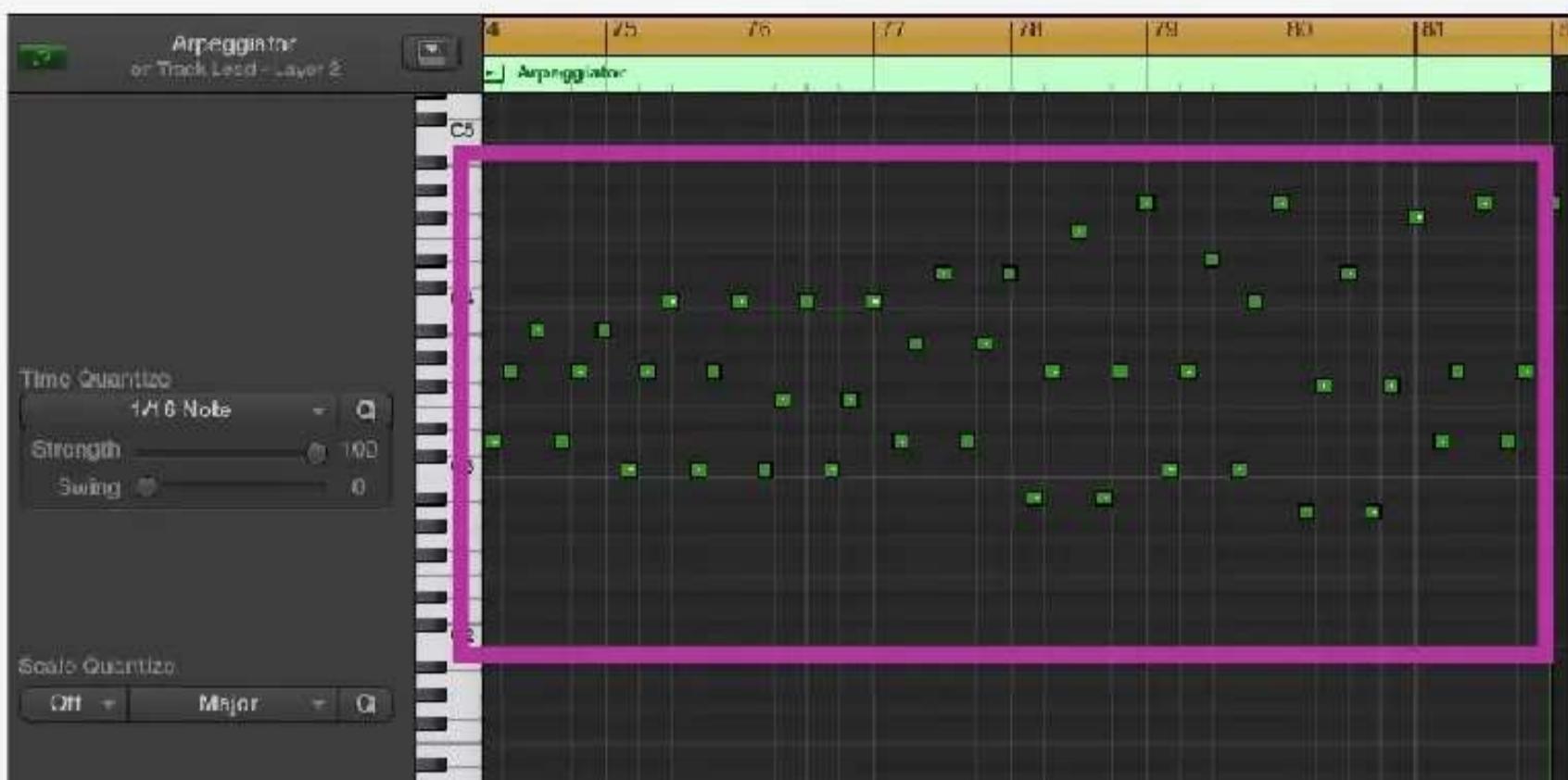
For this tutorial, we are going to create a simple breakdown consisting of a pad, an arpeggiator, and a sub-bass layer. We'll place a buildup near the end of the breakdown. This will help the listener anticipate the drop. The drop, as you might know, is the moment the kick and all the other instruments play together to create the most energetic part of the track.

Learning music theory and harmony is quite essential in this step if you want to create a nice melodic breakdown, so you can arrange your instruments and prevent note clashes. The whole ensemble must sound harmonious and beautiful. You could create a pad with a sub-bass layer to give it weight and then use some cutoff filter automation to build the energy up.

**NOTE:** Even if you use automation here to anticipate how the final breakdown will sound, it can and will be adjusted after the mixing stage because of the volume changes after mixing and refinement purposes. So, don't put too many details on automation in this step. Just imagine what it sounds like after mixing so you will be in the right direction.



🔊 [STEP 11 - BREAKDOWN SUB.MP3](#)

**STEP 11****BREAKDOWN (3)**

This last part of the breakdown consists of an arpeggio. An arpeggiator is a very basic real-time sequencer designed to take a chord like an input and turn it into an arpeggio. You can create your arpeggio like our example or use an arpeggio plugin. Plugins might give you more flexibility, and they will even let you control the following:

- Note length (from 0% to 100%): This will let you choose the duration of the note you want the arpeggiator to play.
- Random (from 0% to 100%): This will randomize the note length.
- Velocity (from 0% to 100%): The velocity of notes played, and the random parameter also lets you choose the random velocity option from 0%->100%.
- Swing: Real musicians do not always play in time; they play with ‘feel’. That’s what the swing parameter will permit you to do - create a more natural “groovy” sequence. You have to hear it for yourself, as it sounds quite nice.



[STEP 11 - BREAKDOWN ARP.MP3](#)  
[STEP 11 - BREAKDOWN FULL.MP3](#)

[STEP 11 - HIHATS NO SWING.MP3](#)  
[STEP 11 - HIHATS + SWING.MP3](#)  
[STEP 11 - HIHATS + SWING + SIDECHAIN COMPRESSION.MP3](#)

STEP

12

# TRANSITIONS



Transitions help glue parts of the track together, creating anticipation and release that makes the track more enjoyable to the listener.

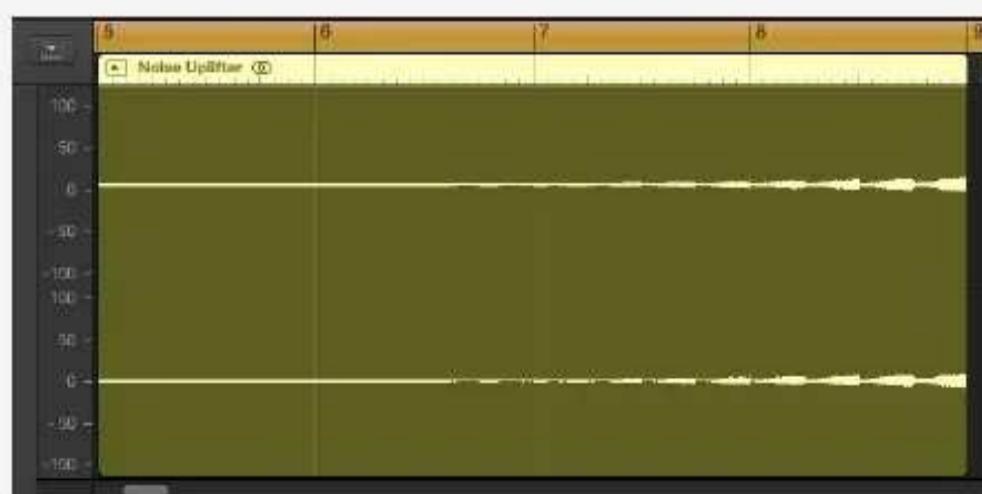
Transitions consist of white noises, melodic uplifters, fills, or anything that creates tension and energy, thus making you ready for the release. You could synthesize your own transitions or use sample packs.

There are small and bigger transitions. Short ones have durations of around one to sixteen beats long, and the longer ones have a length of sixteen beats (4 bars) or longer (32 bars). You can place the short ones just before little changes in the track (every 4 to 8 bars) and the longer ones before every bigger change or every 32 bars (like the big fill before the drop).

For now we are going to create the “**Transitions loop**”. This is an 8 or 16-bar-long loop that contains our transitions and for which we are going to apply our copy-paste method used previously. You can use this



method which will ensure consistency in the record, and it will be easier for you to copy this section instead of just dropping the effects and white noises here and there. You simply copy this loop over and over again and boom! Your white noises and so on are in place.



**STEP 12 - TRANSITIONS.MP3**



## STEP 13 BUILD UPS



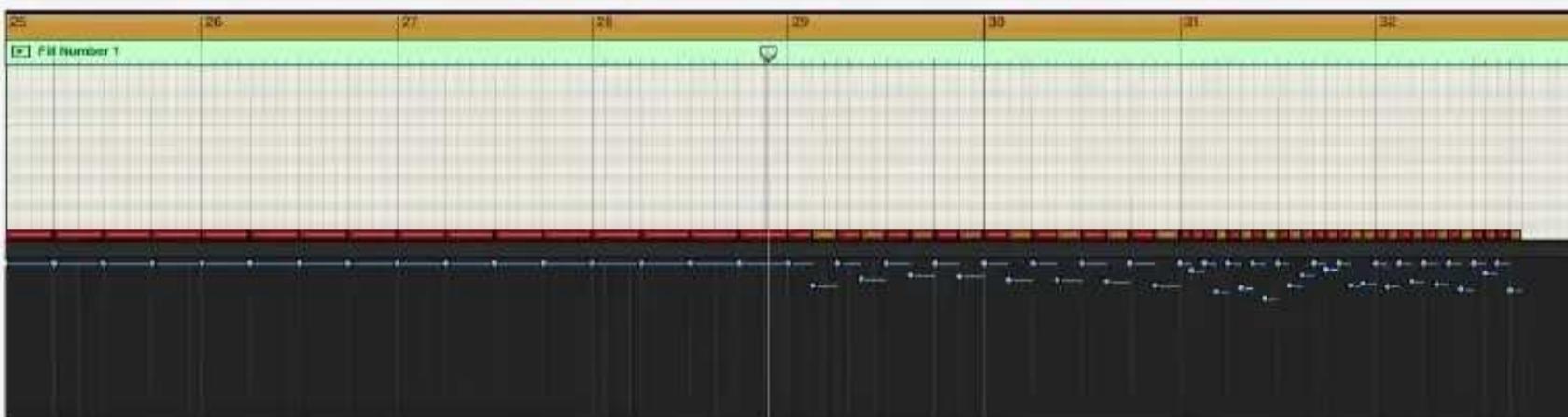
**Build-ups are used to increase the feeling of anticipation and prepare the listener for the release.**

There are many types of “anticipation and energy creators” like build-ups, fills, uplifters and more. For example, speeding up and using a progressively higher pitch on the timeline using automation. The methods are:

- 1-Speeding up elements: Using snares like the second picture on this page.
- 2-Using a higher pitch over time: For example, the uplifter, which rises in tone and pitch.
- 3-Using the cutoff frequency: Automating the cutoff filter to create tension.
- 4-Volume/Silence: Automating the volume knob to create surprises and tension.

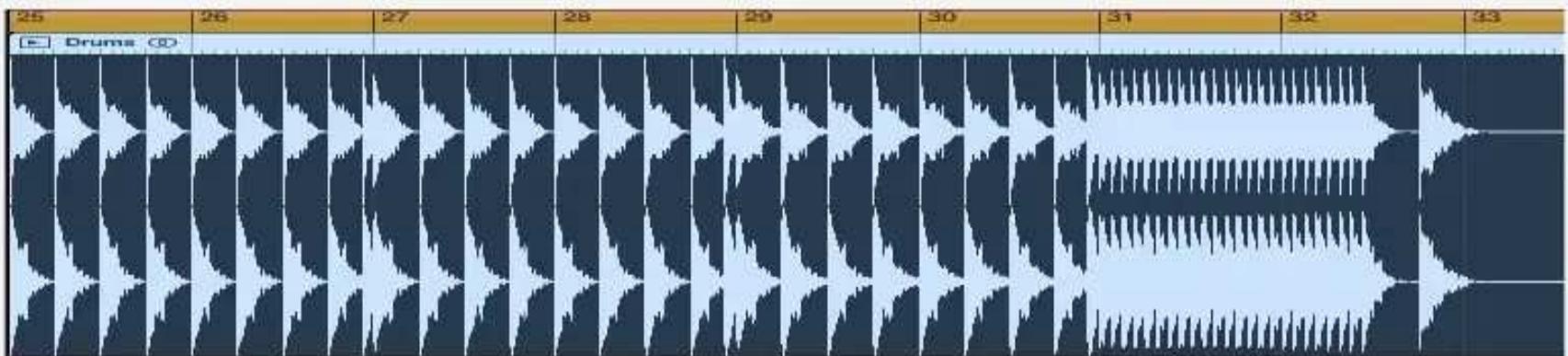
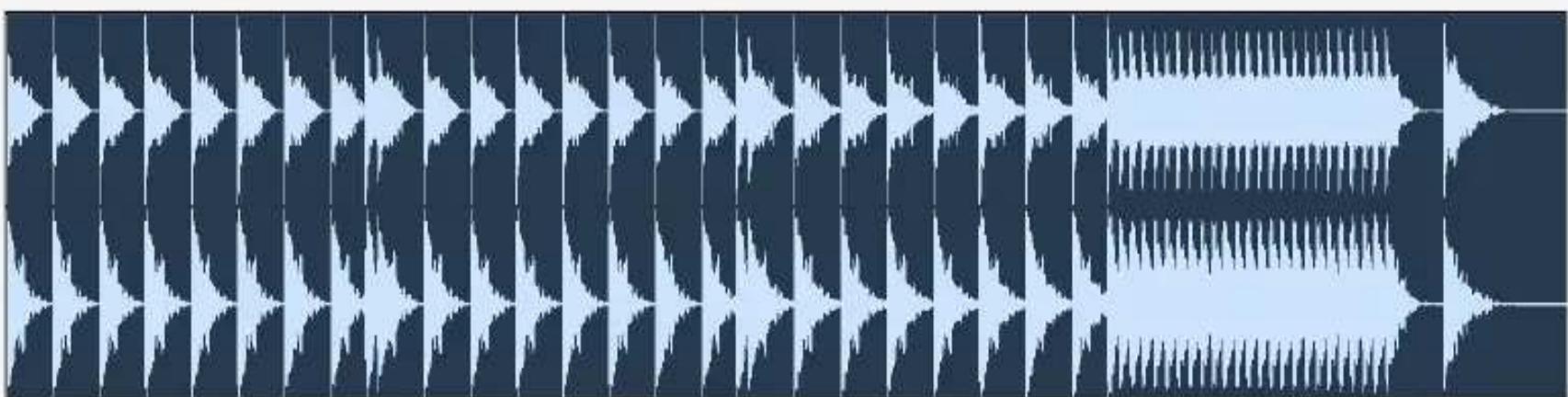
In the example pattern we are creating a “speeding up the snare” typical fill that consists of two parts:

- 1-In the first part the snare plays every beat, like normal.
- 2-In the second part, it plays every half and after that a quarter beat while changing velocity so the snare will not sound as “robotic” but has some variation while it plays.



SNARE FILL EXAMPLE

- 🔊 STEP 13 - EXAMPLE WITHOUT FILL.MP3  
STEP 13- EXAMPLE WITH FILL ADDED.MP3

**1****STEP 13 - SNARE FILL.MP3****2****STEP 13 - NOISE SWEEP.MP3****3****STEP 13 - RISER.MP3****STEP 13 - BUILD UP.MP3**

## STEP 14 UPLIFTERS



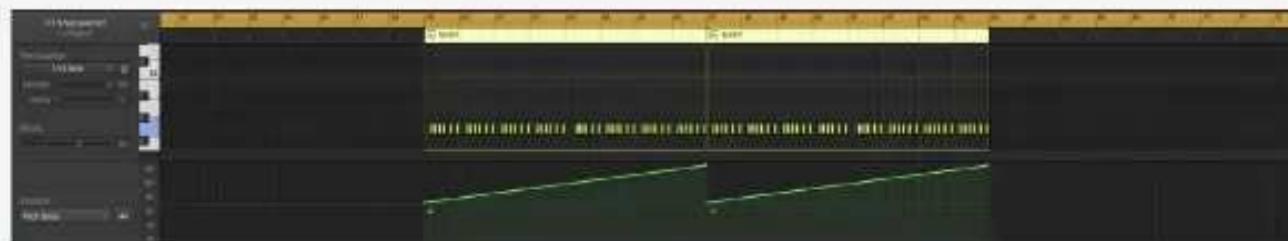
**Uplifters control the energy of the track. Using uplifters creates anticipation and tension, and they are mainly produced by using a single note and using pitch automation or using the midi CC pitch to raise the pitch of the note up.**

Uplifters consist of a single or a series of notes rising in pitch. Raising the pitch over time creates tension and more energy in the track. For example, it can occur during the moment before the drop or before introducing new significant changes in the track.

To understand this concept let's take the example of a movie. Action movies use tension to create more energy for example when the hero begins in a chase scene, we all feel tensions especially when he is pursued. At that moment we are all waiting and excited for what might happen. Will he escape? The equivalent of this is the uplifting section which creates tension. When the hero escapes, the equivalent of this will be the release stage where we could use a white noise downlifter.

Also, like in the movies, the “tension and release” parts can be short in time, such as when small problems happen during the film (small uplifters and white noises). Bigger problems that mostly occur near the end of the movie can be compared to the “end of the breakdown build up” that comes right before the drop. This is where the tension begins to rise, and at the end when the drop takes place, the kick and all the instruments are present in the track.

By understanding the film example it will be easier for you to create uplifters, white noise filters, fills, and any tension creation elements including automation and silence and place them in the right moments without second-guessing yourself. Fortunately, for the uplifters, they are very simple to create too. Proceed with creating a simple note, be sure to use the +12 or +24 in your synthesizer's pitch bend option and your DAW of choice, then raise the MIDI CC of the pitch using automation (you can do that in the region; the value is called “pitch”).



[STEP 14 - UPLIFTER.MP3](#)

[STEP 14 - UPLIFTER \(+EVERYTHING\).MP3](#)



**STEP 15****MORE LAYERS**

**While the track is building up and reaches the drop section, you might feel that the lead is a little repetitive and “thin” for the drop and needs more layers.**

You can do this by adding corresponding layers to the original lead that was playing during the intro. Moreover, adding more layers to any part will ensure that the energy gets higher too, and that's essential while the track progresses. Here we've added two more layers to the lead and some variations in the notes, making the new layer jump out and embellish the track. You can choose whatever sound you like as long as its timbre sonically corresponds to your previous lead and complements it.

You can also create your lead variation preset while playing the original lead that you can draw inspiration from. You must know your synthesizer well and use your knowledge to create that second lead.

You can either be inspired by a sound, layer it and change the settings, or create a new sound that was inspired by the original one. The key here is to create and proceed with finishing your track, not spend hours twirling knobs that might be awful if you lose focus,

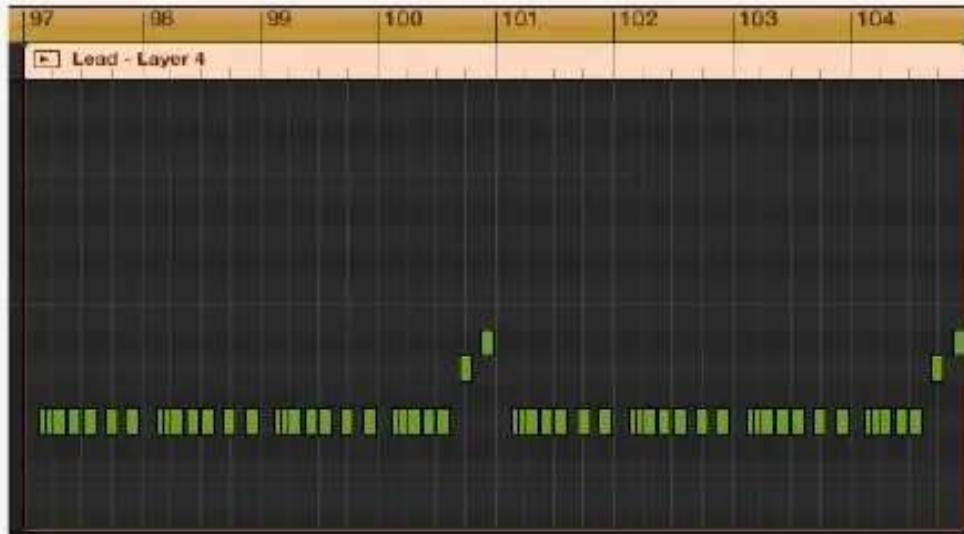
as you will eventually get tired and lose inspiration altogether.

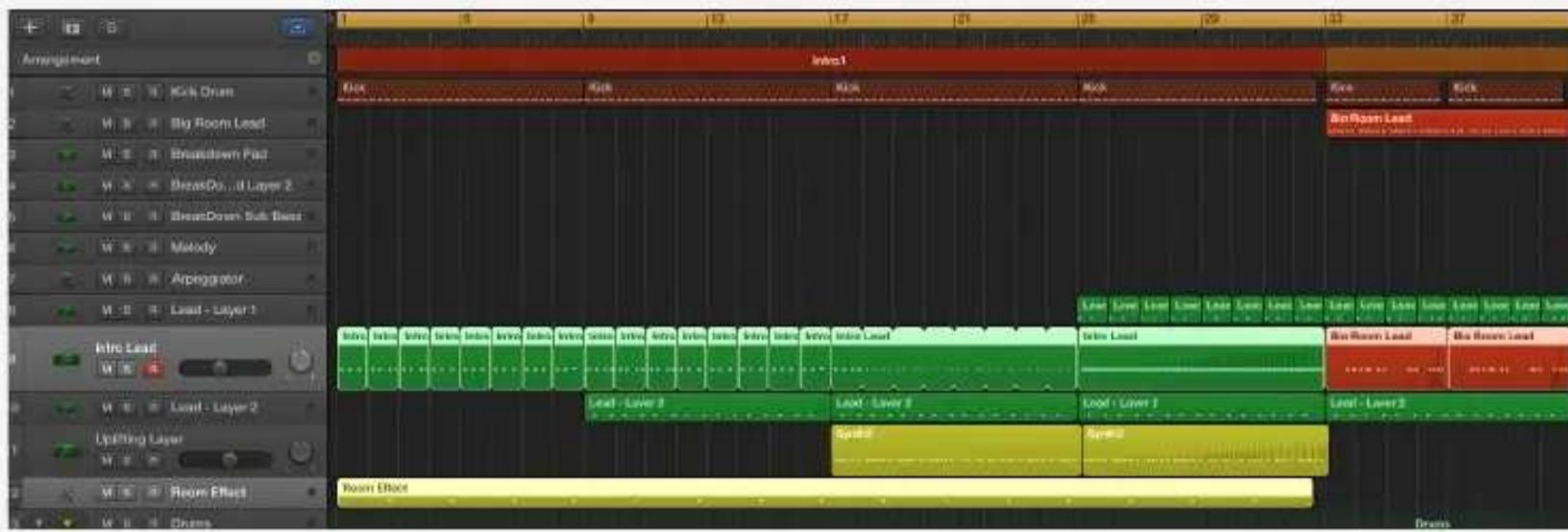
**Quick Tip:** If you want to deconstruct a lead sound of a well-known track, a quick trick is to study the lead playing in the intro. That's because in the intro a single layer of that big lead might be playing, and it can point you in the right direction.



[STEP 15 - EXAMPLE WITHOUT LEAD LAYERS.MP3](#)

[STEP 15 - EXAMPLE WITH LEAD LAYERS.MP3](#)



**STEP****16****INTRO EFFECTS**

**When you approach finishing your arrangement, you might feel that the intro is a little empty. You can now add some elements to it to make it sound nice. That's what this last step in the arrangement is about - adding more channels to our intro.**

The intro must be captivating to the listener because that's the first thing we hear in the track. There's nothing worse than a single kick drum playing for 32 bars without any changes. That's why creating variations in your intro is the key to a track's success and captivating your listener from the first beats. These variations consist of adding new elements and making changes every couple of seconds. These changes are rhythmic by nature and contain few melodic elements.

In our track, we're going to add two more channels which make the intro better than ever before.

**Tip:** Adding reverb, delays, and effects to percussion or synth-based might be the perfect solution here. Reverb creates space, and the natural composition of one-shot samples will embellish your track. Be sure to add sidechain compression to the elements that have reverb added to them so they will have that "pumping" effect right from the beginning of the track.

Ideas of elements you can add:

- A pad with a sidechain compressor keyed to the rhythm of the track
- Bass with a high-pass filter
- Some more percussion elements
- One shot created with your synthesizer or a sample one shot from a sample pack (one-shots can be a single stab or pluck)
- A rhythmic vocal sample
- A pluck with a low-pass filter, gradually opening up
- A rhythmic loop with a low pass or high pass filters opening up
- A sawtooth bassline with an automated low pass filter
- Toms and congas
- Melodic percussion element
- Recording anything audible using your MacBook microphone, adding effects, a high-pass filter, and compression, and using it as an instrument
- White noises and uplifters
- Using one layer of your lead stack layers and playing a rhythmic part etc.

[STEP 16 - EXAMPLE WITHOUT INTRO EFFECTS.MP3](#)

[STEP 16 - EXAMPLE WITH INTRO EFFECTS.MP3](#)





# MIXING & AUTOMATION

**STEP****17****PRE MIXING**

This is a significant step because in the pre-mixing stage you will set a clean ground for your mixing stage. In this step, we are going to clean up the non-required low end of some channels, remove any microphone pops or clicks, and add compression if the instruments need it.

This is the simplest part of mixing yet the most important too. The first thing you have to do here is adding an equalizer to almost all of your tracks except the kick drum and the sub-bass. You must use a high-pass filter on each channel and set it to a minimum of 100hz, leaving room for the kick drum and sub-bass, that the most of their energy operate around 100hz. So, by taking the sub 100hz section out of all the other instruments, you're in fact making room for the kick drum and the bass parts. The reason you must do this is that of the following:

If two channels play the same frequency in the low-end part of the spectrum, phasing issues occur, and the track loses its low-end definition. That's why using an EQ for every channel is the best solution for that problem.

The other part of the pre-mixing stage is removing any microphone pops or clicks and make sure that all the samples sound the best way they could in solo mode. Mixing is all about using instruments together, but in this stage you can go deep into each channel **to hear if anything goes wrong and fix it before the mixing stage**.



STEP

18

# ZERO PHASE

This step is about setting all the channels' volume to zero.

You just need to set all the tracks to silence using the faders:

1-Lower all your faders down (-infinite dB).

2-Make sure that groups that contain other tracks are not lowered all the way down because groups will not play any sound if all the elements inside are silent. If you reduce the volume of the groups too, you will not be able to hear any sound when you begin mixing because the groups will be muted.

As you might see here, all the tracks contain high-pass filters, and all the tracks' volumes are on -infinite dB. Doing that will prepare us to begin with the "more important first" mixing method in the next step.

Make sure that your output level and master volume is on 0dB and then proceed to the next step.





Also, ensure that the group faders are all the way up on 0db and not muted so you can hear the instruments when you raise the fader up.



## STEP 19

# LEVELING

**Because mixing in itself is a little complicated, following a simple guideline is a must, especially if you want to mix yourself. In this part, we are going to establish the foundation of the final mix.**

## Leveling and initial mixing using the faders, EQ, and compression along the way.

We are going to mix in the “most important element first” order that will yield the best results in your track. There are other methods available for mixing around the vocal or adding the lead melody before anything else. However, here we are going to stick with adding the kick

drum first. So, please be aware that it is crucial to mix using this order, just to keep everything simple.

Before beginning, loop the most crowded part of the mix where you have the most channels playing (for example the drop).

Now that the drop is in loop mode, begin with raising the volume of the following instruments:

### One: Kick Drum and Sub-Bass

Now that we have all of the channels on silent we must begin raising the volume of the kick drum to around -12 decibels – please do so now. Now increase the volume of the sub-bass, so it has almost the same power as the kick drum. The lower volume, the better, because we need the kick to dominate and not the sub-bass. Both must help each other out in controlling the low end of the mix. You can add the LFO tool (From Xfer Records) or sidechain the sub-bass to the kick or use the LFO tool with the volume automation setting on the sub-bass to have a pumping effect on it. To have this effect, some notes of the sub-bass must play at the same time as the kick drum. However, make sure to silence these notes when the kick drum is playing so both won’t



clash. Moreover, during the time the kick drum is not playing you will have your sub bass rising in volume in a pumping effect (all of this occurs in a couple of milliseconds between 2 consecutive beats).

## Two: Snare or Clap

Raise the volume and add compression to taste. If you layered two snares or claps a bus compressor will glue the two parts together by automatically adjusting the volume above a certain threshold (that's what compressors are all about anyway, automatic volume faders that work in milliseconds).

## Three: Hi-hats

Raise the volume to taste and try to listen to the mix behind it to find the perfect fader volume amount. You can mute and unmute the channel too to help you with setting the volume of the hi-hats.

A quick tip here: you can raise the volume of any channel until it's too loud, then lower it until it's too soft. That's when you will have an approximation of where the volume fader must be.

Note: Having good trained ears and using the EQ properly needs some expertise. Always practice subtractive EQ and don't boost unless it's a hardware emulated EQ with good tonal characteristics. For example, some equalizers like the one built into the SSL mixing desks have a signature pleasing sound. There are various SSL-emulated plugins offered by Waves, Slate Digital and Universal audio you can use that are emulations of real hardware units.



## Four: Percussion, Rides, Shakers

Now group all of the drums and percussion. That includes the shakers, rides, hi-hats, acoustic percussion, etc. Add a channel equalizer if you like on top of the group and a compressor like the SSL bus compressor or any compressor you like to glue the volume of these different channels together so they will sound more consistent and predictable. You can also sidechain the whole group to the kick drum to have a pumping effect. As you can see, the process is smooth. Your taste, ears and a proper monitoring environment will play a significant role in getting a well-done mix.

## Five: The Melody

Mix in the melody and boost a little around 4khz if you like (depending on your lead) to give your melody some more focus over the other elements of the mix. Please note that when adding any processing you must have a reason to do so: If it does not require any equalizer or compression, you can skip adding any processing altogether. Don't just add effects and processing plugins here and there because they might hurt your track instead of helping it. Simplicity and scarcity are the keys to mixing.

While mixing, remember from time to time to "surf" different sections of the track and make sure that the volume changes you make are consistent with the various parts of the track. If not, take notes, and when you arrive at the automation part, you can change the volume of the channels. You don't want the hi-hats in the intro to sound louder than the drop section (although the volume of the hi-hat is still the same, fewer instruments play at the same time in the intro so there is less frequency masking between instruments). In that particular case, if there are volume differences between sections you can fix that later with automation.

## Six: Bass

You must now raise the volume of the remaining bass parts (middle, high bass) and make sure that they will not cause frequency masking. In this case, you can EQ to lower a particular frequency in the bass (use frequency sweeping of the next step) to make the lead stand out more. Please also remember that the equalizer is nothing more than a volume fader but for frequencies, so it's nothing too complicated or difficult. You just have to train your ears a little while mixing to hear when two channels clash or not.

## Seven: The effects and remaining channels

Now introduce the effects section, uplifters, and every remaining channel and make sure they do not mask any element in our mix.

**TIP:** Use a bus compressor on the effects group to maintain a consistent volume during the length of the track. You can add EQ to taste if you like.

**STEP 20**

# PANNING

With panning, you can choose the position of your instruments in the stereo field. This helps to make more space in the stereo field, thus preventing frequency clashing.

Panning is choosing in which channel (left or right) the instrument must sound louder or softer. What I mean by that is the following: When you pan to the right the audio signal will be louder in volume on the right channel. If you pan to the left, the volume will be louder on the left channel. If you pan 100% to the right the volume is at 100% on the right channel and 0% on the left channel.

That's why panning creates "place" for your instruments in the center of the stereo field even if they play at the same volume. Each channel will occupy a particular place in the stereo field, so frequency masking is minimized. You can then use more instruments that share the same frequencies, and audio clarity is maximized.

In your track, this step will probably come after the initial leveling stage. Panning can also be used for creative purposes, and you can be as creative as you like. Stereo imaging is essential, and panning is just the beginning. You could delay the right channel alone, use widening effects and a lot more.

**PANNING GIVES  
SPACE TO CHANNELS  
AND MAKES THE  
TRACK MORE FUN TO  
LISTEN TO**



[STEP 20 - DRUMS \(+PANNING\).MP3](#)

[STEP 20 - DRUMS \(NO PANNING\).MP3](#)



STEP

21

# EQ + COMPRESSION

In two words, EQ is a volume fader but for the frequency. It is the best tool to solve frequency masking between instruments. On the other hand, the compressor is a very fast (in milliseconds) automatic volume fader that we are going to talk about in this step. We've used EQ and compression in a previous step, but here we are going to refine the settings and make sure that audio clarity is maximized, and every instrument is heard correctly.

**EQ is the best tool to make everything heard in your mix.**

The equalizer makes a place for every element in your mix by removing unwanted frequencies and making sure that some crucial ones are boosted especially when you use hardware-emulated EQs.

Here are two quick tips on EQ you can follow to ensure a professional-sounding mix:

**One: Don't EQ "just" to EQ:**

The main reason for applying EQ is carving out space for instruments to fit in the mix and giving each channel its place in the mix. That's because using the volume fader sometimes might cause problems when some instruments cannot be heard clearly, no matter how many volume changes and automation you introduce. That's when you will have to EQ your different elements to make everything gets heard correctly and clearly. Signature equalizers from big companies such as the SSL equalizer have a particular character especially when you boost frequencies using these emulated EQs.

**Two: Use the "sweeping" technique to find the frequency you need to cut/boost.**

Apart from training your ears to hear frequencies correctly, a simple fix is sweeping the frequencies looking for that "problematic" frequency. It is straightforward: boost any frequency in the EQ spectrum and begin to sweep all the way until you find that frequency you're looking for. When you hear it, you can either use boosts or cuts to taste.



A quick recapitulation:

- 1- Initial Leveling will ensure that every instrument has its best own volume compared to other channels in your record.
- 2- Panning will give each instrument a place in the right or left channel and can even be used as an effect.
- 3- EQ'ing will reduce frequency masking and compression will reduce the dynamic range of some instruments in the mix like the vocals and busses.

[STEP 21 - WITH EQ AND PANNING.MP3](#)

[STEP 21 - WITHOUT EQ AND PANNING.MP3](#)



**There are three main reasons for using a compression in your track:**

### 1- Maintaining an even and consistent volume.

This type of compression will be used on a single channel or a group to insure consistency in volume across the channel or bus. This might be a vocal channel for example where the vocalist lowers and raises his voice, and you are having a problem making his voice sit properly in the mix. So every time you need to control the volume on any track or reduce the dynamic range, you can use a compressor. If you find that the channel or channel group does not require any volume control, your channel will thank you for not using a compressor at all.

### 2- Changing the waveform of an element:

You can use compression to shape the waveform of a particular element. For example, using a compressor on a clap with a relatively long attack (5-20ms) and a ratio of about 4:1 will help the first section of the clap waveform cut through the mix. Its attack portion will be more noticeable. This will result in a change of the waveform in real-time (non-destructive change of course, because you can bypass the compressor to hear the original clap anytime). You could use a transient designer instead of a compressor in that case.

### 3- For creative purposes:

Using sidechain compression to give the channel a “pumping” effect (or use the dedicated plugin).

**STEP 22**

# GROUPING

Please note: This step can be used anytime. I just placed it here.

By grouping, you put similar tracks together to have more control over them when you add compression or EQ. Moreover, as a bonus they'll have a better visual structure so you will really see what goes where.

Grouping is essential, and this feature is common to most DAWs.

When you group tracks you will have access to an additional bus with your tracks grouped together. In Logic Pro X it's called track stacks, while in Ableton Live it's called groups.

You can use this bus to add an EQ, compressor or any additional effect to the whole group to process the entire group. It's kind of cool especially for creative purposes.



STEP 22 - DRUMS (+ GROUP COMPRESSION).MP3  
STEP 22 - DRUMS (NO GROUP COMPRESSION).MP3



**STEP 23**

# BREAK AND REVIEW

Ears get tired, and that's a scientific fact. The more you put strain your ears, the more they say "no" to certain frequencies and that will certainly hinder you in your mixing decisions.

You've certainly gone to sleep once and woke up the second day, listened to your track again and said to yourself: "Why does it sound worse today?" The reason is that listening for hours on end will tire your ears and you might take wrong decisions because of this. In addition, taking frequent breaks will ensure that you have healthy functional ears.

So after taking some rest (from a couple of minutes to a day or more), return to your track and look for anything that is immediately noticeable. After that, please resume this tutorial with some fresh ears.

Listen to any weird volume settings. Find anything wrong and refine the volume of your channels.

If a lead or any channel sounds bad, don't be afraid to change it altogether. Even if you are in the mixing process it's better to change a sound than never, so don't be scared of changes at this later stage. You can

even add new elements.

But always remember not to take it too far, because you'll ruin all the mixing hard work you've done before. But if the track needs it, you don't have another choice and you need to mix some parts of the track again if whatever you've added has ruined the balance.

**HAVING A BREAK IS  
VERY ESSENTIAL TO  
YOUR EARS' HEALTH**



## STEP 24 REVERB

**Reverberation or reverb refers to the way sound waves reflect off various surfaces before reaching the listener's ear.**

**We can use reverb in our track to create space for our instruments.**

Reverb is glued the whole record together, making it sound like it's coming from a single room. It gives your instruments space to sit in. You can also be as creative as you like in reverb (we are creating electronic music after all, so we can use processing as instruments).

There are two ways reverb can be used in electronic music.

### 1-The creative reverb:

You can use reverb creatively to change the tone and tail of your instruments. You can use reverb here as an insert or an auxiliary; it's down to your taste. If you use it as an auxiliary channel, you will have



better control over how it sounds.

This creative reverb will be a part of the instrument, and you can customize it to your taste. Don't use this effect on each single instrument, and try to always use reverb as a send effect.

### 2-The glue reverb:

This glues parts of the track together, for example, the drums part. This reverb is like a room for your virtual instruments. For the drums, you could set a reverb decay time of 0.3 seconds to around 0.7 seconds. Here you must add the reverb plugin on an auxiliary channel and use the send knob of each of the drum sounds to feed the reverb bus to taste. It's good to have a max of 2-3 reverb busses at most.



[STEP 24 - CREATIVE REVERB.MP3](#)

[STEP 24 - DRUMS WITHOUT REVERB ADDED.MP3](#)

[STEP 24 - DRUMS WITH REVERB ADDED.MP3](#)



In this picture, the clap1, clap2, hi-hat, hi-hat loops, percussion, rides and the snares are all sending a part of their signal to the auxiliary channel where we have added a reverb plugin. Use the send knobs to send as much as you like. For a typical send reverb, you can use around -20db to -12db of send volume. If you raise the volume a lot, the signal sent to the reverb auxiliary will get louder than required.

One standard rule for setting up the volume of the glue reverb is that when you mute the auxiliary reverb channel, you can feel that something is missing. When you unmute the channel, it must not sound too loud to your ears and even barely noticeable while giving your track a sense of “space.” If that’s the case with your track, then the volume of the reverb auxiliary is right.

**A GOOD REVERB VOLUME SETTING IS THE FOLLOWING: WHEN YOU REMOVE THE REVERB FROM THE TRACK, YOU MUST FEEL THAT THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING.**

**STEP 25**

# SIDECHAINING

Please note: This step can be used anytime. I just placed it here.

When a radio host is talking, and he needs music to be playing in the background, he lowers the music so we can hear his voice. When he stops speaking, the music rises in volume. This effect can be manually created using a volume fader or automatically using what we call compressor sidechaining.

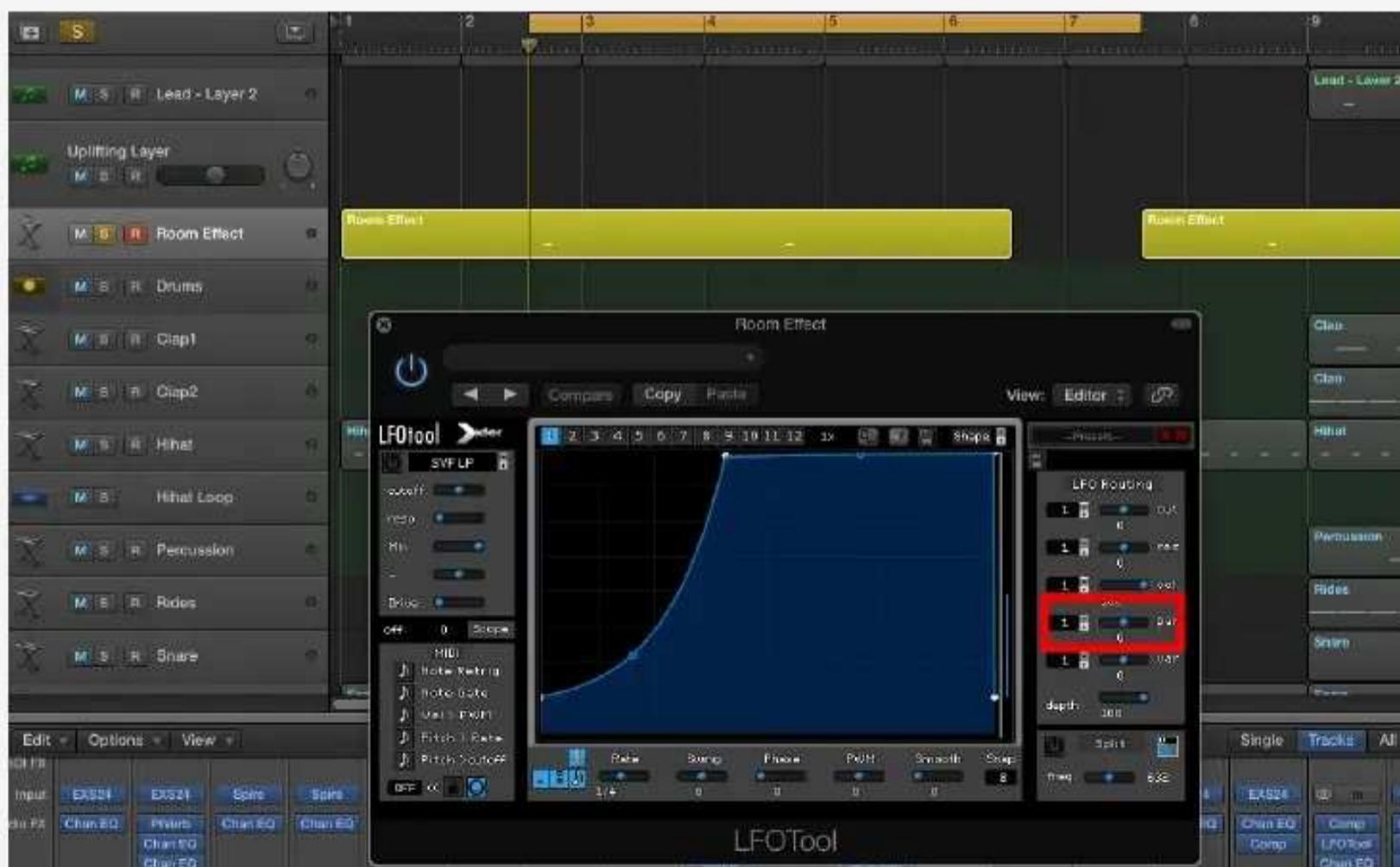
In electronic music, this trick is used to lower any instrument's sound when we need another device to be heard instead. In electronic dance music, this effect is mostly synced to the beat.

You've certainly heard this effect on the radio, TV shows or anytime the host wanted to lower their or another person's voice when the music plays or to remove the background noise of the microphone.

We can replicate this effect by using a compressor that we sidechain to another channel, for example, the kick drum.

In our case and to make our task so much simpler, we are going to use a plugin called LFO tool.

This plugin removes the process of sidechaining in a simple plugin and adds many more benefits like using a filter instead of volume fader. As you might see in the picture below, the blue color represents the volume of the channel, and inside the small red box, I've chosen the volume to be controlled by the plugin. Now the channel "pumps" to the beat, creating an automated volume fader that you can control to your taste.



🔊 STEP 25 - NO SIDECHAINING.MP3

STEP 25 - WITH SIDECHAINING.MP3

**STEP 26**

# AUTOMATION



In electronic music, you must always ensure that the listener is entertained by adding regular changes in the track. That's where automation comes into play. Using automation for lots of different parameters in your DAW ensures that the track is always changing. Automation also helps for mixing purposes, like reducing the volume of an individual track for just a moment or muting or unmuting a channel.

After finishing our mix, we might have some parts where automation is needed: The hi-hat might sound too loud in the intro but barely hearable in the drop. The breakdown sounds a little boring without filter cutoff automation, and the lead in the outro is very loud and needs to be lowered momentarily.

In any such cases, automation works like a charm: nowadays in most DAWs you can automate virtually all the parameters of the mixer, and most plugins let you automate everything in the plugin.

Let's give an example: You can hear automation in action in most trance tracks when the lead seems to come from far away, and suddenly you hear it like it's on your face. What the artist did was controlling the cutoff filter of the synthesizer through the length of his choice.

Use automation anytime you want to increase energy or need to change any parameter momentarily.

[STEP 26- WITH AUTOMATION.MP3](#)

[STEP 26- WITHOUT AUTOMATION.MP3](#)

[STEP 26- PADS AUTOMATION EXAMPLE.MP3](#)

**STEP 27**

# VERIFICATION

When you complete the automation stage, you must listen to your track again using an alternative monitoring system, write more notes and finalize your track.

In this step, please export your track and close your digital audio workstation. Copy the track to your cell phone and leave your studio for some time. Begin playing your track on your mobile phone using quality headphones and keep in mind that you have to take notes from the first second the track starts to play. Now begin taking notes (if any). Write notes about sound quality, production elements, melodic clashes or more general stuff.

Be sure to write notes about where some instruments do not sound as good when played with each other, frequency clashes, or high volume for some drums elements. As an example, you can write a note when you hear that the tune sounds a little boring and needs some more effects, some more automation (again, it's never too late to change anything in your track, even after finishing mixing. Ultimately, you want to publish quality tracks).

After writing down on your cell phone everything that needs to be changed, you can now return to your studio and begin working on the changes. Do this step many times until you have a quality record as a result. This process will make sure that the track you have between your hands is almost complete.

Now it's time for a longer break, more like 1-2 days, then verify everything again one last time before finally sending your track to your mastering engineer. You could even at this step add more elements to your track if it needs it, even after mixing. This is your track, and if you find it needs some more instruments or automation, do it before mastering.

## VERIFICATION SHEET:

**YOU MUST REPEAT THIS STEP MANY TIMES UNTIL YOU HAVE A WELL-PRODUCED TRACK READY FOR MASTERING.**

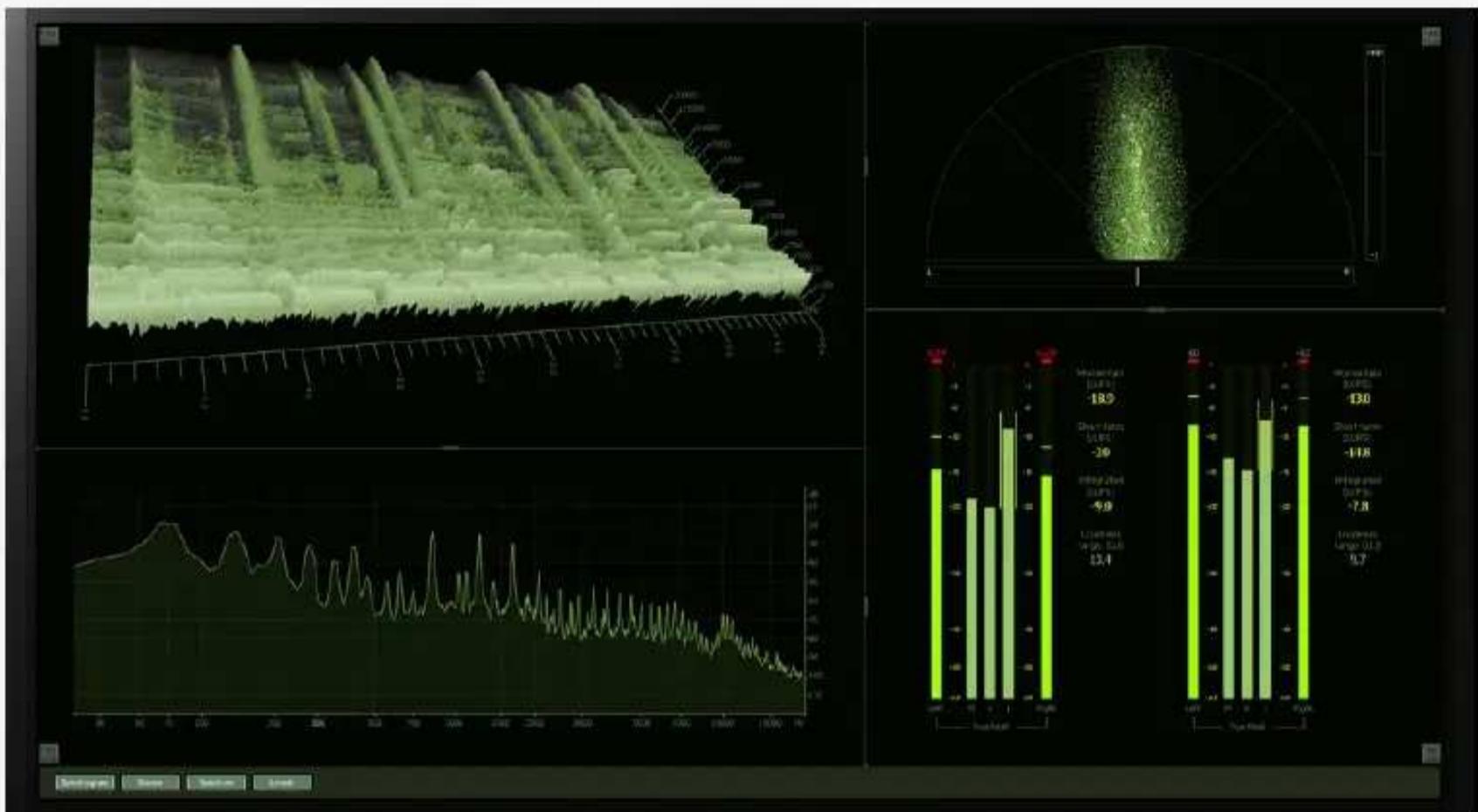
Verification Sheet Example:

- The hi-hats in the intro are very loud
- Add a white noise effect just before bar 32
- The lead is loud at the beginning of the intro part 2 (32nd bar)
- The sub-bass needs a +1.5dB boost overall
- Frequency clashes between the main lead and the second lead at minute 2:03
- Raise the volume of the white noise at 3:07
- The last snare before the drop cannot be heard properly
- The second lead in the drop is barely heard
- The fills of the breakdown are loud

And so on.



STEP 27 - FINAL TRACK

**STEP 28** **MASTERING**

**This is the final step in the track production chain before sending it to the listener. It is strongly recommended that a professional mastering engineer masters your track.**

Mastering is an art in itself. It requires a tremendous amount of expertise, years of experience and a quality monitoring environment. It is recommended to send your track to a mastering engineer of your choice, and have it mastered professionally using their monitoring environment and expertise.

You can also master the track yourself, and I talk about this in details in my courses.