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This can all be done correctly with a minimal amount of software and less hardware. — *deadmau5*

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CHAPTER RECAP

A good EDM producer has to have great musical instincts, and also some serious technical knowledge about processing and handling audio. The mixing process starts as you're laying down your first tracks. Set up groups to help you keep organized—with the drums all summing into a drum group and the bass and synth pads each doing the same. Balance your track volumes against each other roughly, and try to keep your master volume around -6 db so you have headroom to work with when you go into your mastering plug-ins later.

Use EQs to help similar instruments or instruments that play in similar ranges fit together without sounding muddy or dull. Figure out what part of the harmonic spectrum you want from a given instrument—top end shimmer, or bass resonance for instance—and duck the rest of the frequencies to make sonic room for other sounds.

Use side-chain compression, keyed to your kick drum, to make big leads feel like they're a cohesive part of your track. This ducks the lead's volume every time the kick hits, and keeps it from sounding like it's sitting awkwardly on top of the mix.

You also want to duck your bass volume when your kick drums hit, to avoid phase-cancellation dulling your kick sound. An LFO tool works even better than side-chain compression for this.

SUBCHAPTERS

- ▶ Tracks and Groups
- ▶ Earballing
- ▶ EQing for Clarity
- ▶ Getting Your Leads to Sit in the Track
- ▶ Shaping Your Bass
- ▶ LFO Tool vs. Compression
- ▶ Mixing in Home Studio

NOTES

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Most importantly, don't feel like you need better gear to be better at mixing. DAWs like Ableton come with all the plug-ins you really need to make a great sounding mix. Focus on training your ears and getting used to what the plug-ins can do for you before you start investing in more studio equipment. Most of the gear Joel uses he admits he doesn't really need—for him, expanding his studio is a matter of passion, not necessity.

If you want to to dive deeper into the gear used in this chapter, here's a list:

- ▶ Fab Filter Pro L Limiter
- ▶ Ableton Compressor Plug-in
- ▶ Ableton Graphic EQ
- ▶ Xfer LFO Tool
- ▶ Waves Max Bass

TAKE IT FURTHER

- ▶ Listen to the full tracks Joel uses as examples:
 - ▼ "Polaris" for EQing stacked synths
 - ▼ "No Problem" for side-chaining a lead line
 - ▼ "Imaginary Friends" for carving low-end with an LFO Tool.
- ▶ Get to know the frequency spectrum. The better trained your ears are at distinguishing different frequencies, the better you'll be at EQing your tracks. Spend some time experimenting with your DAW's graphic EQ, or use this program to start getting used to what the different frequencies sound like.

ASSIGNMENT

- ▶ See what mixing can do. Find a track of yours that hasn't gotten a lot of mixing attention and try out the skills you've picked up in this chapter. EQ your mid-range synths and pads around each other, carve your bass and compress your leads. Export versions of the track before and after you tweak the mix so you can hear the overall difference when your work is done.

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