11 BEATS: PART 1

> " There's no such thing as a bad kick sample. There's no such thing as a shit audio signal. You can shape any sound source to sound great. — *deadmau5* "

CHAPTER RECAP

EDM beats are relatively simple: 126-130 bpm (beats per minute), with kicks on the quarter notes, snares on every other quarter notes and some hi-hat and percussion to add character. Simple beats are good because they let a really broad audience of listeners lock-in and groove to your music. Getting too complicated means you're probably going to lose some of your listeners. And if you're a melodically driven producer like deadmau5, flashy drum tracks usually end up taking up too much sonic space.

The biggest, most important element of any EDM beat is the kick drum. Joel builds kick drum sounds by layering samples (either from sample packs, or one-shots he cut out of other loops and songs) and EQing the samples around each other so they add up to a full-bodied kick. There are a pair of processors that play a huge role in crafting his drum sound:

Transient Designer: this is a tool for shaping the dynamics of a sound over time—much like the way an ADR envelope shapes the sound of a synth. You can use it to change the attack of a drum sound, making it more or less snappy and punchy. Or to affect the decay—making it ring out shorter or longer. In this chapter, Joel is using the SPL plug-in from Universal Audio.

Compressor: this is another dynamic tool that makes an audio signal more uniform in volume by turning loud parts quieter and quiet parts louder. The "threshold" sets the point at which the compressor starts reducing loud sounds, and the "ratio" determines how strongly it does that reduction.

NOTES

MASTERCLASS

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When used on a drum bus, a compressor can help the different elements of kick, snare and percussion meld together better. In this chapter, Joel is using a plug-in modelled after a famous compressor, the API 2500.

NOTES

TAKE IT FURTHER

▸ Start paying attention to tempo. Use a BPM detector (some synths and drum machines have a 'tap' function built in), or you can use something like:

  ▾ All 8

  ▾ liveBPM - Beat Detector

▸ Check the BPM of some of your favorite EDM songs, then widen your search to different genres. What BPMs do some other genres of music live in? What BPM are most of your own productions set at?

▸ Go back over the "Snowcone" stems, paying special attention to the drums. How many different elements can you count, and how are they coming in and out of the track. Joel will dive deeper into the "Snowcone" beat in the next chapter.

ASSIGNMENT

▸ Build some layered kick drums. Put together a library of kick sounds, either by snipping samples out of tracks and loops you've already got on hand, or downloading one of the collections listed here for FL Studio Music or here for Ear Monk Free Libraries. Now try using Joel's methods to put five or ten kick drum sounds together using layering, EQing, and transient design. Soon you'll have your very own library of original sounding kick drums.