9
Humanizing Your Song

In this chapter, we will cover:

- Humanizing with the OFS knob
- Humanizing with the Graph editor
- Humanizing with the Piano roll
- Humanizing with the Playlist

Introduction

Humanizing your song means you can change the small intricacies of any sound. When working with digital music, everything is very robotic and stiff. This is by far the true nature of music and for those that play instruments in live settings, there are small nuances where the members of a band may get slightly out of sync but then hit their groove and enjoy the magic that happens. When using the step sequencer in FL Studio, it makes the steps perfectly timed and machine like. This is exactly what is needed when composing. However, once all of your pieces come together, you may find it to be a tad unemotional and mechanical. Sometimes this may be desired, and other times you may want to tweak the groove of some of the parts. FL Studio makes this very easy to do. Humanizing your song means introducing more feeling into your composition and making things less computerized. Yes, it's ironic that we are trying to make a computer program less computer-like. Nevertheless, it's a crucial tool that will separate a good song from a great song. You may use all of the following recipes on any type of sound, including vocals, percussion, audio, and virtual instruments.

Humanizing with the OFS knob

When humanizing your percussion, it may help to use the **OFS** knob within the **Channel settings** window.

Getting ready

In order to start humanizing your song using the **OFS** knob, you will want to have data within a channel on your step sequencer. When you click on a channel in the step sequencer, the **Channel settings** window will open up.

How to do it...

Let's take a look at how to humanize your song using the step sequencer and **FUNC** tab within the **Channel settings** window through the following steps:

1. Right-click on your hi hat or shaker type of sound and select **Fill each 4 steps** as per *Fig 9.1*.

You don't necessarily have to use the **Fill each 4 steps** function. This simply makes automatic entries on your step sequencer and may save you time.

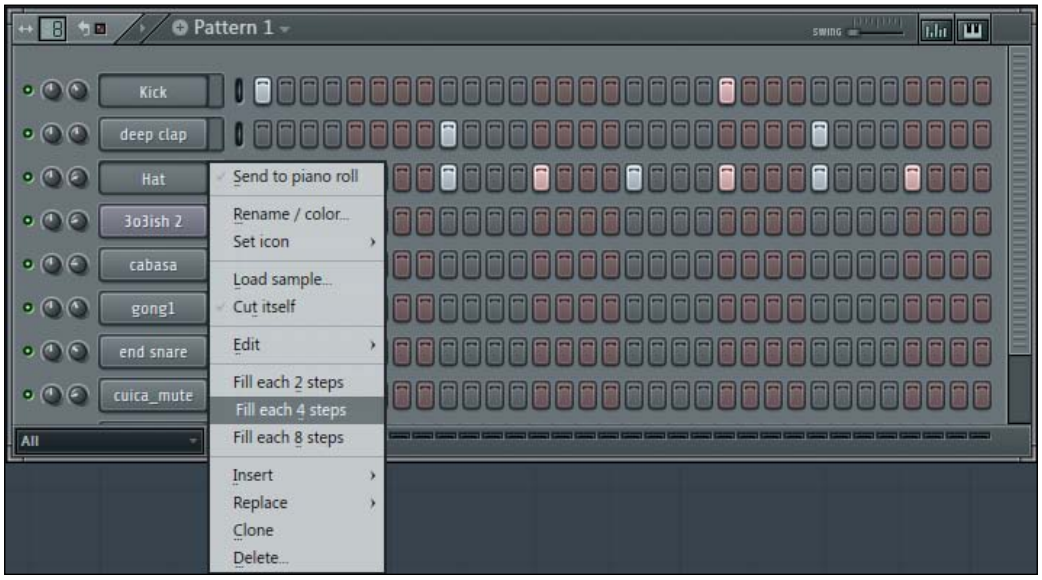

Fig 9.1

2. Click on the **Hat** channel (making sure the small green slit is engaged) to open up **Channel settings** and click on the **FUNC** tab as per the following screenshot:

Fig 9.2

3. Click-and-drag the **OFS** knob (fine time shift) to the right as per the following screenshot:

Fig 9.3

4. You will find that the timing of your sound will be extremely off when the **OFS** button is turned farthest to the right. You will want to turn the knob slowly, starting from the farthest left, while holding *Ctrl* for incremental control. Observe the following screenshot for the position of the **OFS** button, which will usually work to humanize your percussion sound:

Fig 9.4

How it works...

When you click-and-drag the **OFS** button to the right, you will notice that the timing of your sound will shift to the right and be totally off beat. This helps you understand the function of the **OFS** button. After realizing that turning it all the way to the right makes things totally off beat, we will slowly turn it to the right while holding down the *Ctrl* key. How far you turn this knob is up to your personal taste and the vibe you are going for. It all depends on the existing sounds in your project and the mood you want to establish.

There's more...

Adding a human feel is also directly correlated to adjusting the velocity/volume. When working with a hi hat or any type of percussion, you can adjust the volume of the individual steps. You can do this using the **Piano roll** or **Graph editor** menu as reviewed in *Chapter 3*, *Working with the Step Sequencer and Channels*. For a more global change on all of the channels within a pattern, review the swing slider, which was also reviewed in *Chapter 3*, *Working with the Step Sequencer and Channels*. You can also add a touch of reverb sometimes, as discussed in *Chapter 6*, *Using send tracks in the mixer*, or any type of effect on the FL Studio Mixer in your mixer chain.

See also

- The *Working with Graph editor* recipe in *Chapter 3*, *Working with Step Sequencer and Channels*
- The *Using the Piano roll* recipe in *Chapter 4*, *Building Your Song*
- The *Using send tracks in the mixer* recipe in *Chapter 6*, *Using the FL Studio Mixer and Recording Audio*
- The *Adding effects and your effects chain* recipe in *Chapter 6*, *Using the FL Studio Mixer and Recording Audio*
- The *Fine tuning your sample* recipe in *Chapter 7*, *Sampling Using Edison*

Humanizing with the Graph editor

Humanizing your song with **Graph editor** allows you to control every individual step on a channel in the step sequencer. This differs from the **OFS** knob, which is the global setting for your steps, and shifts all of them simultaneously. Depending on your final vision, both methods have their place in the music production.

Getting ready

To get started with using **Graph editor**, you will simply want to have step data on a channel within the step sequencer.

How to do it...

In this example, we will be working with the **Hat** channel again. Let's take a look at how to humanize your song using **Graph editor** on the step sequencer with the following steps:

1. Once you have a channel selected (the small green slit is engaged), click on the **Graph editor** button in the upper right-hand corner of the step sequencer. This is directly to the left of the **Keyboard editor** button as per the following screenshot:

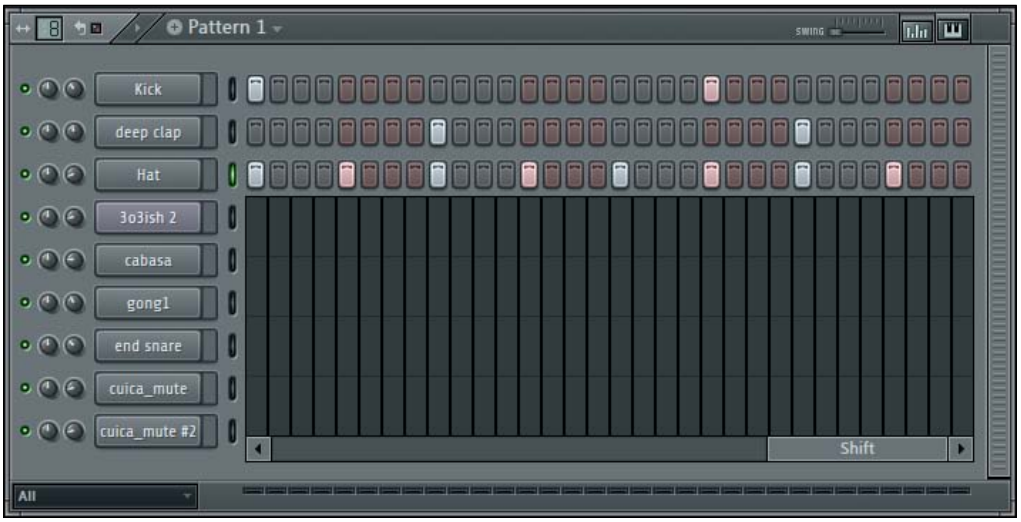

Fig 9.5

2. Click on the bottom scroll bar that appears after you click on the **Graph editor** button. From left to right, it will read as **Pan**, **Velocity**, **Release**, **Mod X**, **Mod Y**, **Fine pitch**, and **Shift**. Click-and-drag the scroll bar to the extreme right to reach the **Shift** parameter as per the previous screenshot.
3. Click-and-drag each column to form blue, vertical lines. The lines will affect the steps directly above each column as per *Fig 9.6*. The color will change from blue to green the higher you make the column.

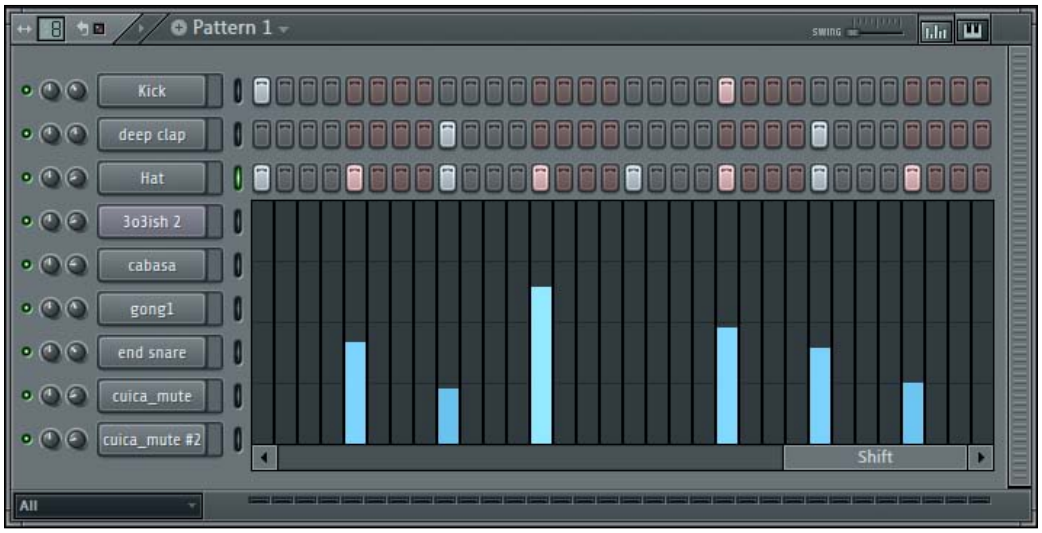

Fig 9.6

How it works...

The greater the height of the blue/green line, the more in time your step will shift to the right. If you experiment with this process, you will be able to hear the changes in your sound and steps. You may right-click or hold *Alt* + left-click in order to delete the column data.

There's more...

Be sure to use the **Velocity** function within the **Graph editor** window (use the scroll bar that pops up when you click on the **Graph editor** button and then scroll to **Velocity**). Adding a human feel is directly related to changing the time and volume (velocity) of your sound. The **Velocity** function will show in pink columns.

If you hold down *Shift* while right-clicking-and-dragging on any parameter in **Graph editor**, it will enable you to add incremental columns up or down. FL Studio refers to this as ramps. If you hold down *Ctrl* while adjusting a column, it will make uniform adjustments to all of the columns simultaneously.

See also

- The *Exploring Channel settings* recipe in *Chapter 3*, *Working with Step Sequencer and Channels*
- The *Working with Graph editor* recipe in *Chapter 3*, *Working with Step Sequencer and Channels*
- The *Sending a channel to mixer a slot* recipe in *Chapter 3*, *Working with Step Sequencer and Channels*
- The *Using the Keyboard editor* recipe in *Chapter 3*, *Working with Step Sequencer and Channels*

Humanizing with the Piano roll

Humanizing with **Piano roll** allows you to shift your notes ever so slightly to the right. This entails using a **Snap to grid** setting (none) within the **Piano roll** window. When you have opened up the **Piano roll** window and are working with a sound, this method can help make a particular groove fit with your entire music production.

Getting ready

To start humanizing your sound using **Piano roll**, you will want to have a particular channel use **Piano roll**. You can do this by right-clicking on a channel and selecting **Piano roll**.

How to do it...

Humanize your notes inside of the **Piano roll** window using the following steps:

1. Click on the **Snap to grid** setting (it resembles a magnet) inside of **Piano roll** and select **(none)** as per *Fig 9.7*. This will allow you to slide your notes independent of the grid.

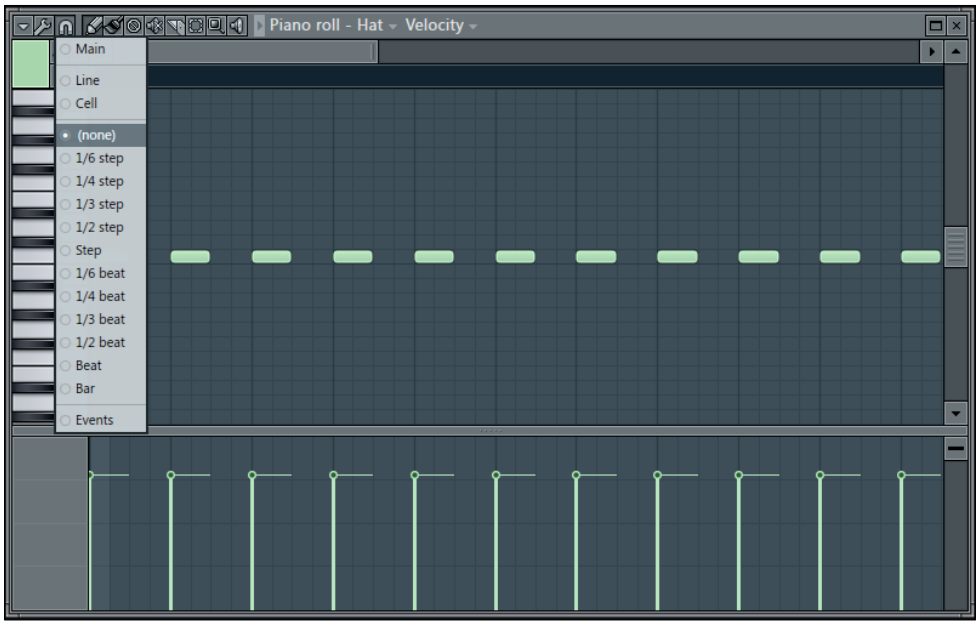

Fig 9.7

2. Click-and-drag a note you want to slide to the right or left. *Fig 9.8* shows the first four notes that have been dragged to the right. Note that they are not directly on a grid line like the remaining notes.

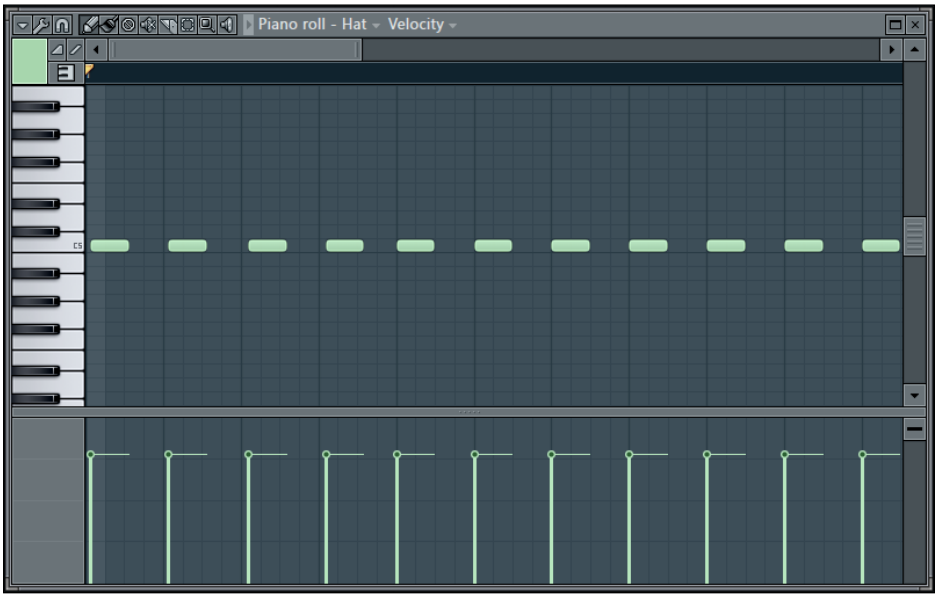

Fig 9.8

How it works...

Changing your **Snap to grid** setting inside of the **Piano roll** to **(none)** allows you to slide your notes that are unrelated to the grid setting. This can help with percussion and virtual instruments of all sorts. In fact, anything inside of the **Piano roll** window is fair game.

Press *Alt* + drag a note to momentarily separate the note from the grid.

Sometimes, a sound's starting point can be a little bit delayed even though you have it set directly on the grid. This means that your actual sample does not start immediately on time. To remedy this, you can drag or slide your sound component to the left in **Piano roll** or open up Edison to delete the space at the very beginning of your sample. In a music file, we will work with small fragments of time, and in some cases, we will have to edit the waveform in Edison. Other times, a slight delay is desired if it adds to the groove of the song. This depends on your given music project and the direction and feeling you want it to embody.

There's more...

Be sure to use the bottom portion of **Piano roll** where you can adjust the **Velocity** value and other individual parameters. Sometimes, you may want to adjust the **Velocity** value before shifting notes. This was reviewed in the final recipe of *Chapter 4*, *Building Your Song* and relates to the **Note properties** drop-down box. You can also double-click on any note inside **Piano roll** to change the parameters. For the global adjustment of notes, hold *Ctrl* and click-and-drag around a group of notes. You can then double-click and affect a global selection of **Note properties**.

See also

- The *Working with rhythm and percussion* recipe in *Chapter 4*, *Building Your Song*
- The *Adding virtual instruments* recipe in *Chapter 4*, *Building Your Song*
- The *Using the Piano roll* recipe in *Chapter 4*, *Building Your Song*

Humanizing with Playlist

Humanizing your song with **Playlist** works similarly to **Piano roll** because you will be working with the snap and zoom settings. Since **Playlist** allows you to work with audio files, its greatest ability may be that it can adjust the settings of the files. You can, of course, adjust your patterns on the playlist in the same manner, but moving your audio samples or slices is most helpful. As usual, it will come down to your individual workflow. We will be sliding our audio or musical parts forwards or backwards ever so slightly.

Getting ready

To start humanizing your parts in **Playlist**, you simply need to press *F5* or select the playlist icon.

How to do it...

Humanize your parts inside **Playlist** using the following steps:

1. Zoom in and resize the playlist window in order to work with the audio file. We are working with the audio file titled **Audio VOX** as per the following screenshot:

Fig 9.9

2. Select **(none)**—the button that looks like a magnet—from the **Snap to grid** setting as per the following screenshot:

Fig 9.10

3. Use the **Draw** or **Paint** tool and slide your audio to either the left or right, as shown in the following screenshot:

Fig 9.11

How it works...

When we select **(none)** in the **Snap to grid** setting, it enables us to be free of the beats and bars grid on the playlist. Make sure you zoom in as close as possible because your minute sliding action will only correlate to very small durations of time. This was reviewed in *Chapter 5*, *Using the Playlist*, so please make sure you take a look at it.

To enable zooming, use *Ctrl* + *Shift* and click-and-drag to the left and right using the scroll bar in **Playlist**. Also use *Ctrl* + *Alt* and click-and-drag up and down using the scroll bar in **Playlist**.

You can test how certain parts sound when they are moved ever so slightly to the left or right, which is forwards or backwards in musical time. Sometimes, an effect or percussion sound you have in your song might need to be more in sync with your groove and less robotic. Alternatively, it may simply begin too quick or too late in time. Using this feature in **Playlist** allows you to fix these types of situations. It ignores the rigid nature of the cells/beats/bars that are actually needed and valued in the music-making process, but only to a point. Remember to put your snap setting back to **Cell** or whatever setting you need it to be after making changes using the **(none)** setting.

Press *Alt* + click-and-drag on a pattern or sample to momentarily separate its snap setting from the grid.

There's more...

All four recipes in this chapter can be used on any type of sound in your project. This means that they can be used on all percussion, vocals, audio, and virtual instruments. To give your project a truly human feel, you can choose to record external audio into it. When you actually use your voice (sound effects or vocals), hands (for clapping), other physical percussion, a guitar, or a keyboard, the recorded part will clearly have human nuances because you are a human! Nobody is perfect, and no human recording can be perfectly timed. It is this fact that makes live music very enjoyable to musicians and their audience. You will also feel more connected to and proud of your music project if you record some of your own parts with a microphone or another instrument.

As with anything, a good balance of your DAW, a good recording level, and your human talent will provide the best results. For example, creating your initial rhythm with wave samples inside the step sequencer is extremely quick and intuitive. You might then want to physically play in an analog keyboard as audio.

See also

- The *Exploring Channel settings* recipe in *Chapter 3*, *Working with Step Sequencer and Channels*
- The *Working with Graph editor* recipe in *Chapter 3*, *Working with Step Sequencer and Channels*
- The *Using the Piano roll* recipe in *Chapter 4*, *Building Your Song*
- The *Viewing the Playlist* recipe in *Chapter 5*, *Using the Playlist*
- The *Recording external audio* recipe in *Chapter 6*, *Using the FL Studio Mixer and Recording Audio*