

# 2

## Using Browser

In this chapter, we will cover:

- ▶ Working with Browser
- ▶ Getting new sounds in Browser

### Introduction

FL Studio Browser is a file listing of all of the WAV and MP3 sounds that you are able to add to your project. Bear in mind that we are not referring to an Internet browser of any sort; this is where we can browse our collection of sounds. The Browser is very important because it provides quick access to your library of WAV and MP3 sounds in an intuitive manner. You want to keep your Browser organized and labeled correctly to keep your workflow at an optimum level. It also holds all of your current project data and presets, and is a quick way to find older projects. The FL Studio Browser automatically synchronizes with your file path on your computer, and we will review exactly what that means in this chapter.

### Working with Browser

In this recipe, you will come to understand the files and parameters within the FL Studio Browser. You can accumulate a wide range of sounds and build your own sound library. FL Studio also comes with its own factory sounds to get you started (25 folders in total in the factory Browser list, which also includes a plethora of presets and functions). This is also the area where FL Studio automatically keeps presets, projects, SoundFonts, automation curves, WAV files, the **undo history** button, the speech synthesizer, and the like. This is also where you can preview sounds while your mix is playing, so it is crucial to understand the Browser while building your track and adding additional sounds to it. When you add sounds from the Browser into the step sequencer, it automatically becomes a channel in the step sequencer, which is the building block of all the sounds in your given project.

## Getting ready

In order to get started with using the Browser, you need to open up FL Studio and then push the **F8** key to toggle the Browser. Additionally, you may go to the **VIEW** menu and then select **Browser**. When **Browser** is selected, you will see a small checkbox next to it. A third way is to simply click on the Browser symbol. Browser is the fourth button from the left, as shown in the following screenshot:



Fig 2.1

## How to do it...

Find a folder in the FL Studio Browser that contains WAV or MP3 sounds. Click with your mouse to trigger the sound samples or scroll using your arrow keys on your computer keyboard. Adjust your volume or effect in your preview mixer track on the FL Studio Mixer; we will discuss this in the next lines.

When you left-click on the folders in the **Browser** section, it will automatically open up the files inside of it, which you can then left-click to preview the sound. Keep in mind that you will be previewing all types of sounds, including drum kicks, snares, hi hats, and all types of percussion, but when a sound in the Browser is longer than 5 seconds, clicking on it will only preview the first 5 seconds of it. There will be a small symbol that helps identify what each file means. A small orange box with a small .wav audio symbol means that the file is, indeed, a WAV file. There is also a label that says MP3 when it recognizes an MP3 file. When you click on a file with your mouse, it will be previewed through your sound card, headphones, or speakers. Once you have engaged a file, you may also use your arrow keys (the up and down arrows) that are part of your QWERTY keyboard.

When working on the FL Studio Browser and triggering with percussion, rhythm, hi hats, cymbals, kicks, snares, claps, and the like, you can actually use your mouse to play musical patterns. This means treating your mouse button like a drum pad, and with practice, it can inspire you to get better. For example, if you have a drum kit called **APRIL Kit** full of WAV samples in the **Browser** section (as shown in the following screenshot) and the kick, snare, and hi hat or shaker are close by in the list, you can play a decent riff with only your mouse button on the fly:



Fig 2.2

In this example, you can left-click on **808kick** and then **beep1** in order to form a percussion riff with your finger and mouse. Sure, this is not recorded anywhere and is only a preview, but you can certainly get a good rhythm groove going no matter your type of WAV samples or musical genre. As discussed earlier, the wave symbol is the orange icon on the left of each sample in the Browser section, and it also says MP3 for the MP3 file titled **beep2**, as shown in the preceding screenshot. You can create freestyle loops on the fly, which allow for immediate feedback and inspiration. The kick and snare are extremely important as the building blocks and foundation of your song. Use your mouse like you would your finger on a hard surface or table top. You can pulsate quickly or slowly.

The other method of previewing your WAV and MP3 files in the FL Studio Browser is using your up and down arrow keys. In this method, you can simply push the keys up or down, and it may feel easier than clicking on each sound with your mouse. The files in any given Browser folder are always listed in an alphabetical order (from top to bottom), so remember to scroll all the way down and start near the end of the alphabet to break the monotony of any given folder.

In order to optimize the way you use your Browser when previewing sounds, you will also need to set your **Preview mixer track** field to whatever track you desire in your Mixer. The FL Studio Mixer is reviewed in *Chapter 6, Using the FL Studio Mixer and Recording Audio*. In this way, you can adjust the volume of the sounds previewed in the **Browser** section and also set EQ, reverb, or any other effect desired. This is crucial when mixing and adding sounds to your project. The following screenshot shows the **Mixer** tab:



Fig 2.3

In the preceding screenshot, I have set **Preview mixer track** to **14**. This is accomplished by going into the **OPTIONS** menu and clicking on **Audio settings**. In the bottom right-hand corner of **Settings**, there is a small area titled **Mixer**. It is here that you select **Preview mixer track**, which means any sound you preview in the **Browser** section will be funneled into your selected track on the FL Studio Mixer. You can simply drag the number up or down in order to reach the Mixer track you so desire to preview. This is one of the most important things to remember in FL Studio, because you can now add compression to the previewed sounds, add reverb, raise the volume, or lower the volume when previewing sounds in the Browser. When your music production is playing, this will help you see how your previewed sound could potentially be blended with your mix. You will learn how to add reverb and light compression to the preview Mixer in the subsequent chapters.

When mixing your song and having multiple instruments and harmonies playing at the same time, adjusting the volume of the **Preview mixer track** can help you decide whether you want to add a particular sound or discard it. Be cautious of this and set **Preview mixer track** to be at an optimal volume based on your other instruments and tracks playing in the mix simultaneously. Sometimes, the volume varies between folders, but generally speaking, you can set the volume and scroll through most sounds in any given kit adequately, especially if they have all been made by one manufacturer or sound designer.

### How it works...

When you find a sound that you like, you can left-click and drag with your mouse, and let go when you reach the lower part of an empty space on the step sequencer. The step sequencer can be opened by pressing **F6**, which we will review in *Chapter 3, Working with the Step Sequencer and Channels*, and is the main sequencing section in FL Studio. This will then make a new channel of the sound you desire to use in your project. Every sound you use (from either the **Browser** section or any recorded audio) in your project will have a dedicated channel in the step sequencer. When clicking-and-dragging, you can also replace an existing sound that is already its own channel. If you left-click and drag a sound from the **Browser** section and let go of it on an existing channel, it will light up in orange on the existing channel and subsequently be replaced. When you right-click on a sound in the **Browser** section, you will have additional options, as shown in *Fig 2.4*. The use of these actual channels will be covered in *Chapter 3, Working with the Step Sequencer and Channels*.

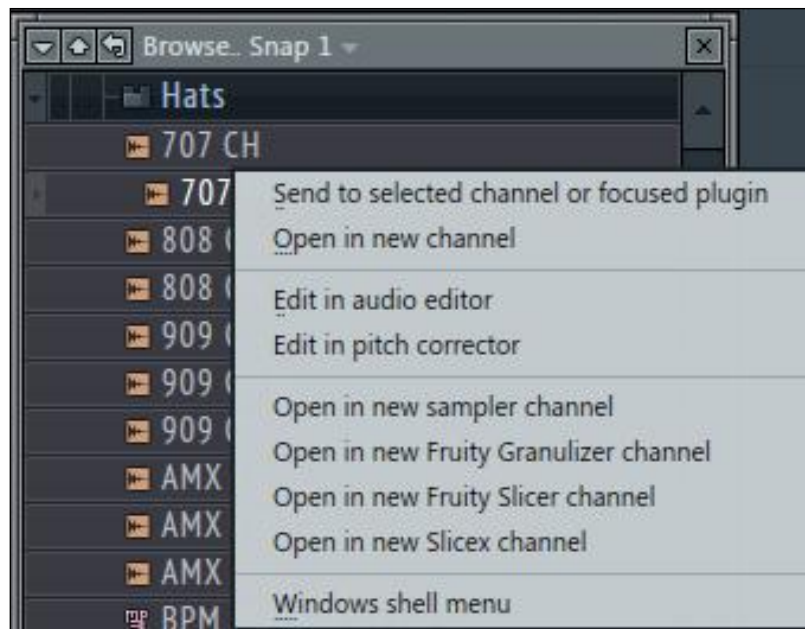


Fig 2.4

The sounds, plugins, presets, history, and parameters of your Browser are directly related to making music. Before recording these sounds into FL Studio, they will be placed as channels inside the step sequencer, and your music project will commence. We will discuss this music-making process in the next chapter. The **Browser** section is your library of WAV and MP3 sounds that differ from VSTs and virtual instrument plugins, which we will also examine later in the book.

## There's more...

Let's learn a few things about browsing extra search folders. In cases where you want to specify your own path, store sounds on a drive other than your main drive, or use an external hard drive, you can tell FL Studio to search for that particular path in your **File settings**. This is also a practice used in recording external audio, which we will cover in a later chapter. A widely used practice is to record your vocals and any other audio onto an external drive in order to save space on your computer. You can also use this method for any sounds or files, if you so desire. You will need to click on the **OPTIONS** menu and then go into **File settings**. You may also press **F10** and then click on your **FILE** tab in order to reach the same **File settings** window in FL Studio. An additional way is to click on the small triangle (in the **Browser** options) in the upper left-hand corner of the **Browser** section and then select **Configure extra folders**. The following screenshot shows the **Settings** window:

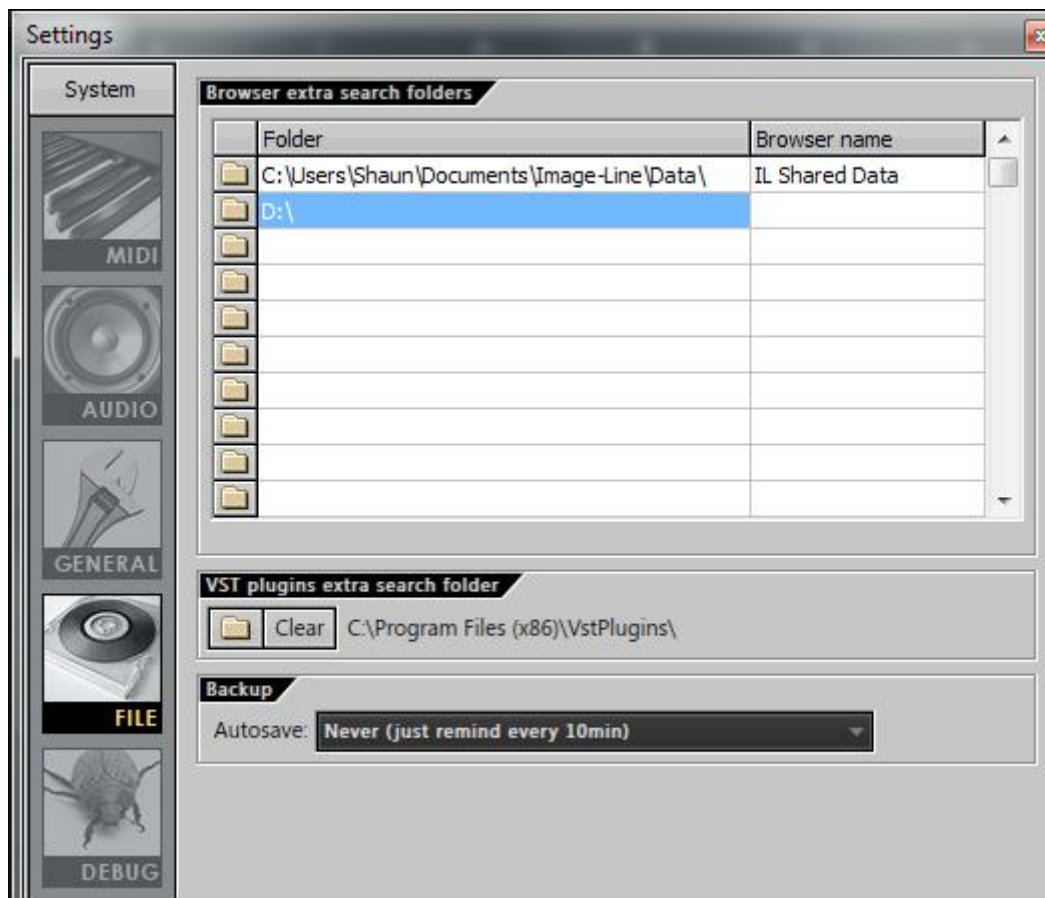


Fig 2.5

In the preceding screenshot, you can see the **Browser extra search folders** menu. The first row at the top shows automatically when you install FL Studio, as long as you have completed the standard installation. In this **File settings** window on FL Studio, you are able to specify more paths that tell FL Studio what areas to search on your computer in order to bring up the sounds into your project(s). I have added `D:\` to the second row as an example. In this example, FL Studio will now search the `D:\` drive in addition to any other locations that I specify. In order to actually specify a location for FL Studio, you simply need to click on the folder icon next to each row. Once you click on the folder icon, you will be able to select the path/folder to be added to FL Studio as an extra search folder.

### See also

- ▶ *Chapter 3, Working with the Step Sequencer and Channels*
- ▶ *Chapter 4, Building Your Song*

## Getting new sounds in Browser

This recipe will walk you through the task of finding new sounds on web and importing these sounds into your **Browser** window.

### How to do it...

The Browser in FL Studio is directly correlated to the FL Studio installation path on your given computer system. For example, in a PC environment, you can view the FL Studio path at `C:\Program Files\Image-Line\FL Studio 11\Data\Patches`. When you arrive at the `Patches` folder on your actual computer file hierarchy, please keep in mind that on FL Studio, the Browser is directly related to it. You are able to add any WAV or MP3 files that you desire, and you can organize them, name them, and place them in a dedicated folder, like anything else you organize on your computer. Similar to organizing documents, photos, and music, the file path that leads to `Patches` is where you will organize your wave samples and other pertinent files. As stated previously, it can be a great idea to store WAV or MP3 files on an external hard drive. If you keep all of your files in the FL Studio install directory, they are likely to be overwritten.

An easy way to find WAV files, such as percussion, kicks, hi hats, snares, cymbals, or any other type of effect, is to search online by typing in whatever WAV file you desire. There are many free types of WAV files, and you can find whatever you want using your given search engine correctly. For example, if I want to find something like a clock chime, I can simply use an Internet search engine and type `clock chime free.wav` or something of a similar context. Of course, when you are serious about your recordings, you want to have the most high-quality WAV samples you can when working with FL Studio. There are numerous drum packs, sound packs, drum kits, virtual instruments, high-quality loops, and sounds that you can research online and purchase if you so desire. That being said, there are thousands of free wave samples across the Internet, so you may want to test your luck and work with some free WAV files you find online.

When you find a free sound that you want on the internet, there will sometimes be a **Download** button that you can click. Other times, you may need to right-click on a file and select **Save link as** before saving. You want to make sure that the file is indeed compatible with FL Studio, which means it should be an MP3 or WAV file. If you select **Save link as**, and then it tries to save an HTML page, web page, or something of the sort, then you should *not* save that file. The following screenshot shows how a file is saved:

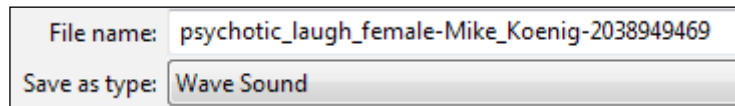


Fig 2.6

In the preceding example, you have right-clicked on the WAV icon for the psychotic female laugh, and your computer recognized that it is indeed a WAV sound. Your computer has also automatically named the file in the manner listed above, next to **File name**. This is the final step before saving your file into the file location of your choice.

Once you have saved your WAV or MP3 file to the proper folder on your computer, FL Studio will recognize this; your new sound will be listed in the **Browser** section and can be previewed when you left-click on the **Browser** section.



## There's more...

Let's take a look at the various ways to refresh your Browser. The following screenshot shows the refresh icon:

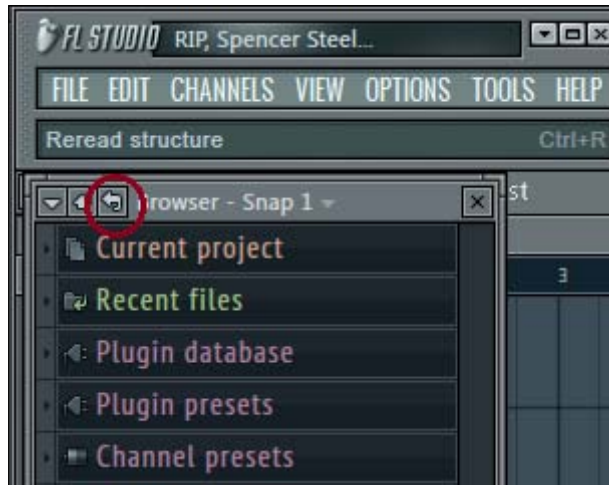


Fig 2.7

If you are adding sounds to the computer file hierarchy in your `Patches` folder (or external drive) and the FL Studio software is open, you may practice the following two methods:

- ▶ Click on the third button from the left in the **Browser** section. As shown in *Fig 2.7*, this will **Reread structure**, that is, refresh your Browser, and your new sounds will now be recognized in the Browser.
- ▶ Press *Ctrl + R*, which is a quick key command that tells FL Studio to refresh the Browser in lieu of clicking with your mouse on the third button from the left.

Additionally, if the FL Studio software is closed—that is, it is not running on your computer—the moment you launch the software, all of your new sounds will show in the Browser, regardless of whether you have refreshed the Browser or not. Refreshing the Browser is probably a little bit easier to do when FL Studio is already running, and it's a nice function to have so you don't have to close and open FL Studio in order to read the folders and new files on your computer. The following screenshot shows the other options in the **Browser** section:

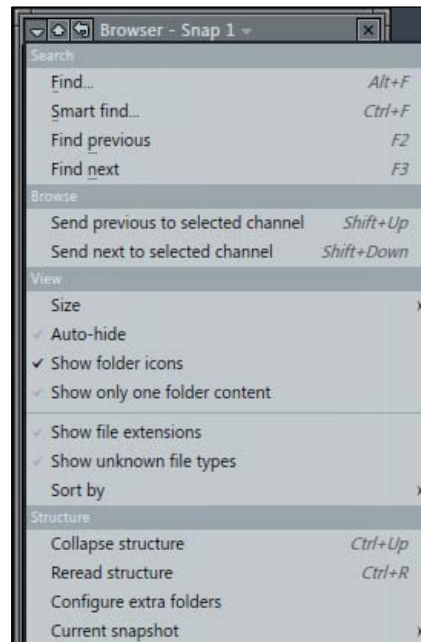


Fig 2.8

If you can't seem to locate a sound that you have previously worked with, you can press the small triangle in the upper left-hand corner of the FL Studio Browser and use the **Find...** button, which is an exact keyword search engine for your FL Studio Browser. You can also press *Alt + F*. Alternatively, you may also use the **Smart find...** option, which is *Ctrl + F*, because it will most likely find more results while it is not based on an exact phrase. There are also other choices from this small triangle button, including **Search**, **Browse**, **View**, and **Structure**.

To actually scroll through your Browser, it includes two up and down arrows on the FL Studio Browser window in addition to a scroll bar that you can drag. Alternatively, and as a more natural method, you can also use your wheel mouse, wheel mouse optical, or any type of upgraded mouse interface that has an up or down scroll wheel.

## See also

- *Chapter 3, Working with the Step Sequencer and Channels*