Thirty Five Mixing Tips

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35 mixing tips that I've learned over the years packed into one ebook

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Contents

In this guide,

I'll be walking you through 35 mixing tips that I've learned over the years and that I apply to my tracks when mixing and mastering that I'd love to share with you.

The guide is split into five different sections, as you can see above in the Index. Even though I recommend you to follow the ebook as planned in the index, feel free to scroll around the topics that you struggle with the most or to later revisit any of the individual tips independently, as each topic starts and ends on its own.

For this guide to work, there are no rules, as I say in the first tip.

- Don't want to use a spectrum? Feel free not to;
- Don't want to reference your tracks? Feel free not to;

I tried my best to explain why you should use that tip, and followed it up with a video of mine or an example of how you can apply this technique or tip. In addition, it's important to say that I personally use all these 35 tips when I'm doing my mix and masters for myself and for other clients. However, if you find a way or think one tip is conceptually wrong, please email me with your thoughts and I'd love to talk to you about it!

Lastly, thank you for downloading this ebook. If you're here, you've either downloaded it at Abstrakt Music Lab's Website or a friend shared it with you. If you're already a subscriber, thank you so much for the support, and please consider sharing it with one friend as we're all in this together, and I thank you for passing on my message of learning. My only goal is to help as many people as possible.

If you're not subscribed, please consider subscribing to my newsletter and you'll receive a weekly batch of tips and tricks related to the music business, music production, mindset, and productivity for musicians. You can get the latest tips and techniques from my recent posts at Abstrakt Music Lab or watch my videos on my Youtube Channel for in-depth instructions on all kinds of topics like sound design and music theory.

Initial Mixing Tips

There Are No Fixed Rules

As with anything in music, there are no fixed rules. You don't need to, for example:

- Set your kick to -6db and mix from there;
- Stem out your track and mix in a different project;
- Test your song in crappy speakers;
- Parallel compress here and there;

There are no rules.

This is important to make sure that EVERYTHING that I'll teach you in this eBook is just a technique that you can apply to your specific scenario and the only way you'll know if it works (or not) is by testing it.

In addition, it's important to mention that what has worked for one track may not work for another track. Therefore, it's important to understand the concept of the techniques I'll teach you and understand when they would be better applied.

Only Put Plugins if You Need Them

The title says it all. Only apply the effects you feel you need to apply and, AT ALL COSTS, please avoid adding something if you don't fully understand why you're applying it.

I've seen some producers having EQ / Compressor / Saturator as a standard on their audio channel, even though they might not use it. This takes CPU power away from you, and it could possibly give you the temptation to turn these plugins on "just because they are there."

If you don't need it, take it off. Avoid the temptation of using something you don't need and, therefore, overdoing your mix.

Avoid Copy/Pasting Chains From YouTube Videos

Before adding something that you've seen on youtube, question yourself if that fits your song/scenario. If something worked for someone's tracks, it may not necessarily work for you.

The problem of adding something you've seen, but don't fully comprehend, is that it may be causing you a problem you don't even know about. For example, let's say you've seen on YouTube to add a compressor to a master chain. Therefore, you repeat this and add it with the same settings to your song.

- Does your track have the same dynamics as the example?
- Do you know what the thought process was behind that plugin and its settings for that YouTuber??
- Does your track really need to be compressed?

It's important to understand why you're using that effect to make sure that it fits your song. That's why, as I've said before, you have to, understand the reasons why you're inserting a plugin. If you don't have a reason why, take them off.

Ask For Feedback

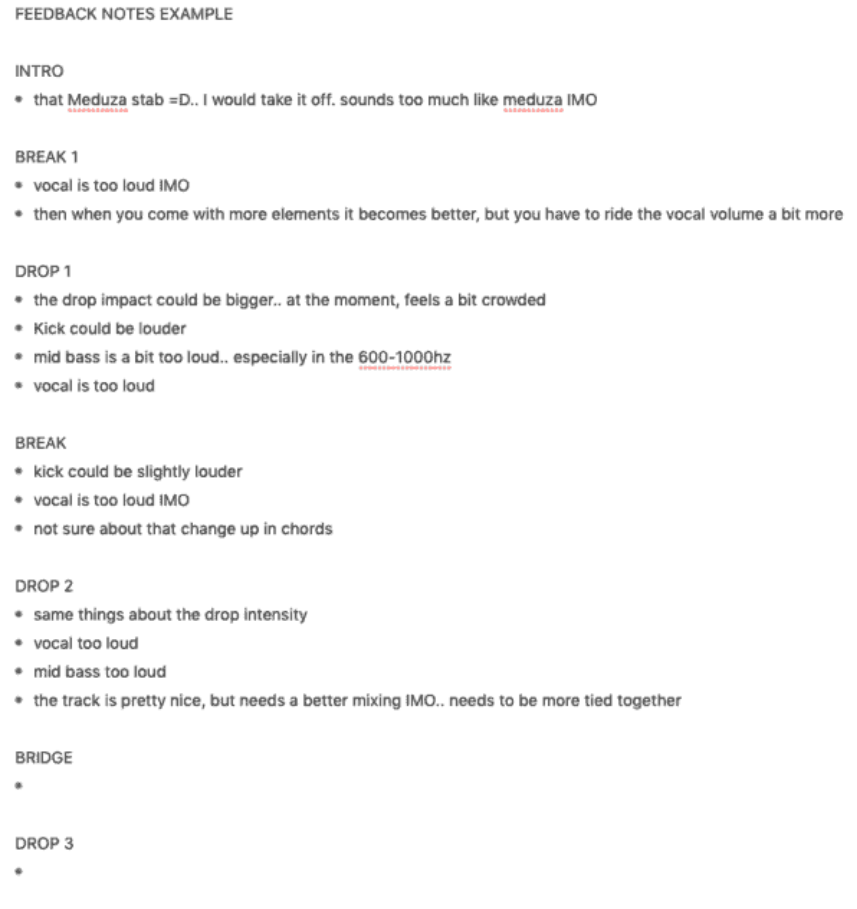
This is one of the most crucial steps for EVERY musician: You must ask for feedback. This is for two reasons:

- When producing, we tend to overvalue our productions and due to the

many conditions and characteristics a song has, we might miss out on something. Asking for feedback can help you with an unbiased opinion of things you might be over or underdoing.

- Feedback is like a beta test. Before any major release, software companies do betas of their products to test it out in the market, gather opinions, and enhance something that might be missing or that is buggy. Use the feedback you gather as a way to enhance tracks with ideas that you might not be perceiving.
- Learn from others' mistakes. By asking for feedback, you must be willing to give it as well. This will give you the opportunity to learn from other producers and enhance your production's quality.

If you need feedback from us, shoot over your song HERE and expect either video feedback or something like the image below:



FEEDBACK NOTES EXAMPLE

INTRO
- that Meduza stab =D.. I would take it off. sounds too much like meduza IMO

BREAK 1
- vocal is too loud IMO
- then when you come with more elements it becomes better, but you have to ride the vocal volume a bit more

DROP 1
- the drop impact could be bigger.. at the moment, feels a bit crowded
- Kick could be louder
- mid bass is a bit too loud.. especially in the 600-1000hz
- vocal is too loud

BREAK
- kick could be slightly louder
- vocal is too loud IMO
- not sure about that change up in chords

DROP 2
- same things about the drop intensity
- vocal too loud
- mid bass too loud
- the track is pretty nice, but needs a better mixing IMO.. needs to be more tied together

BRIDGE
-

DROP 3
-

A Mix Can't Fix a Bad Song

Your mix, as good as it might be, won't fix a bad arrangement, a bad composition, or a bad sound design. It enhances the relationship between elements, which might make the arrangement better, but it will never fix a set of bad chord progressions.

Think about a wooden ball that was a wooden cube. The creation process is the process that shapes a wooden cube into a ball. After you finish shaping it, there will probably be some sharp edges and that's what you'll fix in the mixing stage. However, your mixing stage won't fix your wooden ball if you cut it in half.

Why am I saying this? Sometimes we avoid accepting that the song is bad and blame it on our lack of mixing skills. Then, we say mixing and mastering is hard and that "I need to hire someone to help me with that." Well, sometimes it is not your mix, but your creative choices that are holding you back.

Break Is Necessary

After 1h to 1h30 after working on a mix or in a song, you start to feel biased about it and this could lead to mistakes. Take a break!

Let's make an analogy. While constantly exercising any muscle group, short breaks are part of your training program. Even high-performance athletes take breaks, and likewise, so should you when working with music.

In these breaks, proudly go play games, check your Instagram, etc. Since it's serving the purpose of resetting your ear and mind, it's not a distraction. Instead, it is a way to refresh your mind so you can later achieve better results because you took the bias off your ears. You can read more about this concept in this post.

Mix While You Create

The only way you'll know if you'll need to add more elements is if you put your current elements to the test and mix them side by side with your reference track, all while you're creating the track.

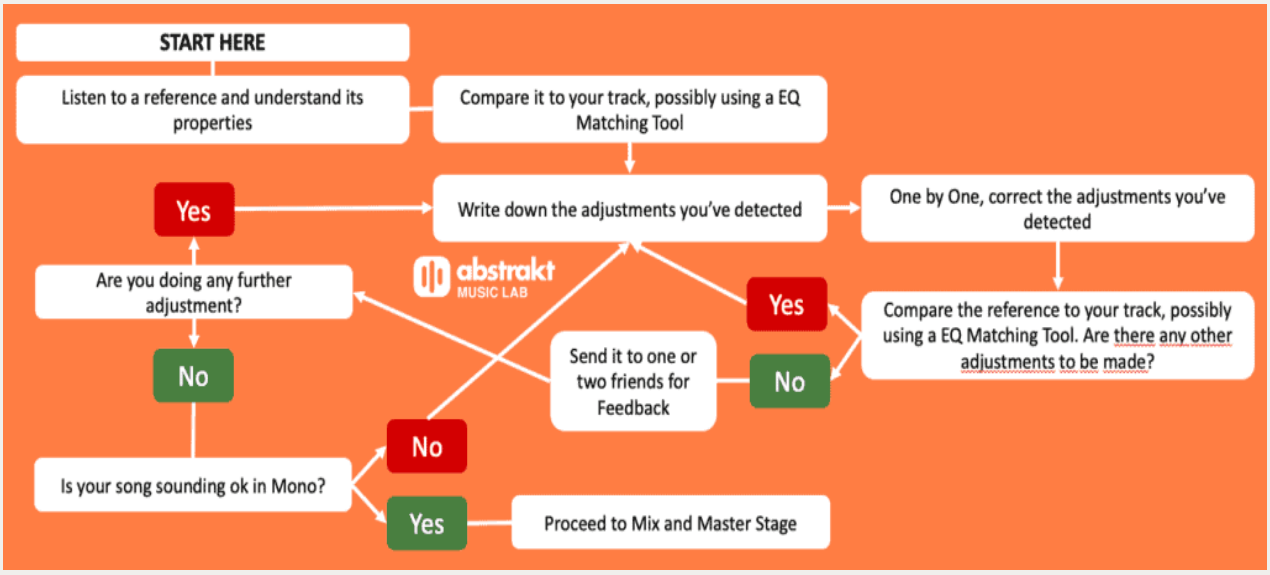
When comparing your project with reference tracks, you'll get an idea if you need to do further adjustments to your mix. If you do these adjustments and you still lack the sound you want, then consider adding a new element.

Setting Up The Mixing Workflow

Standardize Your Mixing Process

The more standard you make your mixing process, the easier it will be for you to mix your track. Not because the next song will be easier, but mainly because you'll get used to the process you've created, and repetition is the key to more efficient mixing.

The goal with this tip is to make your mixes more efficient, more comfortable, and with less overworking. Therefore, the more standard you can make your mixes, the better, which does not mean that your songs have to be standard, but your process should be.



You can check my entire mixing workflow in this post.

Render Stems to a Separate Project

Rendering your project into stems has some efficiency/workflow and safety benefits when it comes to mixing and mastering a track:

- It makes you commit to audio, which is helpful to avoid unnecessary tweaks in VSTs or in your arrangement. You can always go back, but it creates a first barrier;
- It guarantees that you have an audio copy of what you worked on rather than just MIDI, which can sometimes be lost while upgrading software;
- It will save you some CPU power since all the VST instances that you had during your creation project were converted to audio.

You can see my workflow on this video below and in this post:

Do a Mixing Checklist

When starting your mix, the first thing you'll do is listen to your track twice and write down everything you notice that needs fixing. Let's say you find ten spots to fix and one of them was "hit hats are too loud". You'll fix these ten spots and relisten to your track. I show you how you can do this in this video below:

You can apply this checklist workflow while mixing your track with or without references. If with references, you should do another list after comparing it to your references. An example of workflow is the following:

FEEDBACK NOTES EXAMPLE

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The problem with mixing without a checklist is that you can easily start over correcting elements that you thought were fine today, but problematic tomorrow. With a checklist, you can limit yourself to correcting only elements that need correction, avoiding overthinking what you've already liked and, therefore, avoiding overdoing your mix.

Start Your Mix by Choosing One Anchor Element

Regardless of the genre of your track, if it's electronic, there is a huge possibility it will have a kick and a bass. If it does, I'm sure that without them in your mix, you'll lose a lot of energy in your track. Therefore, since kick and bass play such a huge role in our tracks, you should start your mix with them.

To be more specific, you could start with your kick, then go placing all the other elements according to the volume that you anchored your kick at, so all your mix is volume related to your kick.

"But can I start with the chords?" Yes, you can. You can anchor any element and place the others relative to it, but I'd recommend you to start with the low end. The main reason for that is that your low end has fewer elements than your highs or mids, which will make the anchoring process much quicker and easier.

If you want to watch how I do this, also in the video mentioned in 'Do a Mixing Checklist', I mention how I start my mixing by anchoring my KICK.

Your Mixing Tweaks START with Volume Knobs

Before you add ANY plugin to your mix, just use volume faders and you'll be impressed with the quality of the mix you can achieve just with faders. This is what I will show to you also in the video posted above on how to mix your tracks with mainly EQ + VOLUME.

With the help of a reference track or even your own tracks as reference tracks, start moving the faders only until you have adjusted the levels in the mix to where you like what you're listening to. It's tempting to use plugins. It's even tempting for me to tell you to use plugins, but avoid this for the first stage.

By adjusting the faders, you're going to detect a couple of things:

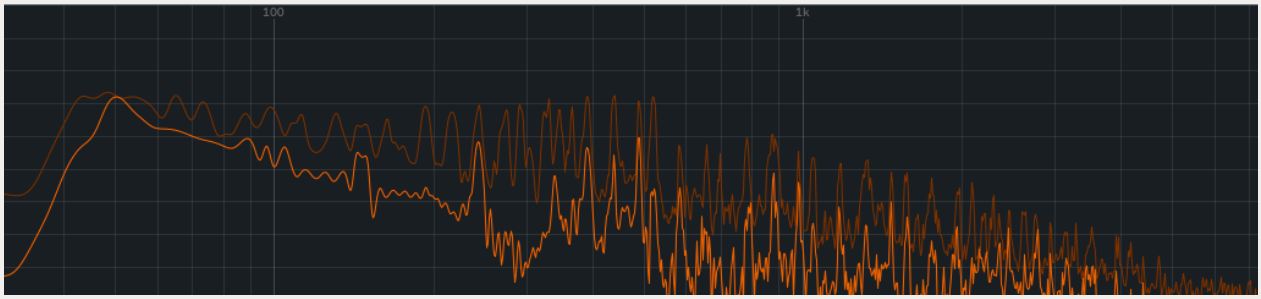
- What is the key frequency that I'm looking to raise with that fader? For example, when boosting a kick, you may want to raise the attack or the low end of it.
- Elements that need to be EQed later because raising a fader caused something to be too loud/quiet. For example, when boosting a kick, you might have done this to elevate the "oomph," but this caused the attack to be too loud.

Therefore, after this initial step, write everything that you feel needs to be fixed due to volume fader adjustment, and keep on going with your mix. Without proper leveling of your track, however, you won't know what you'll really need to fix.

You NEED a Spectrum Analyzer

A spectrum analyzer is not a MUST, but it's definitely a huge plus, mainly because it's visual and we as humans love to see what we are doing.

With music, we must be able to listen to what we're doing, but this is another tool to help us detect problems or opportunities in our mixes that you might not be listening to or is just not aware of. For example, you might think your bass is too loud but when you check it in a spectrum analyzer it could be too quiet.



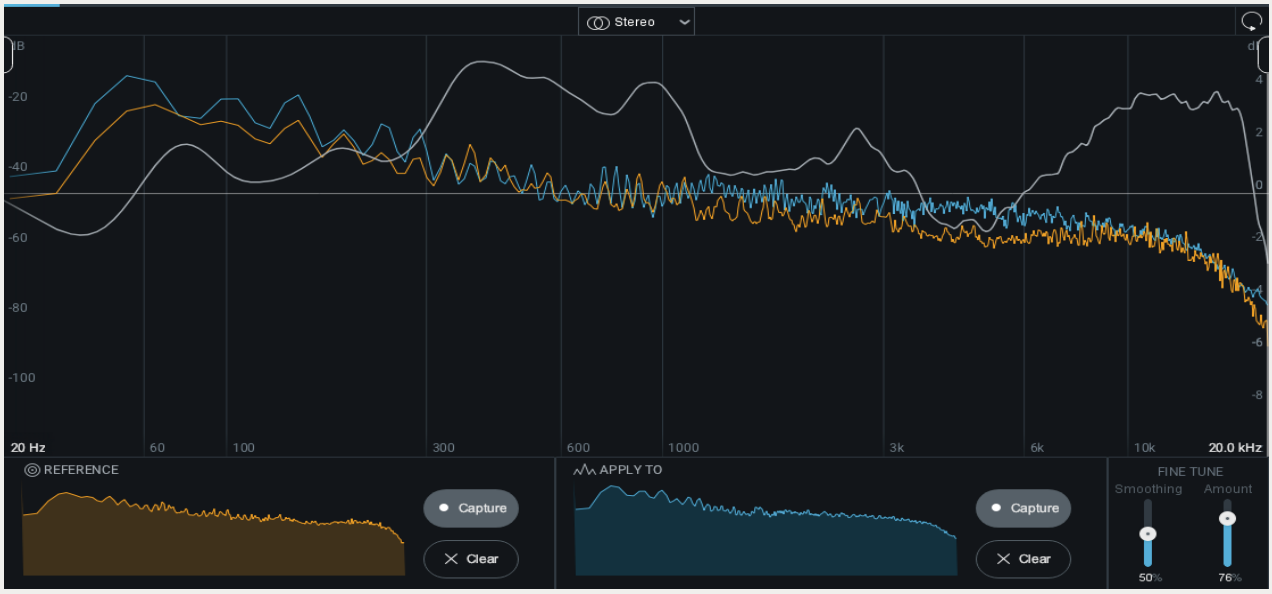
Therefore, using the spectrum can be a resource to validate what you want to do and make sure that what you see is the same as what you want to listen to.

If you use Ableton, I recommend using Ableton's Stock Spectrum and you can grab this preset here. If you're not an Ableton user, you can download Voxengo's Span for FREE.

Referencing Is KEY

There's a lot of information that you can gather from referencing and one of them is mixing. Volume, character, compression, loudness... all these elements, and many more, can be extracted from tracks you like.

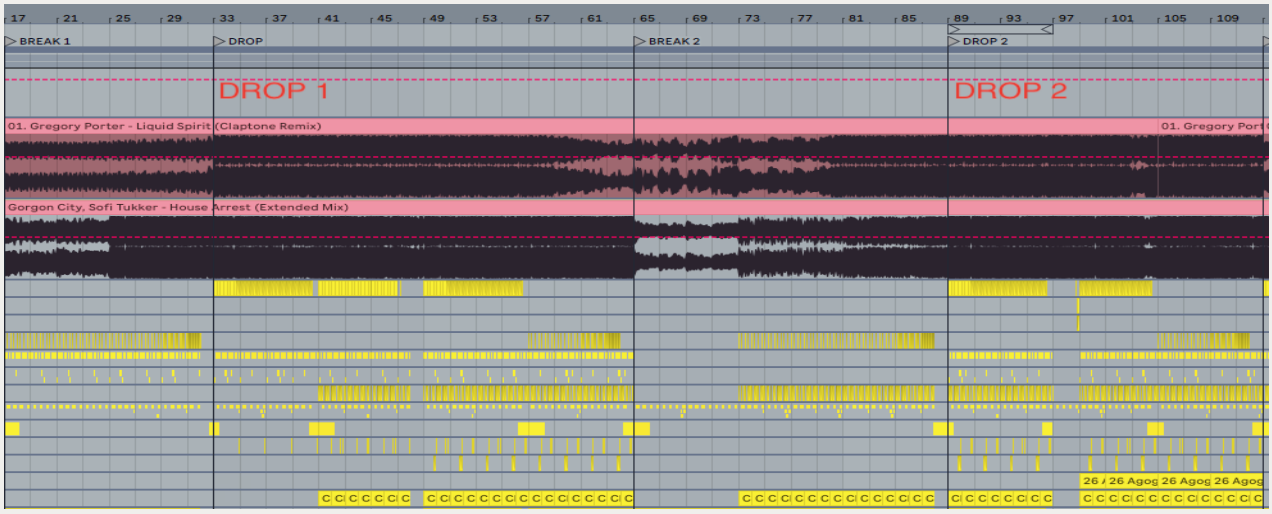
The image below shows, for example, EQ differences between a track with another reference track, and there's a lot you can extract from this in terms of mixing your elements



More importantly, referencing helps you refresh your ears. The more you work on a mix continuously, the more your ears will get used to it and possibly end up tricking you. Listening to something else will refresh your mind and possibly make your ears "unbiased."

To give an example of what referencing is capable of, you can identify the levels in which some parts of the track are playing.

- Pick one or two tunes and put them in channels 1 and 2. Match the reference tracks' structures to your songs: i.e., drop 1 of track one hits at the same time as drop 1 of your track. This will allow you to compare "apples to apples." Check the example below. Do you see how the drops of the two tracks are aligned with the drop of the track I'm producing?



- Put the tracks at the same loudness as yours, but avoid metering tools and use your ears only to match the volumes. They must sound at the same level, but not necessarily at the same 'metering level';
- Pick a spectrum analyzer and compare the loudness of the kick. If your track's kick is 5 dbs quieter, bam, you can correct that. You can view more about this in this video below:

The resources that referencing gives you are infinite, especially when you compare tracks you love with your own track.

Understand Your Reference Tracks

Reference tracks are a given to any producer. You can understand what you should aim for in terms of composition, arrangement, mixing, and mastering decisions with them, but you have to understand your references.

Does your track and the reference have the same arrangement? Is it the same key? What about tonalities? Elements? Genre? Can you compare this reference to your track? First of all, when choosing a reference track, choose a track that is similar in the arrangement because you want to compare apples to apples. Hopefully, they have other similar elements as well.

After that, you have to look for less obvious features like how compressed it is, how loud it is, how bass-heavy it is, is the sidechain more or less intense than mine, etc. This will help you decide whether this is the right track to reference and could help you fine-tune your mix and creation process.

You can read more about this in this post or you can watch this video below:

EQ Matching as a Guide to Where You Need to Go

I first saw EQ Matching on Shanahan's Stars and Moon Walkthrough and this has been the greatest tip I've ever gotten on mixing. If I had to make this ebook with only 3 tips, this would definitely be in it.

EQ Matching is a tool that matches the EQ balance of your track to another reference track. The output of EQ Match tools is "Do this and your track will have the same frequency curve as your reference." However, why not use this as a guide?

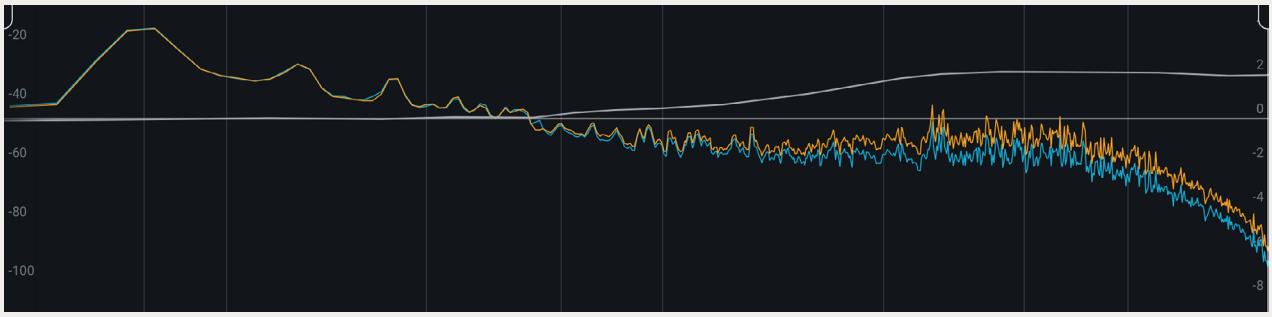
EQ Matching should be used as something that will guide you through your mix, helping you when:

- You're lost about whether boost or lower the chords volume;
- You like the way your track sounds, but want to compare it to other tracks to make sure you're going on the right path, either when creating or doing the final tweaks of the master.

For more on this topic, watch the video below:

EQ Matching Could Mislead if You Don't Listen

When EQ Matching your tracks, you need to not only see what's happening, but also use your ears. Look at the example below, where orange is your reference curve (reference track), blue is your target curve (your track) and white is the curve designed by the EQ Match to match your target curve into the reference.



Now, ask yourself: Do you need to raise the highs of the entire track or just the hit hats? Or maybe it's the chords that need to be boosted? Only by listening to both tracks would you be able to understand what's so loud in the reference track and then apply it to yours.

The problem with EQ Matching is that it doesn't consider these particularities and that's why you have to use it as a guide to later tweak the individual channels or busses. If you only did a boost like this in your master, it might make your chords too high to overcompensate the hi hats being too low, for example.

Avoid the SOLO Button

Your song is a combination of multiple sounds playing together and every element has some relationship with all the other elements in your mix. Therefore, mixing in SOLO will blind you to what you really have to do and may lead to mistakes.

For example, if you're mixing a bass, you have to mix your bass in relationship with the kick, with the mid-bass, and all other elements. If you mix your bass in solo mode, you might even get the best sound from it independently. However, the best sound that you can achieve with it is directly related to all the other elements around it.

Therefore, the best mix is the one that fits all the elements in your song together without problems rather than the best individual sounds alone.

Listen to Your Mix the Next Day

Whenever you're working on a mix or master, give a big time difference between the time you finish and your last check.

After working for more than 1h, especially when mixing and mastering, our ear can get fatigued or biased towards what we've been working on, as said before in point #10. Therefore, a big time difference is necessary to reset our ears fully and make sure we come back to our normal listening standards for the final listen.

I recommend you to wait a day (if possible) between your "finished" and your "let me give a last listen to it". If you can't wait that long, give it a few hours to take your mind off of it completely so you can truly reset your brain and ears.

It's Not a Must to Check Your Mixes on Poor Quality Speaker

I've always heard the "music production truth" that you HAVE to check your song with bad speakers. I even had a mixing and mastering client that made it a priority to listen to my mix and master via SoundCloud on his car. Does it help? Well, possibly it does, but it's not a "must-do." Testing on different sources is valid, but they don't necessarily have to be bad speakers.

The concept behind this is that you listen to your song on speakers that you know inside and out, which could be your main speaker, so you can detect possible mistakes. However, if you have a mixing mistake, you'd probably figure out about them with good speakers rather than bad ones, right?

Honestly, the hard truth is that if your mix sucks in your car, it's because it sucks on your monitors as well. You're just not able to spot this or you don't know your speakers that well. If you have to go to your car to check how a mix sounds, my question to you is: How well do you know your speakers?

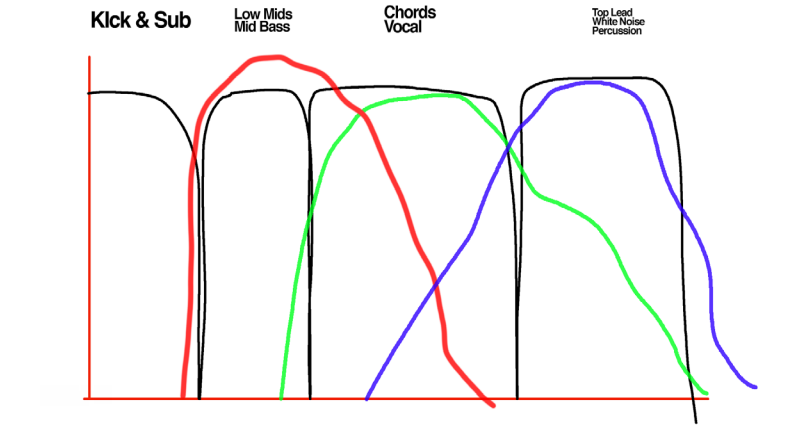
Therefore, instead of saying that you must test on poor quality speakers, I'd say that it's "OK" to test on different sources that you know inside and out, but you need to feel comfortable ONLY mixing in your studio. For more, watch this video:

Creating Space Within A Mix

Don't Overcrowd a Specific Frequency Range

Ever had a track where your drop, which is the loudest part, plays without clipping, but during the break, which is quieter than the drop, it starts clipping? This happens because it may be clipping a specific frequency range.

Even if you have your whole song balanced out, if one frequency range is "out of control," it could not only ruin the sound of your mix, but also make it clip even though the overall song is quieter than others. In the image below, I show an example where the low mids may be louder than what they should be.



Feel Free to CUT and BOOST Your EQs

Everyone says "cut instead of boosting", but I'll say cut as well as boost. Why can't you boost? What is the problem with that?

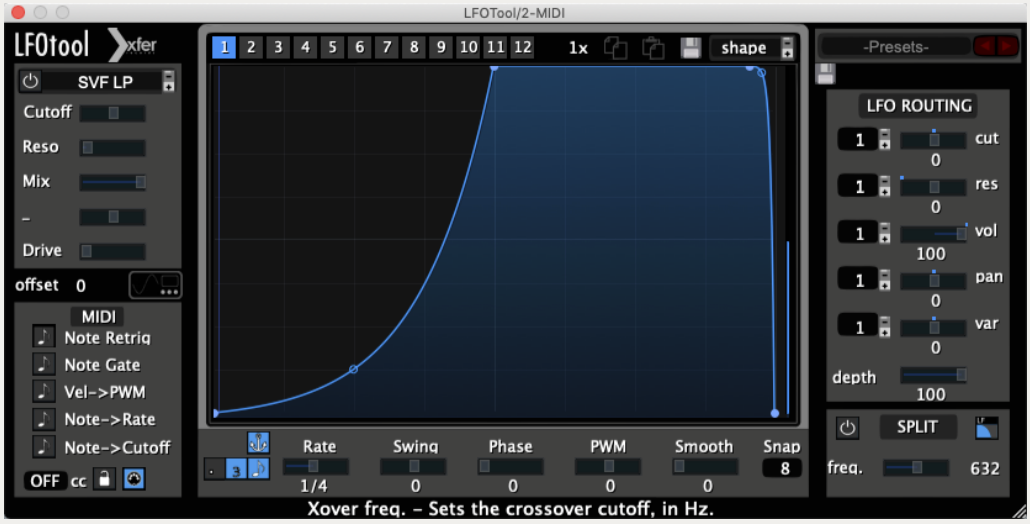
Supposedly, the problem is that you can end up with a sound that is saturated or has resonating frequencies. However, if you cut, you could end up with a sound that is dull. As with any cut/boost, you need to have a purpose for why you're doing it. For example, in my track Stay With Me, my bass processing ended up like this:

In addition to these EQs, I have two Decapitators that are saturating the sound, which happen to boost some frequencies as well, and the EQ speaks for itself on how much I don't care about this "don't boost, cut" rule and why you shouldn't as well. If you have a reason for what you're doing, feel free to do it.

Sidechain Your Elements Properly

If you get your sidechaining right, you not only enhance the flow of your track, but also enhance the mix of your track. For example:

- You probably sidechain your bass to make room for your kick, but do you sidechain the kick to make room for the bass?
- Do you sidechain the transient of the snare to make room for the transient of the kick?
- Why do you sidechain the chords? Do you need it or do you want to do it?
- When working with vocals, do you sidechain them as much, more or less than chords?



These are just examples of how many other elements other than your bass are affected by sidechain. Sidechaining is as much of a decision as any other plugin you add to your chain. Since it affects your sounds as equally as any other plugin, you should pay attention to each instance of sidechain you add to your project.

If you want a full guide on mixing your low end properly with sidechain, take a look at our low-end ebook in our free downloads section.

Get Your Low End to Sit Tight

There's nothing more boring than a song with no low end. Get your low end to sit tight in your mix and 50% of your mix is done. This will not fix a bad song, but it can give power to your track and make it more engaging.

Your low end is your kick and your bass, and maybe some other percussion, but most likely is kick and bass. When we dive deep into bass, we have our first octave (40-80hz roughly), which consists of the sub, and we have the second octave (80-160hz roughly). Now, consider the elements' level, sidechain, and sound design to mix it properly.

If you want to go more in-depth about this topic, download Abstrakt's Low End Mixing Checklist. In addition, you can watch this video below:

Place Elements in the Correct Position in the Stereo Field

Along with the frequency spectrum, you can always use the stereo spectrum to create a differentiation between elements.

Even though elements might play in the same frequency, you could differentiate them by placing them in stereo or in mono. They don't necessarily need to be fully stereo and fully mono, but place their core position as stereo or mono.

To make sure what goes in stereo and what goes in mono, I always like to think about the role that elements play in the track. Main elements (kick, bass, chords, top leads, vocal) would play fully in mono (kick, bass) and sometimes also in stereo (chords, top leads, vocals). If it's not a main element, try placing it in stereo (hit hats, white noise, background arps).

To make the elements wider, you can check this video:

A bad version of a mix, therefore, could have the same level as a good version of a mix, but with totally different loudnesses.

Mixing And Mastering

Louder Is Not Always Better

The loudness war got a break since major platforms started to normalize the loudness in LUFS. However, there is a huge understanding gap between level and loudness, and here is where the confusion lies.

Level is an objective electrical measurement (SPL, RMS) while loudness is a perceptual and subjective measurement that varies according to many aspects. Tracks with similar levels may have different loudnesses and this majorly relies on the way they were both mixed.

Therefore, this misconception starts with a poor mix. When you don't correct "problems" in your mix (for example, in your low end), you won't be able to push your track as loud as if these problems were corrected, and these problems sum up. The more issues you have, the less loudness you'll have, but this does not mean that you can't get the track at a high volume level.

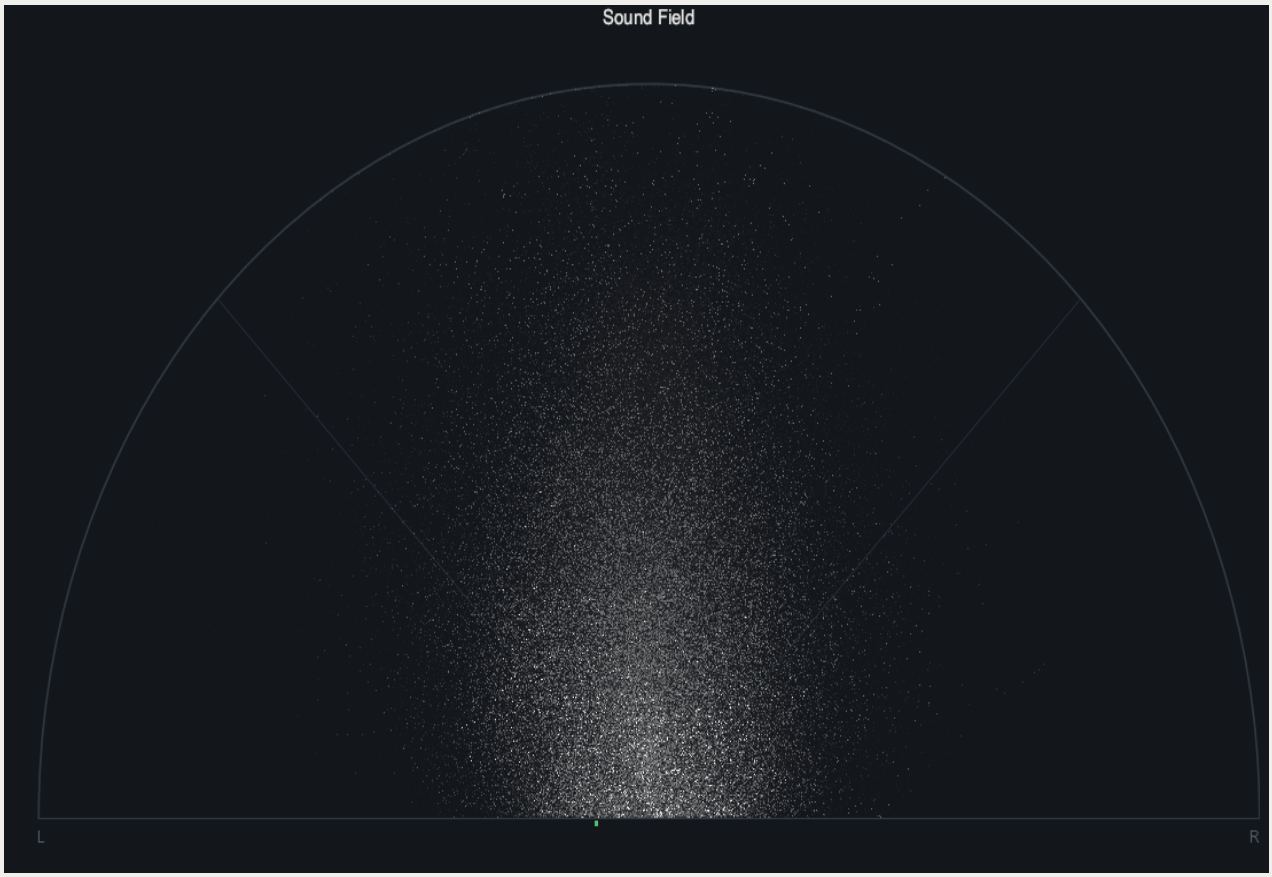
Make Sure Your Track Is Mono Compatible

Electronic music is a genre that explores the stereo field prominently, but you can't forget to check if your song is mono-compatible, due to how many people will listen to your track like that.

Therefore, listen to all the sections of your track (drop 1, break, drop 2, etc) while in stereo and in mono. If you can, toggle mono/stereo while you listen multiple times.

When toggling between mono and stereo, you're checking if the power of your song is the same in mono as it is in stereo. A couple of things that could come up when doing these tests:

- If your bass sounds less interesting while in mono, there could be an issue.
- Assuming you have chords, if your chords sound less interesting in mono, make a mono chord layer to boost this mono section, etc.



The idea here is that your song needs to sound as good in mono as it does in stereo. By constantly checking this, you can avoid sounding amazing in stereo, but weak and empty in mono, which is the setup of many cheap phones, nightclubs, and some Bluetooth speakers.

Don't Make Your Master Below 130hz Mono

This concept is not wrong per se, but there is a better way to do it. Almost all the things you do in your master could be done during your mixing process. So, let's think about elements below a variable frequency instead of a fixed frequency.

The phrase " must mono everything below 100hz" has one wrong concept. Why 100hz? What if the song had a bass progression that went from 80 to 130hz? Would only half of it be in mono? So, you must ensure mono is standardized up to a certain point, not a set frequency.

Let's say we've detected that the frequency is 140hz. If you know that the only elements that have content below 140hz are your kick, your bass, and possibly your second octave, why not make these elements mono directly in their channels?

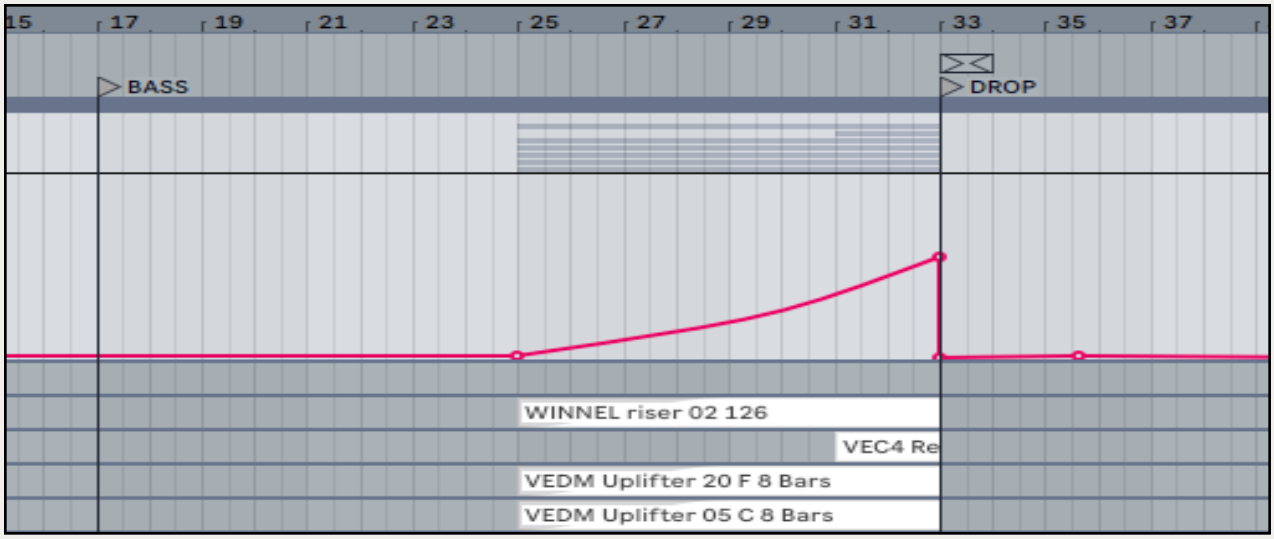
You can check more about this in my Low End Mixing Guide or in this video:

The Build-up Low-End Effect

Whenever you have a build-up to a drop, or a big pause within a drop section, consider filtering the low end right before the drop hits again. This creates a sense of a bigger impact on your drops, even though you're not touching them directly.

Our brains perceive differences a lot better than similarities as a defense mechanism and the same happens with music. Therefore, if we do an automation filtering he bass of our tracks right before big impact moments, we enhance the bass volume difference between the build-up and the drop, which creates an impression of a bigger impact.

You can do this with any low end filter or by automating any low cut within an EQ. Look at the image below to see how you can do this:

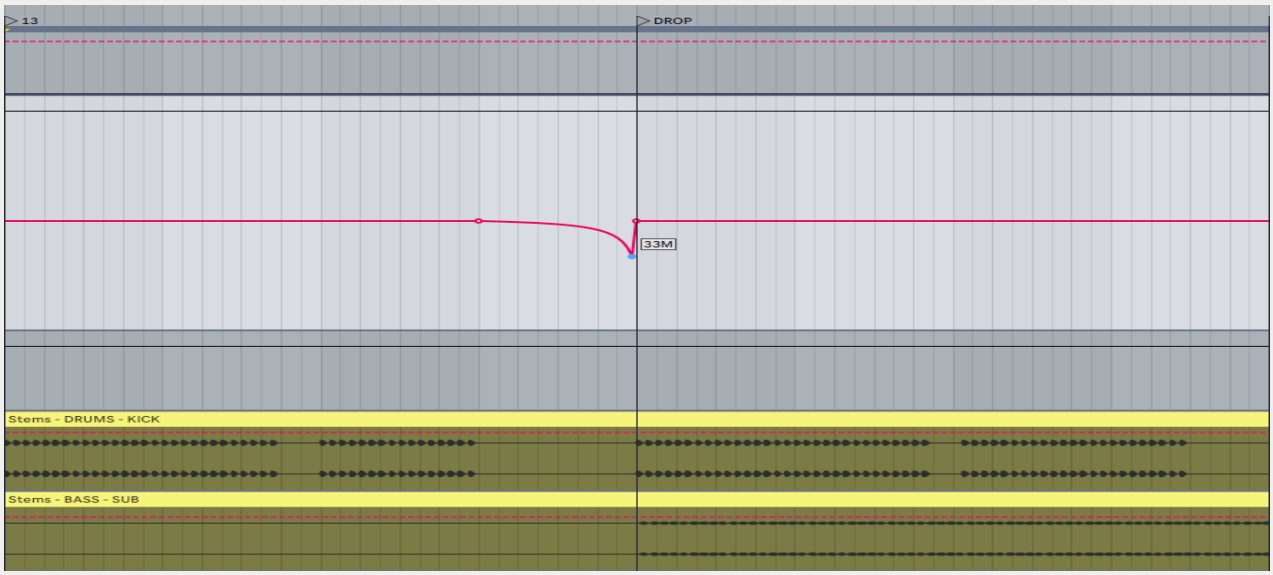


However, beware to not be too aggressive with this or you can kill the energy of the build-up. If you doubt how much you can cut, check reference tracks.

The Build-up Mono/Stereo Effect

When we make our build-up a bit more mono towards the end, our drop is perceived as being a lot wider. This is not because we're actually making the drop wider, but again, we're fooling brains into perceiving that it's wider.

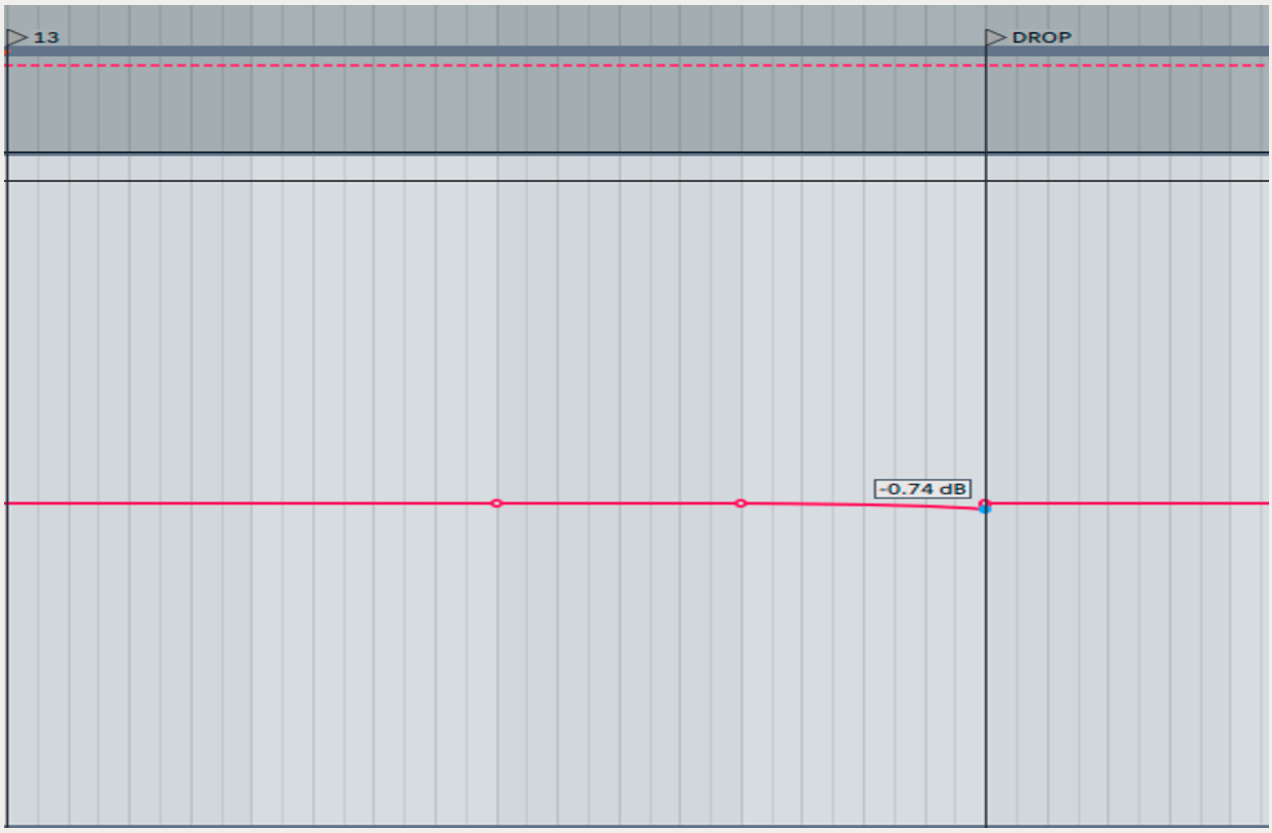
As we did with the bass cut, automate your mono/stereo filter to diminish the stereo volume as the drop approaches. Again, test it out, and don't be overly aggressive with this trick since being too intense might change the energy of the build-up and could have a negative effect on your track. Look at the picture below to see how I do this:



From 0 to 100% mono, I made my track 33% mono right close to the drop, and back to 0% when the drop hits. Notice how the automation returns to 0% much less abruptly than with the low-end trick I just showed you.

The Build-up Volume Effect

The last build-up effect is the volume effect. Similar to all two previous tricks, you're automating the volume of the track right before the drop comes so when it does, the perceived impact is much greater. You can do this simply by automating the volume, like in the example below:



I don't normally go as far as a -0.8 db automation, meaning it's just a slight addition of impact, but the amount varies from track to track. However, at the same time, the guy who corrected this ebook says he normally goes up to -2db so, again, there are no rules here. There are two things to pay attention to though:

- This might not be necessary according to how you mixed your track and how loud each section is. So, always test with and without it.

- Big volume differences are not perceived well and it could cause a negative effect if you're too aggressive with this effect.

You can watch this and trick 21 in this video below:

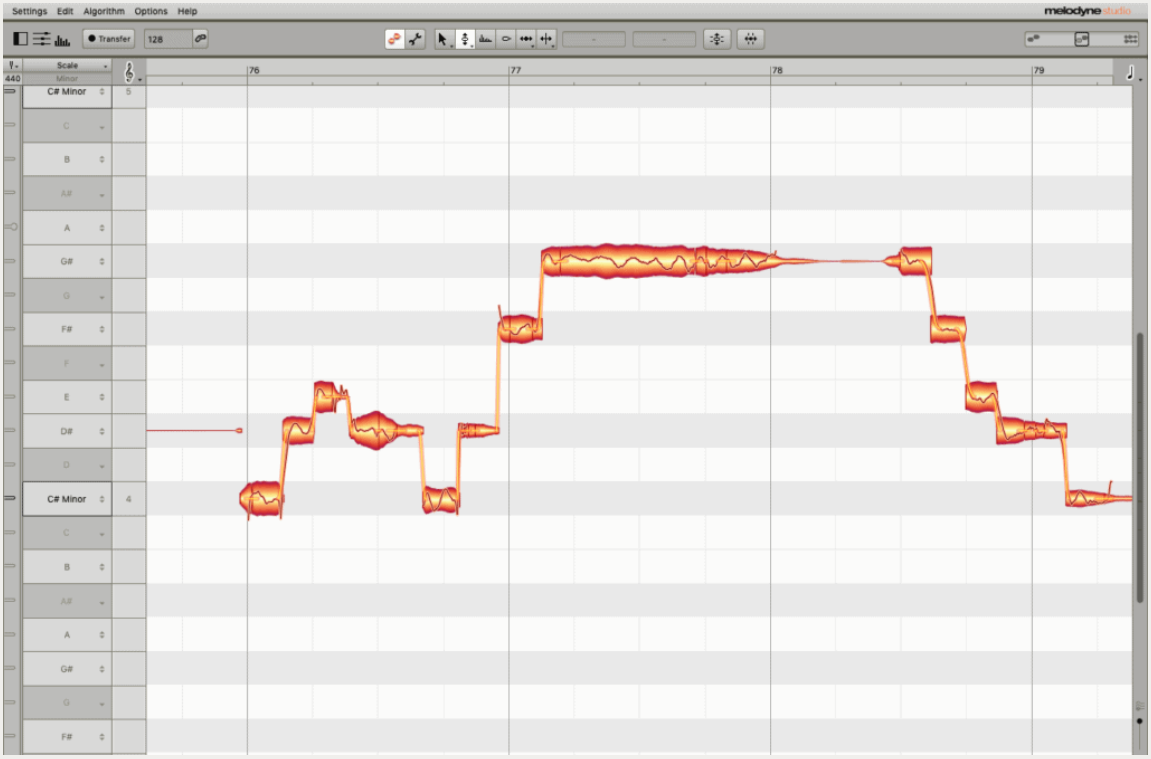
Vocals

Vocal Needs to Be in Key With Your Track

If you're mixing the vocals yourself, make sure it is in key with your track.

After receiving and compiling (aka comping) your vocals, make sure you run your vocal through plugins like Melodyne, Auto-tune, iZotope Nectar, or any plugin that corrects the vocalists' pitch.

Melodyne is more precise, but takes a bit more time, while automatic plugins like Auto-Tune or Nectar are faster, but could be problematic with a few notes. You can read more about this in this post.



Compress the Vocal, but Don't Over-Compress It

We want a steady vocal for your tracks, but it is really easy to let yourself go and overcompress. When you do this, you kill the dynamics of the vocal, which could make it boring to the listener.

When I compress vocals, I normally use two compressors in series, and both compress around 2-6dB, mainly in a 4:1 ratio. At the same time that I'm squashing the vocals a bit to make them more even, I'm allowing room for some dynamics, which feels more natural to listeners than if I was compressing 13 dB all at once.

You Need Static and Automated Delays

When mixing a vocal, don't just add one set of delays and be done. It's important to have automated delays and possibly reverbs to compliment some static delays, which will give more movement and energy to your vocal.

Normally, you'll have a standard set of delays applied to your vocal. However, since these are static throughout the track, they fill the spatial purpose more than anything. They are there to give the vocals more space along with reverb.

After that, automate your additional delays according to the energy of the track, when more energetic parts could have a wetter signal. Check how you can do this in this video below:

You Don't Need a De-esser to De-ess

You don't need a de-esser to achieve the de-esser effect. You don't even need a plugin for that.

On the latest version of Melodyne, a module was introduced to get the sibilance from vocals reduced by just turning their volume down. Applying the same

principle, you can de-ess your vocals by just turning them down in volume. My recommendation is to test both and see what gives you the best result.

The benefit of using a de-esser is that de-essers are automatic. It perceives when there is a sibilance by adjusting the frequency range of these sibilances. When using Melodyne (or doing it manually), you'd have to manually lower each sibilance individually.

A way of doing this with a free plugin is with the dynamic EQ TDR NOVA, which you can get here. Check this video below to see how:

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