

10 – Creative Effects Exercise

Creative Effects

Creative effects encompass a broad category of techniques that include the creative application of common effects like EQ, reverb, compression, and delay, as well modulation-based processing such as flange, chorus, phase shifting, pitch shifting, harmonizing, auto-pan, tremolo, and vibrato. Examples of the creative application of common processors include using an EQ to heavily band-pass an element so it sounds telephonic, using a large amount of reverb and/or delay at the end of a vocal phrase to create a dramatic wash of sound, or using a heavy amount of compression to create a noticeable pumping effect.

Overall, creative effects should be used with a specific artistic goal in mind. Some mixes do not require the use of any creative effects whatsoever. For instance, this could be the case where the arrangement and music alone are compelling and such obvious alterations of the source material may not be appropriate for the genre (e.g. traditional folk, classical, or bluegrass). In other genres such as EDM, shoegaze, hyperpop, and post rock, a liberal application of creative effect processing is common and required to fit the genre.

Overview

Use the provided multitrack recording, a cover of “bloodstream” by indie-rock artist Soccer Mommy, to practice your skills using creative effects. While the purpose of the exercise is to focus on creative effects specifically, you may also use any other processing you deem necessary to achieve a quality result (such as a standard application of equalizers, compressors, etc.). However, the majority of the time you spend on this exercise should be with creative effects.

The musical arrangement of this song is fairly simple. The recording techniques used are unadorned by additional effects like delay, chorus, and reverb. To create more interest for the listener, experiment with a variety of creative effects. You may need to audition many effects on different sources before you choose which ones sound best. Your final mix should feature at least 2-3 creative effects (or more if you deem appropriate). The mix does not need to sound like the original recording as long as you can justify your choices with artistic goals (e.g. to create more motion in the guitar part, to create a thicker vocal texture, etc.). Make sure that your decisions add interest for the listener rather than distract from important elements like the lead vocal.

Guidelines

1. Before starting to mix, come up with a plan for your approach to this exercise by using what you have learned about creative effects from your readings and class instruction. Listen to all the tracks provided and take notes of: 1) any problems you hear, 2) your best guess as to how to fix these problems, and 3) what you would like your final mix to sound like. *Be prepared to discuss your mix approach in class after handing in your assignment.*
2. Focus on using creative effects. The primary purpose of this exercise is to improve your skill with creative effects.

3. You may use any plugins you like for this exercise. A creative application of stock DAW plugins will be enough to succeed on this exercise, but if you would like to explore plugins outside of stock plugins please feel free to do so.
4. Apply any processing as necessary to achieve a polished and professional product (e.g. EQ, compression, etc.). You may use standard applications of processors as we have practiced in all our previous exercises in addition to creative applications of any processors you deem appropriate.

Initial Deliverables

Please deliver the following in one parent folder entitled “**LastName_CreativeEffects v1.**” Upload this folder and share it with your instructor.

1. Pro Tools session of your mix. Label the session name with your last name and “v1”.
2. Make sure the “Audio Files” folder in the Pro Tools session includes only newly created audio files. The original files included in the exercise should be deleted for delivery to the instructor. Please note that you will want to keep a copy of the session with the original audio files for your own records and for future revisions.
3. 48kHz sample rate and 24 bit interleaved stereo .WAV file bounce of your final mix.

First Mix Attempt - Rubric

| <i>Criteria</i> | <i>Overall quality of mix</i> | <i>All materials submitted as requested</i> | <i>Followed exercise guidelines</i> | <i>Focused on the assigned mixing technique</i> |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Points Allotted</i> | 2 points | 1 point | 1 point | 1 point |
| <i>Guidelines for full points</i> | Your mix features an appropriate application of at least 2-3 creative effects which create more interest for the listener without distracting from the foundation of the song. | All materials are properly labelled, all original audio files are deleted in Pro Tools session, and final mix delivered at proper specifications. | Product delivered is well-organized and professional in presentation. | It is clear that a significant amount of effort was put into using creative effects in the exercise. |

Revision Process

To simulate a real-world mixing process better, and to help you to continue improving your skills using creative effects, this mixing exercise will go through one round of revisions between the instructor and student. In the professional realm, it is very common for clients to listen to the initial mix and provide the mixing engineer with notes for revisions.

After you have submitted your initial mix to the instructor, they will provide you with notes regarding their thoughts on your mix, including what you did well and areas for improvement. Come up with a plan to address the instructor’s concerns before starting your revisions. This could

be a simple checklist of the revisions you need to complete or a general brainstorm of what techniques you might use during your revisions. Coming up with a plan will help you stay focused and address the instructor's concerns.

Once you are finished revising the exercise, closely listen to the results of your work and write a brief paragraph about your experience. In your written reflection, outline any difficulties you encountered while mixing. Compare your initial impressions and goals for your mix with the actual process of mixing and the final result. Did you fully or partially achieve your goal for what you wanted your final mix to sound like? Were you able to address all of the instructor's revision notes? Were there any particular revision notes that you struggled with and why?

As the mix engineer, it is your job to provide the instructor (the client in this scenario) with one updated version of this mixing exercise with the below deliverables.

Revision Deliverables

Please deliver the following in one parent folder entitled "**LastName_CreativeEffects v2.**" Upload this folder and share it with your instructor.

1. Pro Tools session of your revised mix addressing the instructor's concerns. Label the session name with your last name and "v2".
2. Make sure the "Audio Files" folder in the Pro Tools session includes only newly created audio files. Please note that you may want to keep a copy of the session with the original audio files for your own records.
3. One Word Doc or PDF of your written reflection notes for your revised exercise. This document should include a brief paragraph and be no longer than one page maximum (shorter is fine).
4. 48kHz sample rate and 24 bit interleaved stereo .WAV file bounce of your revised mix.

Second Mix Attempt - Rubric

| <i>Criteria</i> | Addressed revisions | All materials submitted as requested | Followed exercise guidelines | Focused on the assigned mixing technique |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Points Allotted</i> | 2 points | 1 point | 1 point | 1 point |
| <i>Guidelines for full points</i> | Your mix addressed all or almost all of the instructor's concerns regarding revisions. | All materials are properly labelled, all original audio files are deleted in Pro Tools session, and final mix delivered at proper specifications. | Word Doc or PDF included with written reflection. Product delivered is well-organized and professional in presentation. | It is clear that a significant amount of effort was put into using creative effects in the exercise. |