

9 – Drum Editing Exercise

Drum Editing

It is not uncommon in modern recordings to reinforce or replace drum tracks with samples of prerecorded drum hits. This is done in scenarios when the original drum recording quality is poor or lacking, when the drum tones captured do not match the aesthetic of the song, when more dynamic consistency is needed from the drum performance, and/or when more impact is needed from the drums even when the original drum recording provided is outstanding. Learning how to seamlessly meld drum samples with provided drum tracks in a way that sounds organic and appropriate for the song is an important skill enabling you to deliver consistent mixes with professional sounding drums. Quality drums are essential for top-tier mixes.

Overview

Use the provided multitrack recording to practice your skills with drum editing and mixing. While the purpose of the exercise is to focus on drum editing and mixing specifically, you will need to mix and process other instruments to achieve a good result overall. However, editing and mixing the drum recording should be the bulk of the time you spend on this exercise.

The included cover of Taylor Swift’s “All Too Well” was recorded in MTSU’s Studio D and B. The drum selection, tuning, and preparation for the recording was inappropriate for this style of pop music. It is your job to create a powerful drum mix from these recordings that adds to the punch and impact of the arrangement rather than detracts from the aesthetic of the song. This may include reinforcing or replacing these drum recordings using samples.

Guidelines

1. Before starting to mix, come up with a plan for your approach to this exercise by using what you have learned about drum mixing 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 drum mixing. The primary purpose of this exercise is to improve your drum mixing skills.
3. You may use any plugins you like for this exercise. While stock plugins and manual techniques are able to deliver quality results for drum editing and mixing, you may be able to achieve quality results faster with third-party plugins.
4. Apply any processing as necessary to achieve a polished and professional product (e.g. EQ, compression, etc.). You should process tracks other than the drums to make sure the entire mix sounds excellent.

Initial Deliverables

Please deliver the following in one parent folder entitled “**LastName_DrumEditing 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>	Overall quality of mix	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>	The drum mix is punchy, well-balanced and matches the aesthetic of the song. The drums do not sound artificial or overly processed.	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 drum editing in the exercise.

Revision Process

To simulate a real-world mixing process better, and to help you to continue improving your skills with drum editing and mixing, this 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_DrumEditing 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 drum editing in the exercise.