

Cubase mixing workbook

Gain staging and a static balance, subtractive EQ and honest compression in the Channel Strip, then two shared reverbs that create real depth.

Gain staging, MixConsole and a static balance

Lesson 04 · 15 min

Before a single plugin: get the levels sane. Aim for each track peaking around -12 to -10 dBFS with the master under -6 dBFS, using the Pre-Gain field in the MixConsole channel strip rather than the fader. Faders are for balance; pre-gain is for feeding plugins the level they were designed for.

Then build a static mix — no automation, no processing — by pulling faders until the song sounds right with nothing moving. Most 'mixing problems' are balance problems in disguise, and they are free to fix at this stage.

DO THIS

- 01 Set every fader to 0.0 and use Pre-Gain so each track peaks near -12 dBFS.
- 02 Insert a metering plugin on the stereo out and keep true peak under -6 dBFS.
- 03 Balance in this order: kick, bass, lead vocal or lead instrument, drums, then everything else.
- 04 Save the project as 'static mix' before touching EQ — it is the version you return to when you get lost.

Check yourself — Turn the monitors quiet. If the balance still reads at low volume, the balance is right.

EQ and compression in the Channel Strip

Lesson 05 · 16 min

Cubase's Channel Strip has everything most mixes need: gate, compressor, EQ, tools, saturation and limiter, in a fixed order you can reshuffle. Using it instead of six third-party plugins keeps the CPU down and, more importantly, keeps your decisions few.

Work subtractively. High-pass what does not need lows, cut the frequency that annoys you, then only boost broadly if the part still feels dull. Compression comes after EQ here: set the ratio first (3:1 for most things), then lower the threshold until you see 3–4 dB of reduction on the loudest phrases.

DO THIS

- 01 High-pass everything except kick and bass, from 80 Hz on big sources up to 200 Hz on hats and air parts.
- 02 Sweep a narrow +6 dB boost to find the boxy band (usually 250–450 Hz), then cut it 2–4 dB with a wider Q.
- 03 Compress the vocal: ratio 3:1, attack 10 ms, release 80 ms, threshold set for 3–4 dB reduction, makeup to match bypass level.
- 04 Sidechain the bass compressor to the kick with a short release so the low end breathes instead of fighting.

Make it yours — Bypass every processor and A/B against your static mix. If the processed version is not clearly better at matched loudness, undo it.

Buses, sends and depth: reverb, delay and width

Lesson 06 · 14 min

Depth comes from shared spaces, not from a reverb on every channel. Build two FX channels — a short plate for close instruments and a longer hall for the far ones — and send to them. Two rooms make a coherent picture; twelve individual reverbs make mud.

Width is the same discipline. Pan hard rather than at 30%, keep everything below roughly 120 Hz in the middle, and use the MixConsole's stereo tools rather than a widener on the master.

DO THIS

- 01 Add two FX channels: REV SHORT (plate, 0.8 s) and REV LONG (hall, 2.2 s), each with a high-pass at 300 Hz on the return.
- 02 Send drums and vocal to the short plate; send pads and ear-candy to the long hall.
- 03 Add a DELAY FX channel with the delay time synced to 1/8 dotted and feed only the vocal.
- 04 Pan doubles hard left and right, keep the lead and the bass centred, and check mono with the MixConsole mono button.

Check yourself — Collapse to mono. If the vocal disappears or the width vanishes into a phasey smear, back off the widening and re-check the doubles.

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Pre-gain set so tracks peak near -12 dBFS
- ☐ Static balance saved as its own project version
- ☐ High-pass on everything except kick and bass
- ☐ One subtractive EQ cut per problem, no rescue boosts
- ☐ Two shared reverb buses, not per-channel reverbs
- ☐ Mono check passed