CONVERTING STEREO PROJECTS TO DOLBY ATMOS

Hi Everyone,

Here's a *very* basic guide on how to convert your existing *'stereo'* project into a Dolby Atmos project. This is a 'quick start' guide intended to get you up and running, but by no means the definitive handbook on Dolby Atmos. There's tons of resources online and also a heap of great videos to get you going. A favorite video of mine can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4ah4-jcCIg&t=1714s

There are two methods to bring your current stereo project into the Atmos world, and this document outlines both.

Method 1.
STEM METHOD

This method is possibly the simplest way to do things for most newcomers.
It essentially involves bouncing multiple stems from your existing stereo project and then simply spatialising (panning) them in a new Dolby Atmos project.
You still need to set up all your routing as described in method 2, however it means that you need to do nothing else as all your stems are printed with FX and are ready to go.

PROS
Straight forward. No more audio processing needed. Possibly the biggest advantage of this method is the fact that if you don't have an Atmos rig, the stems can be handed off to someone else to spatialise.

CONS
The stereo FX are printed into the stems, allowing no further tailoring for the Dolby Atmos environment.
It also takes time to print off all the stems.

<u>Method 2</u>.
SESSION DATA METHOD

No doubt this is the more comprehensive and technically correct way of converting your current stereo project. This method entails exporting the session data from the existing stereo project into a new 7.1.4 project.

1) Firstly, ensure you have purchased and installed the Dolby Atmos suite
2) Create a 'new project' within ProTools
3) Change your playback engine to 'Dolby Audio Bridge'. (this connects ProTools to the Dolby Renderer)
4) Change your Buss & Output settings via your I/O menu.

Below is a routing example of a 'mono' object project. Your 'Output' page should look similar to the picture below, with the 'Bed' occupying channels 1-10, followed by 'Object' channels 11 -128.

5) After having created the above outputs, the busses will be created automatically and named for the outputs with Mapping to Output already set in the Bus tab.
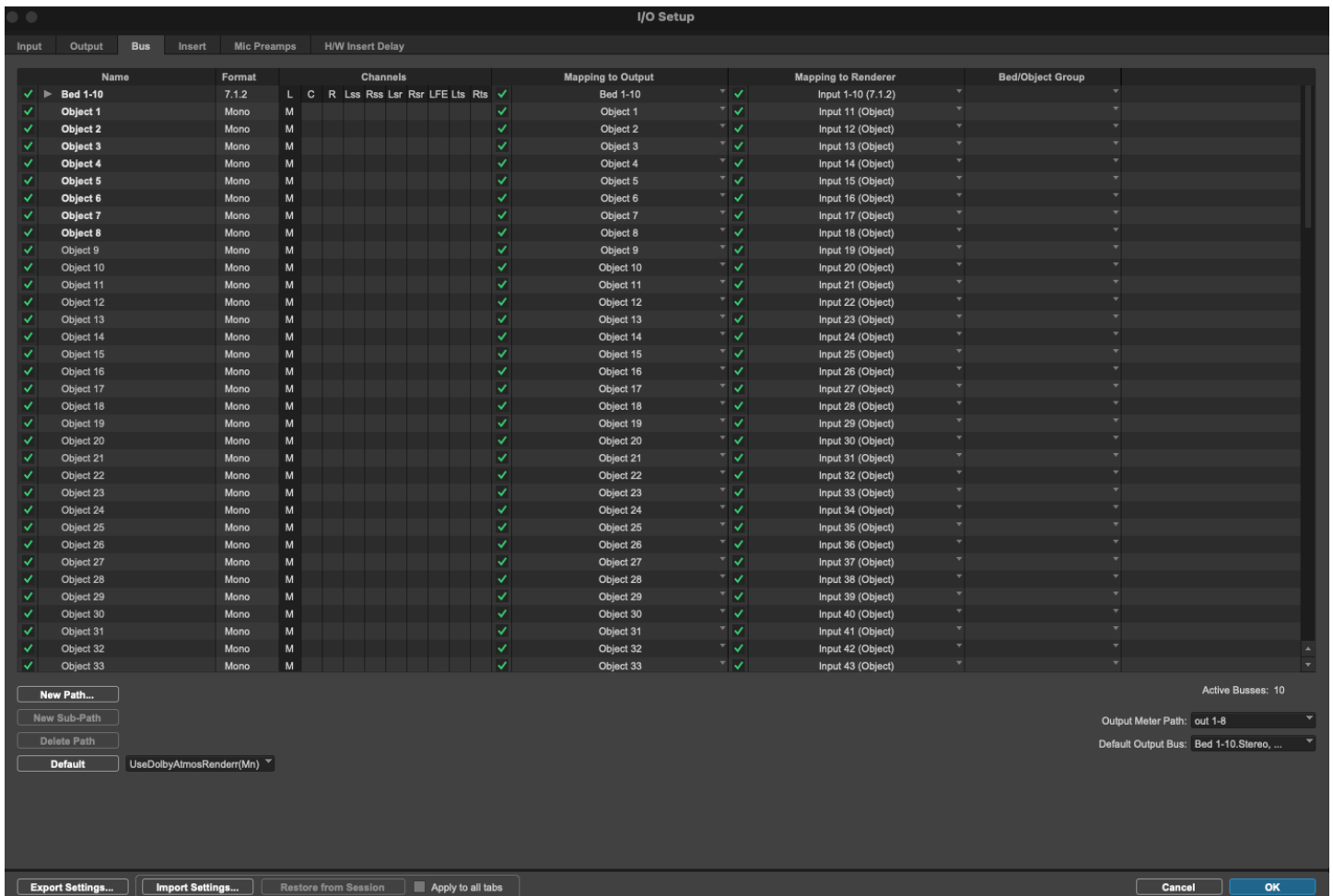
6) Save the above i/o settings as your 'Dolby Atmos template

7) Export your 'session data' from your stereo project into this newly formed Atmos project.

8) Route all tracks to objects;

9) Create a mono AUX track on output channel '129' for Time Code (LTC)
(n.b If you import the Dolby Atmos template in the Buss part of the i/o it automatically sets up LTC buss at output 129)

10) Use the ProTools panner to spatialise your tracks in the immersive environment.

11) Adjust FX processors, such as reverbs and delays to perform more accurately in this immersive environment. De-correlate stereo FX so they act more independently with their associated objects. Alternatively with this method, you can swap out existing stereo FX plugins and use dedicated Dolby atmos FX processors.

PROS
The FX are not baked into the audio, hence allowing the engineer to tailor and customise reverbs etc in a 7.1.4 environment
Allows the implementation of purpose built, Dolby Atmos FX plugins. Overall this method has more customisation and flexibility than the stem method and allows a better integration of your stereo project into the Dolby Atmos environment.

CONS
Possibly a little more work for the uninitiated as there is additional work to do in regards to re-working stereo FX etc.

I hope this gets you up and running in no time and having fun with this amazing new format.

Joe Carra.

Many thanks to Zac Camm and Michael Carpenter for reading over this and making sure I hadn't stuffed it up too badly.