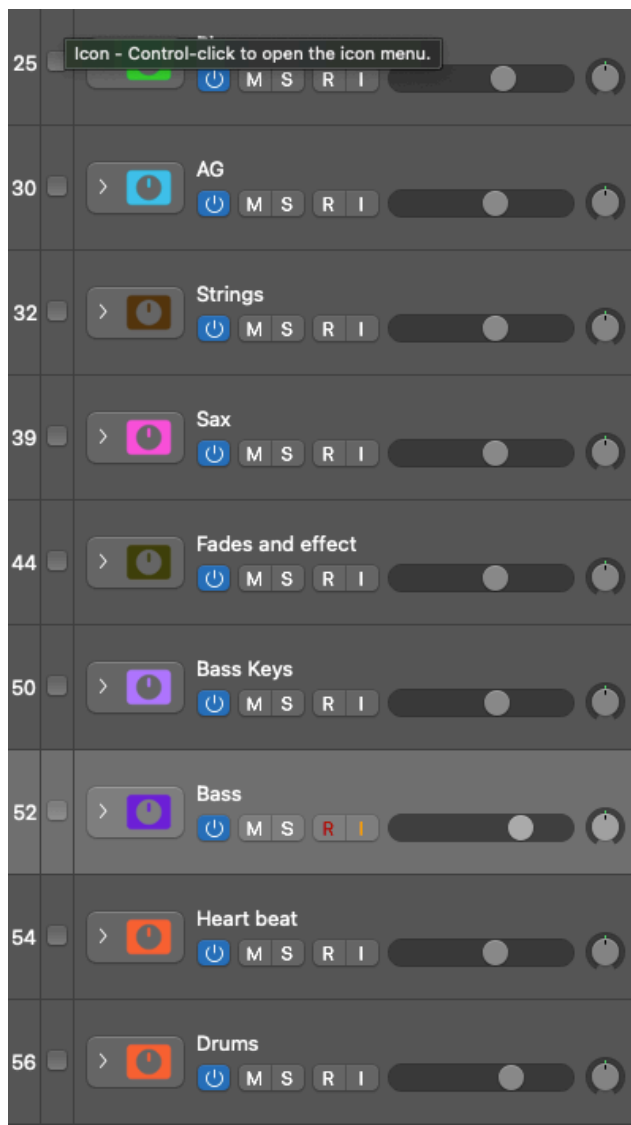


8 Steps to a great mix

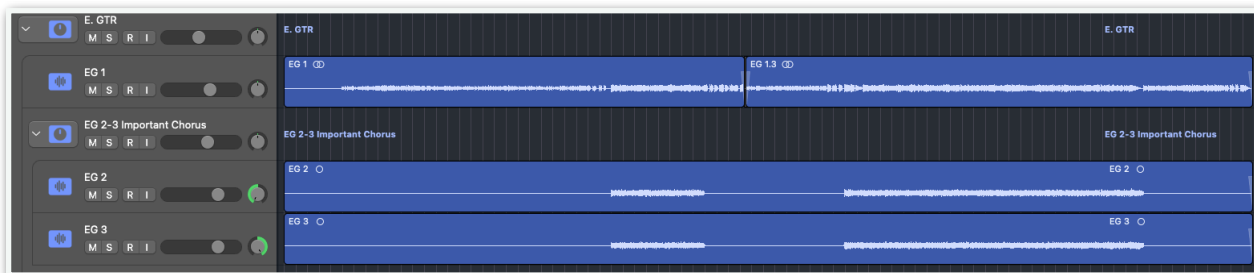
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1. Prepare your session. The best way to have an organized session by creating buses. Each instrument group as it's own bus. Example: All drum tracks are directed to a bus that you may call DRUMS. All acoustic guitars are directed to a bus that you may call AG, etc....In Logic Pro, buses are called "Stacks". It's also a great practice to give each bus a colour so it makes it easy for you to identify the instrument you are looking for. . For me, drums are red, AG are light blue, EG are dark blue, Bass is purple, Piano is light green, keys are dark green, lead vocal (VOX) is always orange and BGV (background vocal and harmonies) are always yellow, etc...Some engineer will put all keys on a bus, for me, I prefer pianos to have their own bus and strings also.

There is no wrong practices, you setup you instruments to your liking.



2. Identify the lead tracks by looking at the wave forms. Those tracks are usually instruments that play most part of the song. Example



That way, it's easier to mix. You start raising level of the lead tracks first then you do the rest. Makes sense so far?

3. **Before you start step 3, it is recommended that you mix the tracks listening to the full song. Make each track fit in the song. Mixing them in “Solo” mode can slow down the mixing process.** Do the raw mix or what we also call the static mix. Note: I work with Logic Pro, since all audio tracks are often recorded at different levels, Logic Pro has a feature called “Normalize levels on all tracks”. I normally normalize them at -10db so none of them peak. Your DAW may have this option. This first mix involves raising levels, panning and fixing issues. At this stage, it doesn't involve dynamics like EQ and compression. Start by mixing the buses. This is what we call top down mixing. A lot of times, if the tracks are well recorded, mixing the buses will get you close to a great sounding mix. If an individual track needs level adjustment, you can go underneath the hood (inside the bus) and adjust it to your liking.

4. Listen to the full song and take notes on what you feel might need adjustment. After, you can use levels only to make the changes. Then

emphasize every section of the song. Intro, verses, bridges, chorus, ending. Example, maybe increasing the level of the piano in the chorus will make it stand out. Makes sense ? Remember, we are keeping things simple.

5. Gain stage each section using automation. Some engineers will do this later in the mixing process but I do it at this stage, you'll thank me later, trust me. After all sections have been emphasized using levels only, your mix should sound amazing. Remember that you did not apply any dynamics (EQ, compression) at this stage. If the song has been well recorded, you could actually master it.

6. Start adding dynamics which involves EQ and compression to the buses if needed. Not all tracks need compression, sometimes they are better left alone. As for EQ, often you will use it for high pass filter or low pass filter. You will also use it to remove mud, boxiness, harshness, boost or tame low and high end of the frequency spectrum. A good practice is to have each track in their respective frequency range to avoid conflicts. If the tracks have been properly recorded, the artist already chose the instruments accordingly to facilitate the mixing process. Example: Bass guitar ranges from 40Hz to 400Hz, if you include harmonics it goes up to 4KHz. When you use compression or EQ, it is very important that the levels you have set above at step 5 don't change. Why, because you already had a great sounding mix with the levels you have set at the static mix level. Use the output gains of the plugins to make sure levels remain the same. (Called gain staging)

7. Add spatial effects like reverb, delays, etc.. to taste. It is also important to not change the levels, so adjust outputs accordingly. Remember that no effects will solve a problem that you heard at step 3. Effects are ornaments in your Xmas tree to make your mix stand out.

8. Grab a note pad, listen to the full mix and take notes on what you feel needs adjusting. After you are done listening, take your notes and do the changes. After, listen to the full song again taking some notes and repeat the process. It is recommended to take breaks before repeating so that you always have fresh ears. I did not believe this when I started but trust me, it is a fact. After you have listened to the song and you did not write any notes. Bounce the song and have a listen on different devices because you might bring up some notes. When all of this is done and you

have no more notes, congratulations, you have completed your mix. Do not second guess yourself.