
Subject: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 14:11:16 GMT

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I have to start off by saying I'm sitting here and laughing, because as I typed "Kick and Snare," all I could think of was "Moose and Squirrel." Probably because kick and snare can sometimes be as elusive. ANYway...

OK. Tracking Moose and Squirrel. Sometimes I just like to see what other engineers think about things.

Here's my thought process - take a drummer that plays in a very balanced way, and music that is dynamic. There's some dynamic range to the drums, he's not just hitting them as hard as possible from start to finish. You'd like to hear those ghost notes. It's hitting the meter at an average -6db but occasionally at a crescendo he may overshoot a bit and you get double red. Meanwhile, the sound you're getting into the recorder will need barely any EQ at mix, and if there are no rogue peaks to tame, you are going to be able to leave the faders close to 0, strap two 1176s across the drum sub and the whole thing will sound like God.

In such a case, who's in favor of taming those possible peaks during tracking, and who's not? And if you are, what would you use to do it?

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [compasspnt](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 14:18:27 GMT

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One guy in high school used to call me "Squirrel," for obvious reasons.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [Bill Mueller](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 14:45:59 GMT

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Dave,

Put down the doober and step away from the console! :d

Best Regards,

Bill

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 15:14:41 GMT
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:lol:

I am serious about the question, though!

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Bill Mueller](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 15:57:42 GMT
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My answer may be quite different than others because I come from a live production background and use those techniques in the studio as well. That means that I go for the sound I want at the tracking stage and don't really wait to make decisions later. So I apply compression and EQ and limiting or whatever else I need, even gates, to my mic signals. Lots of other folks track pristine unadorned tracks and leave all the processing till later.

My favorite comp or limiter is whatever is the best in the truck at the time. The 1176 is a great complimiter and you can't go wrong with it IMO. The DBX 160 has much more of a "sound", again IMO, and is not as universally useful. You can buy a stack of them for every 1176 however, so it's not a fair comparison.

Best Regards,

Bill

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [PRobb](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 16:01:40 GMT
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Read out loud with bad Russian accent:

Boris: I catch Moose. I have stregedy.

Natasha: Don't you mean strategy?

Boris: No stregedy. I stregedy rope across door, moose come out he trip and fall.

I remember when I was about 14 and found out there was an opera called Boris Goodenov! I laughed for days. THat was an absolutely brilliant show.

To the real question. I don't statements like "I never track with EQ". That may be a nice goal, and EQ should absolutely be the last step, but if you get a sound you like but it's not quite bright enough, by all means crank up some 5k. And I think the impact of a snare can from the close mic but the tone and size come from OH and room.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [zmix](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 16:03:05 GMT
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Moose...Squirrel...Moose..Moose..Squirrel...

Moose...Squirrel...Moose..Moose..Squirrel...

is easy to squash moose and squirrel to work with song after, when mix.

-Borris
Frostbite Falls, MN

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [PRobb](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 16:07:38 GMT
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zmix wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 11:03Moose...Squirrel...Moose..Moose..Squirrel...
Moose...Squirrel...Moose..Moose..Squirrel...

is easy to squash moose and squirrel to work with song after, when mix.

-Borris

Frostbite Falls, MN

:lol: :lol: :lol: :lol: :lol: :lol: :lol:

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 16:31:24 GMT

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PRobb wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 10:58:01I don't statements like "I never track with EQ". That may be a nice goal, and EQ should absolutely be the last step, but if you get a sound you like but it's not quite bright enough, by all means crank up some 5k. And I think the impact of a snare can from the close mic but the tone and size come from OH and room.

Absolutely! Overheads - they're not just for cymbals anymore.

I say "never" about EQ just because I have to set that limit for myself. When I was just a little Boris, I would tell myself "only after I've done everything possible with tuning, mic selection and mic placement." But I would always backslide. Especially under time crunch. So I had to make it a hard and fast rule for me.

With dynamics, it was different. While I understood the role of overheads in getting snare sound, I also knew that certain elements of intimate character (snare rattle, ring decay, etc.) needed to be captured or at least supported by the close mic. And if those elements aren't on tape, you can't flesh them out later should you want to. Limiting is your friend there, I've always found. But that's just me. I know other engineers who don't think that way.

I'm just wondering what my new friends think 8)

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [J.J. Blair](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 16:52:37 GMT

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Definitely kick, and most likely snare, are the only things I might EQ out of the basic tracks. Out of the drum tracks, the only things that will receive any compression are OH and rooms. I've compressed kick and snare only to have it bite me in the ass later, because it increased the amount of bleed and made sympathetic rattling snares annoyingly loud. I'd rather do it later, so I can gate any bleed first, if I decide the track needs compression.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 17:12:16 GMT
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zmix wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 11:03Moose...Squirrel...Moose..Moose..Squirrel...
Moose...Squirrel...Moose..Moose..Squirrel...

-Borris
Frostbite Falls, MN

Dood... hAh!

Compression... hmmm, barely.

EQ? Rather not.. and just to tame the worst ring in the snare, and maybe humpy it up in the 'your guitar ate my snare' 150-250Hz range, or add fizz that the mix is going to need.

Depends.

M

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [wwittman](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 20:12:40 GMT
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let me preface that I am not saying EVERYONE (or even anyone) should do what I do (as something about my tone inevitably seems to get people popping up to say "how DARE you insist

on everyone doing things YOUR way"

so disclaimer over:

I never compress bass drum or snare drum (or ANY close drum mics).
I LIKE transients.

and I ALWAYS EQ the bass drum and snare mics.
Usually quite a LOT. (especially the bass drum)

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [rankus](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 20:27:04 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 12:58:12

I LIKE transients.

Weirdo...

me too... I don't comp or EQ on the way in... But then I would never compare my drum sounds to others in this thread...

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Bill Mueller](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 20:35:11 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 15:58:12 let me preface that I am not saying EVERYONE (or even anyone) should do what I do (as something about my tone inevitably seems to get people popping up to say "how DARE you insist on everyone doing things YOUR way"

so disclaimer over:

I never compress bass drum or snare drum (or ANY close drum mics).
I LIKE transients.

and I ALWAYS EQ the bass drum and snare mics.
Usually quite a LOT. (especially the bass drum)

How DARE you insist on everyone not doing it your way!

Edit: Seriously though, sometimes I compress with a slow attack to CREATE transients where I felt there were not enough naturally.

Best Regards,

Bill

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 21:24:07 GMT
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I am just too lazy to make the patches, but I have a clue about where the mic sounds good.

Maybe I should auction a mic placement clue weekend, for monkey preservation.

Ook

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Les Ismore](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 21:40:36 GMT
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eq kick and snare to tape
no compression till mix stage

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 21:50:02 GMT
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OK OK OK OK...

I should have been more clear ... I'm talking about using dynamics in avoiding digital overload. For youse guz who slam it to tape, you have tape compression to help you.

I'm certainly all for percussive attack and even emphasizing the transien with slow comp if you absolutely know you're going to want extra thwack.

I'm talking about using limiting so that the three or four times you get the double red line doesn't kill the take.

Yes, yes, there's the "back off more gain" response. I guess I'm asking those of you who use limiting as the insurance that allows you to record a hotter track.

Subject: Re: Tracking Bass Drum and Snare
Posted by [compasspnt](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 22:26:50 GMT
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Not to be the "back off more gain" response, but why would you need to track it "hotter?" Nothing but trouble there.

If you want a compressed sound, then compress it. If you want a "normal" sound, then don't.

I see no need at all to use compression for level making, however.

I will normally not compress drums "to tape," unless I am specifically looking for a compressed, special sound. Same as W, I will quite often EQ whilst tracking though.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Extreme Mixing](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 22:43:31 GMT
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Yes, if you track things hotter, just to get them hotter, then you'll wind up having to track everything else hotter, too, just to keep up. In the end, you'll end up mixing with all your faders at -30, if you're mixing itb. Where's the fun in that???

In the "olden days" we used to try to track so that we could monitor flat on the return side of the console. I didn't like having to eq anything on the returns to get a good sound--just a bit of delay or reverb. All the guys that I knew did it the same way.

One thing I don't usually EQ during tracking is the vocal. If you use a great mic, pre amp and compressor, it should sound pretty good, unless you do something to mess it up on the way in. I call that the "ten thousand dollar sound". The bonus benefit is that it is really easy to match the sound without the 5 band parametric in the mix, if you should need to fix a line or two. But that never happens...

Steve

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 22:58:56 GMT
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There are two guys here; One more mixes to 'tape', the other captures, then goes mixing.

The guy with less frontend is going to do the second more, the guy with more experience wants the first, often.

M

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [kats](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 00:28:17 GMT
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My problem with EQing on the way in is that come mix time, I can't keep my filthy fingers off the damn EQ knobs. God forbid it's just right during tracking....I won't know what to do with myself after :d

My personal idiosyncrasy is to EQ if I'm recording most of the basic tracks live off the floor, and refrain from it when it's the old 1 instrument at a time PITA. Unless there's something obvious. With compression, I use it where I know I'm going to use it so as to free up the unit for the mix.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Extreme Mixing](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 00:45:39 GMT
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There is usually no need to EQ the sounds that come out of samplers. They are pretty good just the way they are. Set the level and print them.

I trust myself to EQ drums going in. If they need it, I hear it, and do what I think is right. I'm pretty consistant in that I like what I do. When I hear it later, I still like it. If I don't then I change it.

The important thing is not committing to things that you can't adapt later, when the production values become more clear in your minds eye. I like to track big and punchy sounds that leave lots

of room for change later. The other thing is to be careful not to do things like losing tom fills in the gate. Those are hard to get back. Why not wait on that stuff until you know how big those fills need to be. In some cases, you may not even need the tom mics.

Steve

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [wwittman](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 00:50:34 GMT
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Dave Scoven wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 16:58:50

Yes, yes, there's the "back off more gain" response. I guess I'm asking those of you who use limiting as the insurance that allows you to record a hotter track.

So you're not really asking who does what... but rather you're asking who validates a position you already hold? :roll:

I don't do anything different going to ProTools than I do going to tape.
In neither case do I compress close mics on drums, and in both cases I peak the levels fairly conservatively.

I rarely have the bass drum or snare peaks reach 0 VU (which is a slow reading, averaging, meter)

I don't NEED a "hotter track" at any point.

The level of the final record is determined at mastering... but up until then, I record everything to sound as good as I can manage. not for level.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [wwittman](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 00:52:56 GMT
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Extreme Mixing wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 19:45... In some cases, you may not even need the tom mics.

Steve

OR gates

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 01:17:52 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 18:50 Dave Scoven wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 16:58;50

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The level of the final record is determined at mastering... but up until then, I record everything to sound as good as I can manage. not for level.

Jeeeeeeeeesus. Friendly response, dude. I guess I'm an idiot. Next time I'll just PM you so I can find out what a real engineer does.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [G.Hunt](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 02:26:53 GMT
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PRobb wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 10:01: Read out loud with bad Russian accent:

Boris: I catch Moose. I have stregedy.

Natasha: Don't you mean strategy?

Boris: No stregedy. I stregedy rope across door, moose come out he trip and fall.

:lol:

Seriously though.

Everything has been explained very wel by extremely consumate pro's. This is my
In my pathetic and limited experience, i record in at -5db, the same applying to my sequencer,
(cubase) this then allows me head room for most things i want to do. (this is slightly off topic)

I will apply EQ on my kick and snare with my analoge mixer. This i find paramount to the type of
track im recording, though im already aware of how i want the track to pan out. (no pun intended)

Everything else i leave to ITB.

Best of luck

G

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [J.J. Blair](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 02:36:18 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 12:12: let me preface that I am not saying
EVERYONE (or even anyone) should do what I do (as something about my tone inevitably seems
to get people popping up to say "how DARE you insist on everyone doing things YOUR way"

so disclaimer over:

I never compress bass drum or snare drum (or ANY close drum mics).
I LIKE transients.

and I ALWAYS EQ the bass drum and snare mics.
Usually quite a LOT. (especially the bass drum)

Once again, I agree with William. Why is that? I think the only thing we part ways on is jazz!

Dave, btw ... I don't think William's response is hostile. More importantly, not only is he a "real engineer", he's a pretty fucking great engineer, with a lot of experience. You'd be wis eto follow any advice he gives.

And he's right, anyway. Going for max level in digital is folly. There's no point. there's no S/N ratio to worry about, so the only thing you do by printing hotter to PT is risk running out of headroom in your converters, or even worse, run the risk of digital clipping.

Take some good advice: Skip the limiting and print at lower levels.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [TJ](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 03:19:03 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 15:12: let me preface that I am not saying EVERYONE (or even anyone) should do what I do (as something about my tone inevitably seems to get people popping up to say "how DARE you insist on everyone doing things YOUR way"

so disclaimer over:

I never compress bass drum or snare drum (or ANY close drum mics).
I LIKE transients.

and I ALWAYS EQ the bass drum.
Usually quite a LOT.

I agree with William!

During most basic tracking sessions the ONLY thing that requires eq. is the Kik.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [wwittman](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 05:28:02 GMT

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[quote title=Dave Scoven wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 20:17]wwittman wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 18:58;50Dave Scoven wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 16:58;50

Yes, yes, there's the "back off more gain" response. I guess I'm asking those of you who use limiting as the insurance that allows you to record a hotter track.

Jeeeeeeeeesus. Friendly response, dude. I guess I'm an idiot. Next time I'll just PM you so I can find out what a real engineer does.

It wasn't meant to be "unfriendly" and I don't think I called you an idiot.

Just pointing out that there's a complete 180 difference between your original question:

"Do you prefer to track Moose and Squirrel with no dynamic processing or with compression or limiting or both, and if so, which comps/limiters are your favorites?"

and

" I guess I'm asking those of you who use limiting as the insurance that allows you to record a hotter track."

I said as clearly as I possibly can that I in no way care to tell you, or anyone else, what to do. But there's a big difference between asking what people do, and only asking people who DO compress/limit what they do.

right?

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [maxim](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 07:13:00 GMT
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terry wrote:

"Same as W, I will quite often EQ whilst tracking though."

i've asked this before with little response, but i will ask again (and again)

let's take the bass drum

what sort of eq are you talking about?

adding top/bottom/taking out 300 hz?

all of the above?

do you eq it again in the mix?

i'm not asking about settings (for they will obviously change according to the situation), but rather general principles...

i'm quite scared to jump into the "tracking with eq" land, and i haven't got a good outboard unit, but i have thought about getting the daking pre/eq for that very reason...

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [dkgzr](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 11:49:40 GMT
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I use EQ and COMP but not gladly. Sometimes its the only way. I do try to record everything so that it blends with out too much fuss

Subject: Re: Tracking Bass Drum and Snare
Posted by [compasspnt](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 14:33:33 GMT
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maxim wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 02:13let's take the bass drum

what sort of eq are you talking about?

adding top/bottom/taking out 300 hz?

all of the above?

do you eq it again in the mix?

Seriously, there is no way to answer this in quantifiable terms. It does completely depend upon what each different situation calls for. I just try to make things sound good at each point along the way. Sometimes that means adding some 7-8k to the snare. Sometimes it means adding some 72 Hz to the bass drum. Sometimes it means taking out some 248 Hz to either. Sometimes it means doing nothing at all. Sometimes there is a close microphone on the snare, and sometimes there is just a kit mic. Each situation calls for something different with each drummer/drumset/room/desk.

But having added during tracking, if during mixing it needs more, then by all means boost or cut.

Good is good.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 14:44:38 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Thu, 08 March 2007 23:58:28

It wasn't meant to be "unfriendly" and I don't think I called you an idiot.

Just pointing out that there's a complete 180 difference between your original question:

"Do you prefer to track Moose and Squirrel with no dynamic processing or with compression or limiting or both, and if so, which comps/limiters are your favorites?"

and

" I guess I'm asking those of you who use limiting as the insurance that allows you to record a hotter track."

I said as clearly as I possibly can that I in no way care to tell you, or anyone else, what to do. But there's a big difference between asking what people do, and only asking people who DO compress/limit what they do.

right?

Oh, you know -- I'm sorry if I got my panties in a wad. It's just that I'm NOT trying to guide the responses or exclude the "I don't use dynamics during tracking" ones.

You're right. I did not ask the question I really wanted to at first, so my subsequent post was just meant to clarify that I was asking if anyone uses just a slight amount of limiting (that may or may not be hit once during the take, but is in place to prevent the possibility of digital clipping), as opposed to doing what we all think about as typical mix phase compression - just so we wouldn't get "I never compress during tracking," which I guess none of us do. I sure don't.

I do realize that the common wisdom is that in 24/82 (or above) digital, you don't have to get anywhere near the red in order to get it all into the recorder.

Here's my thought process (and in it, I guess, the more fleshed out question) - take a drummer that plays in a very balanced way, and music that is dynamic. There's some dynamic range to the drums, he's not just hitting them as hard as possible from start to finish. I'd like to hear those ghost notes. It's hitting the meter at an average -6db but occasionally at a crescendo he may overshoot a bit and you get double red. Meanwhile, the sound you're getting into the recorder will need barely any EQ at mix, and if there are no rogue peaks to tame, you are going to be able to

leave the faders close to 0, strap two 1176s across the drum sub and the whole thing will sound like God.

In such a case, who's in favor of taming those possible peaks during tracking, and who's not? And if you are, what would you use to do it?

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Fibes](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 14:50:58 GMT
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Why are all of the tracks recorded above 24/48 that we get in here so shitty?

If a file shows up at 24/96-192 I'm gonna start putting a surcharge on the project because I'm almost guaranteed to have to polish a turd.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 14:56:44 GMT
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Fibes wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 08:50: Why are all of the tracks recorded above 24/48 that we get in here so shitty?

If a file shows up at 24/96-192 I'm gonna start putting a surcharge on the project because I'm almost guaranteed to have to polish a turd.

Maybe because the conventional wisdom is that you can record all the tracks at frickin' -20 db and still be fine? I don't know, maybe it's me, but I can hear a big difference in tone between a track recorded at -6 and a track recorded at -18. Maybe I'm just a caveman who can't live without the sound of tape compression.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [compasspnt](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 15:02:43 GMT
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This has spiraled into outer space. I am confused here.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 15:16:28 GMT
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compasspnt wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 09:02: This has spiraled into outer space. I am confused here.

No shiznit. I apologize. I hope we can get things back on track...

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Fibes](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 15:22:10 GMT
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compasspnt wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 10:02: This has spiraled into outer space. I am confused here.

I am too.

I think.

I didn't mean to threadjack either.

It's just something that we've noticed.

That, and I like to have Distressors and API eqs when tracking kick and snare for rock. I'm ususally not doing much with them but it all adds up come mix time.

1. Tune
 2. Mic selection and placement
 3. Tune
 4. Mic selection and placement
 5. Tune
 6. Eq
 7. Compression
 8. Order of EQ and compression in the chain dependent on goals
 9. Tune
 10. Track
-

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 16:05:01 GMT
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Fibes wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 09:58:22

1. Tune
2. Mic selection and placement
3. Tune
4. Mic selection and placement
5. Tune
6. Eq
7. Compression
8. Order of EQ and compression in the chain dependent on goals
9. Tune
10. Track

Right there with you. To me, it's all in the source, the mic and the placement. Tuning for the room and for the song are just so, so so important, but really and truly, a drummer should show up with (or otherwise have access to) LOTS of (very awesome) snare drums and cymbals to choose from.

I do realize that so much of the answer to this question turns on the type of music. Most modern radio rock is mixed so that drums are more like a series of percussive events across the stereo image, as opposed to various voices of a single instrument. Of course not always, and certainly back in the good old days, you didn't hear Charlie Watts' or John Bonhams' drums mixed that way. Modern radio rock drums are SO processed after the fact that it's really a different beast.

The kind of music I'm talking about -- think Jim Keltner playing with Dylan, or almost any alt country recording, like the Jayhawks... or the drums on Loretta Lynn's record with Jack White (even though that's 90% room sound and the vibe from the sound of a great vintage drumset). I'm talking about almost a jazz recording approach to drums. Honestly, I don't even know what a Distressor does. I don't use gates. Bleed is good. I want to hear mechanical noise if there's any to hear (squeezy kick pedals excluded). I like rattle and hum. I don't mind sympathetic snare buzz. All of that stuff is real to me.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [PRobb](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 16:44:16 GMT
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I've always been confused by guys who say they love to record real hot to analog tape, then say when they go digital they never use compression. Isn't slamming tape recording with compression?

And I also question "I never track with EQ/compression". Tracking flat is usually my goal. Sometimes I get there, sometimes I don't. :roll: But the only hard and fast rule is if it sounds good, it is good. Just remember what you do in tracking cannot be undone. But if you decide to commit to a sound, go for it.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Bill Mueller](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 17:20:35 GMT
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To literally get back on track, at this very moment I am tracking guitar and drums. This is the first time I have used the Heil mics on the kit and WHOA! I have a new kick drum mic. The PR 40 on kick is almost amazing. I also have a new snare mic. The PR 20 on the snare kills.

Best Regards,

Bill

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [CHANCE](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 17:21:19 GMT
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I always thought that "slamming tape" was recording as hot as possible to utilise the tapes natural compression/saturation

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 18:21:04 GMT
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That's exactly right. So when people say "we never tracked with compression in the old days" they clearly mean "outboard compression." But then not everyone hit tape hard as a matter of course, either. There were all kinds of tricks of the trade with regard to tape and tape recorders. Using Dolby as a kind of EQ, biasing tricks, using the tape itself as a compressor, saturation as an effect...

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 18:39:18 GMT
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There are many questions, unasked ones. The story develops.

I never do anything exactly the same, again. That is why I get the big bucks.

Bring bread, I have some of that awesome Salmon flavored peanut butter from Georgia!

M

Subject: Re: Tracking Bass Drum and Snare
Posted by [wwittman](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 18:47:37 GMT
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compassnt wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 09:33:33 Seriously, there is no way to answer this in quantifiable terms. It does completely depend upon what each different situation calls for. I just try to make things sound good at each point along the way. Sometimes that means adding some 7-8k to the snare. Sometimes it means adding some 72 Hz to the bass drum. Sometimes it means taking out some 248 Hz to either. Sometimes it means doing nothing at all. Sometimes there is a close microphone on the snare, and sometimes there is just a kit mic. Each situation calls for something different with each drummer/drumset/room/desk.

But having added during tracking, if during mixing it needs more, then by all means boost or cut.

Good is good.

This is naturally the right answer for me too...

But I suppose I COULD add that I tend to like to have a 4 band EQ on the bass drum and then I might or might not use each band as needed.

But I tend to think of it as a (potential) low boost, usually 50-60 Hz but sometimes as high as 100. A low mid cut, anywhere between 250 and 500, if needed.

A mid boost in the 1k-2k range

and possibly a higher mid (not really top) boost in the 2-4 k range.

I balance these ranges against each other and of course if anything isn't needed I leave it alone.

but that's my general starting point.

I also MAY use the low pass filter at the very top, but that's less usual for me.

I'm always a little hesitant to give "recipes" for EQ as they rarely translate well.

I feel the same way about cooking.

I like to get a handle on the technique and the idea, but I don't read recipes and follow proportions.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [wwittman](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 18:56:25 GMT

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Dave Scoven wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 11:58:05

The kind of music I'm talking about -- think Jim Keltner playing with Dylan, or almost any alt country recording, like the Jayhawks... or the drums on Loretta Lynn's record with Jack White (even though that's 90% room sound and the vibe from the sound of a great vintage drumset). I'm talking about almost a jazz recording approach to drums. Honestly, I don't even know what a Distressor does. I don't use gates. Bleed is good. I want to hear mechanical noise if there's any to hear (squeaky kick pedals excluded). I like rattle and hum. I don't mind sympathetic snare buzz. All of that stuff is real to me.

I did a record very much in this vein recently... and I did it with 5 mics on the drums plus one room mic.

Bass drum, snare drum, drums left, drums right, overhead, and room.

Only the room mic was compressed.

(and the overhead was largely unnecessary)

And I recorded it with the desk meters peaking at less than 0 VU consistently on the drums (just as I would to analogue tape) into ProTools at 96k. (which is the sample rate I use for everything, when I can)

(and I'm NOT paying a surcharge)

there IS no equivalent to "tape compression" from hitting the A-D convertor harder.
it's just not anything PLEASANT being added.

at best, it's no different but louder, and at worst it's clipping and unpleasant sounding.

So because I don't come near those problematic peaks, I don't compound the error (as I see it) with a software peak limiter (none of which are something you should WANT to add to a sound)

If you really think it sounds better when you hit the "DAW" hard, then of course that's your call. but you are in a sense creating the issue that then you need a limiter to solve.

I don't PERSONALLY think there's any reason to think it DOES sound better as the level goes up.

as a simple test - have you recorded something in at say 8 db less than your usual level and at the same time to another track at your usual level, and then pull down the PLAYBACK level of your 'usual' track by 8dB and compare?

in other words, they are playing back at the same level, but one is recorded IN on the hard drive hotter.

There really SHOULD be no diff unless it's clipping.

Subject: Re: Tracking Bass Drum and Snare
Posted by [thedoc](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 18:56:44 GMT
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being able to make a decision is a good thing including eq to "tape" or whatever is needed at the time. That means having confidence in your decision making process.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [wwittman](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 18:57:38 GMT
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PRobb wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 11:44I've always been confused by guys who say they love to record real hot to analog tape, then say when they go digital they never use compression. Isn't slamming tape recording with compression?.

no.
not in any MEANINGFUL way.

plus i never "slam" tape (by my definition) on drums.

did I say, i LIKE transients?

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 19:23:03 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 12:56
there IS no equivalent to "tape compression" from hitting the A-D convertor harder.
it's just not anything PLEASANT being added.

Sure not arguing with you there ...

Quote:So because I don't come near those problematic peaks, I don't compound the error (as I see it) with a software peak limiter (none of which are something you should WANT to add to a sound)

Well, OK, but lets make a distinction for a moment between "peaks" and "clips". Now I know you've worked with some great drummers. But even great drummers occasionally hit the kick a little too hard on an accent or whatever, and you need to smooth that out, right? You'd do that in mix, and if you did it with an 1176, for example, you'd get the 1176 sound while doing it. What's your rationale for waiting until mix to do it?

Quote:as a simple test - have you recorded something in at say 8 db less than your usual level and at the same time to another track at your usual level, and then pull down the PLAYBACK level of your 'usual' track by 8dB and compare?
in other words, they are playing back at the same level, but one is recorded IN on the hard drive

hotter.

There really SHOULD be no diff unless it's clipping.

I just happen to be set up at the moment to do just that. I'll do it with a completely open mind and let you know whether or not I lose detail. Good suggestion.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Buzz](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 20:11:37 GMT
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Dave once it's DONE it can't be UNDONE , these guys weaned me off of using 1176's on kick and snare during the recording process and it has helped me (I used to use WAY too much on the way in) now I use it afterwards and get the same effect BUT I have control now!.

I have also lowered my recording levels as well and do not have master overload problems etc. like I used to , as Terry explains in the Digital Tracking Lower Levels STICKY this allows more headroom for FX and the buss it's a good read if you take the time.

Later
Buzz

PS: Disclaimer, I'm just parroting what these guys have said all along !!

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 20:59:10 GMT
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Buzz wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 14:58:11 I have also lowered my recording levels as well and do not have master overload problems etc. like I used to , as Terry explains in the Digital Tracking Lower Levels STICKY this allows more headroom for FX and the buss it's a good read if you take the time.

Later

Buzz

PS: Disclaimer, I'm just parroting what these guys have said all along !!

Hmmmmmmmmmm..... OK, read the sticky. This is very interesting information regardless of the present question, but if it's all true (and I'm sure that it is), it renders the present question moot.

So the argument is that in the 24/84 world, you maximize headroom by treating -12db as 0VU. Which I guess means I'd better have a super-quiet pre for those Coles 4038s, but yes, I see everyone's point very clearly now.

But I did read this exchange:

Paul Frindle: 24bit digital audio has 144dB or so total dynamic range - so you can easily provide more than 30dB of this kind of headroom before the digital signal noise becomes significant in respect of the DAC SNR.

Compassnt: Paul, Would you then say we could record (in a good quality DAW with good converters) at, say, 12 dB below "red light?" Would there be any other trade off penalty (something like "using all the bits" which some people talk about)?

If this level is ok, then most people are digitally recording about 12 dB "too hot" most of the time (assuming a proper, non-sample based meter). This lower level would certainly negate many of the digital/plugin overload problem!

Paul Frindle: Yes in essence this is the point. But it isn't a good idea to lose too much gain in the input stages of the recording ADC since you will lose SNR. It is perfectly permissible to record in the first instance at relative high levels (peaking around -3dBFS) because an illegal signal should not come out of an AD converter (as we have said here).

The place where you need to make the gain loss to get headroom and avoid unreported overs is in the DIGITAL domain - right at the start of your mixing channel. In this way you preserve the converter's SNR during recording and optimise SNR and headroom for the whole system - making maximum use of the 144dB SNR the digital domain offers. The only provisor is that you will need to run good quality plugs that are not noisy and function correctly at lower reference levels.

So if I understand Paul correctly, he's saying hit peaks at -3 during recording, but treat -12 as 0 at the beginning of mix in order to let the proper things happen in the digital domain. This solves my

worry about my Coles 4038s, but then a very curious turn - instead of this becoming a way to get the maximum out of non-linear plugs, it becomes a potential problem for plugs.

I'm now officially REALLY confused.

Subject: Re: Tracking Bass Drum and Snare
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 21:08:23 GMT
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wwittman wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 13:58:47

This is naturally the right answer for me too...

But I suppose I COULD add that I tend to like to have a 4 band EQ on the bass drum and then I might or might not use each band as needed.

You also usually use an LDC on kick.

Too many questions. Leonard Bernstein would love this.

M

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [compasspnt](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 22:02:41 GMT
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Dave Scoven wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 15:58:59...he's saying hit peaks at -3 during recording, but treat -12 as 0 at the beginning of mix in order to let the proper things happen in the digital domain. This solves my worry about my Coles 4038s, but...

He is saying that you CAN hit -3 with your ABSOLUTE highest peak IF you are using good plug-ins and summing algo downstream. He is talking about maximising the s/nr of your adc. I suggest not even trying to go that high, however...if you use a well designed adc, and don't go HORRIBLY low, (like 50-60 dB, and really...oh well...) you will be fine. Also note Paul mentioned the first 30 dB as well acceptable.

And -3 from red for highest sample peak (NB: this doesn't take into account inter-sample peaks!) is at least 3 dB lower in level than that at which many people record digitally, anyway.

As for the "noise with the Coles," that doesn't factor into this. Get the best s/nr you can out of your mic pre, making the Coles sound as good as possible, and then keep that level into the adc lowered.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [rankus](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 23:10:48 GMT
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As a side note.

Nuendo has the capability to design the coloring of the meters.. so I went in and set them to green turning to red at -6 db... Now I don't even have to think about keeping my levels down... I just automatically do it to avoid the reds...

I started with the lower levels a few years ago, and it works real good.

Spread the word.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [maxim](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2007 23:40:18 GMT

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william wrote:

"I like to get a handle on the technique and the idea, but I don't read recipes and follow proportions"

agreed

even in baking, where the exact proportions are important, the recipe will vary according to the local conditions, including temperature and humidity

terry wrote:

"Good is good"

i get it now

thanks for the insights

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare

Posted by [J.J. Blair](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 00:19:35 GMT

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On kick and snare, I used to hit the tape as hard as I could before distortion occurred. After reading some of Massenberg's process, I tried otherwise, and I wound up liking the results more. The transients were infinitely better. I had been relying on tape compression to compensate for the unevenness of the non double scale session drummers I had been working with. In fact, in order to keep the transients intact, I now use parallel compression, rather than regular compression, to help with tone and evenness now. I get the best of both worlds.

On a different note, I have noticed that on toms, I tend to like the sound of my API pres when I'm hitting about +8 or more. It does something great. Perhaps it's the harmonic distortion making the drum sing nicely. I back it off though, because that level is too hot to print. Maybe as an experiment next time, I'll make the pre that hot, and then attenuate the signal before tape or ADC with a pad or something.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Bill Mueller](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 00:23:29 GMT
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J.J. Blair wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 19:58:19 On kick and snare, I used to hit the tape as hard as I could before distortion occurred. After reading some of Massenberg's process, I tried otherwise, and I wound up liking the results more. The transients were infinitely better. I had been relying on tape compression to compensate for the unevenness of the non double scale session drummers I had been working with. In fact, in order to keep the transients intact, I now use parallel compression, rather than regular compression, to help with tone and evenness now. I get the best of both worlds.

On a different note, I have noticed that on toms, I tend to like the sound of my API pres when I'm hitting about +8 or more. It does something great. Perhaps it's the harmonic distortion making the drum sing nicely. I back it off though, because that level is too hot to print. Maybe as an experiment next time, I'll make the pre that hot, and then attenuate the signal before tape or ADC with a pad or something.

Or a console?

Best Regards,

Bill

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 01:00:20 GMT
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I have been running a few pres in series.. hmm..

some.

M

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [J.J. Blair](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 01:43:27 GMT
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Bill Mueller wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 16:58:23

Or a console?

Best Regards,

Bill

Why would I want to run out of an API pre through a console to tape? That introduces all those other components now in the path. I'd rather just use one of the H pads I wired into my patch bay, honestly.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [compasspnt](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 04:00:23 GMT
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J.J. Blair wrote on Fri, 09 March 2007 19:19...next time, I'll make the pre that hot, and then attenuate the signal before tape or ADC with a pad or something.

Ah ha. Now it's coming out.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Tidewater](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 04:05:52 GMT
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Insight won't help.

M

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 19:41:17 GMT
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I'm getting this now that you guys have sort of collectively re-routed my thinking. Duh. This is a digital domain gain structure issue, and you won't be open to it unless you accept that a lot of it is counter to the conventional wisdom surrounding analog gain structuring (not that the conventional wisdom of analog gain structuring necessarily gave the best results either).

I did some experimenting this morning and it was immediately clear to me that Paul's advice yields superior results.

Thanks, guys, for your patience -- :blush:

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [compasspnt](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 19:42:55 GMT
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Good work Dave. That's what it's all about.

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Buzz](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 20:44:16 GMT
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Nice Dave ! my recordings have improved 500% just by listening !

Later
Buzz

PS: The virtual intern !!!

Subject: Re: Tracking Kick and Snare
Posted by [Dave Scoven](#) on Sat, 10 Mar 2007 20:45:10 GMT

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compasspnt wrote on Sat, 10 March 2007 13:58:42 Good work Dave. That's what it's all about.

Thanks, I appreciate that. Talk about going down kicking and screaming - All I can do is laugh at myself! :lol: To quote another favorite cartoon character, "Whatta maroon."
