Program a House Beat From Audio.

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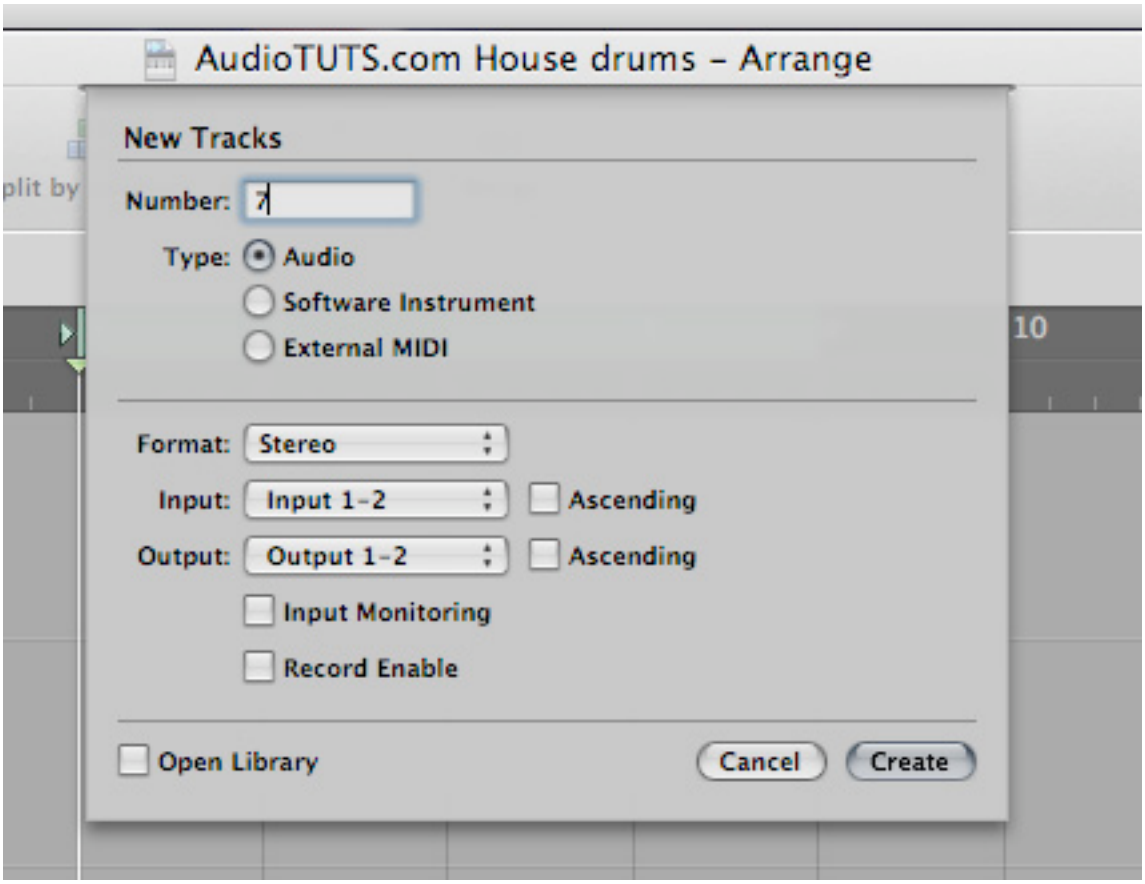
There are loads of ways to program beats—from using an Akai MPC to recording your own drums—but often some of the best techniques are the most direct. In this tutorial we'll learn how to create a house beat using just raw audio and a handful of plug-ins, with not a virtual drum-machine or sampler in sight...

Step 1

Start by adding enough tracks to accommodate all the drum sounds you think you'll use. This way you can add sounds quickly, the track will be there for you and your creative flow wont be broken.

Don't worry too much about whether the tracks are mono or stereo for now. You can always change this as you go. The same goes for the amount of tracks: just add and delete as you go.



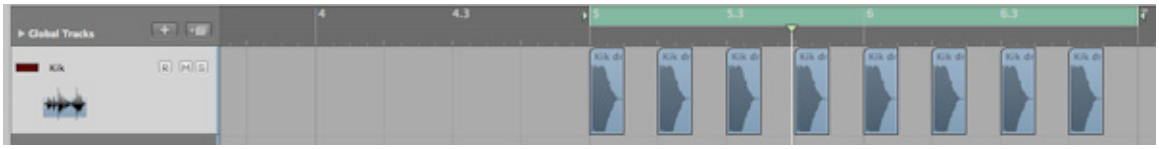
Step 2

The first drum sound added here is the kick--the core sound of any house/dance beat. Many people seem to think there is a golden rule about kicks being in mono, and although there are good technical arguments for this, many producers are using stereo and mono kick samples. Remember Joe Meek's catch phrase: 'If it sounds right, it is right' ... make up your own mind.
In this case only one kick was used but layering different styles of kick can often give great results, so feel free to experiment. A subtle amount of EQ was added here to

bring it into line, with small amounts of high-end reduced and low-end added.

As straight audio files are being used in this tut, you must ensure your start and end points are dead-on throughout to avoid noise. Fade out any samples that contain clicks, pops or noise.

Kik drum.mp3



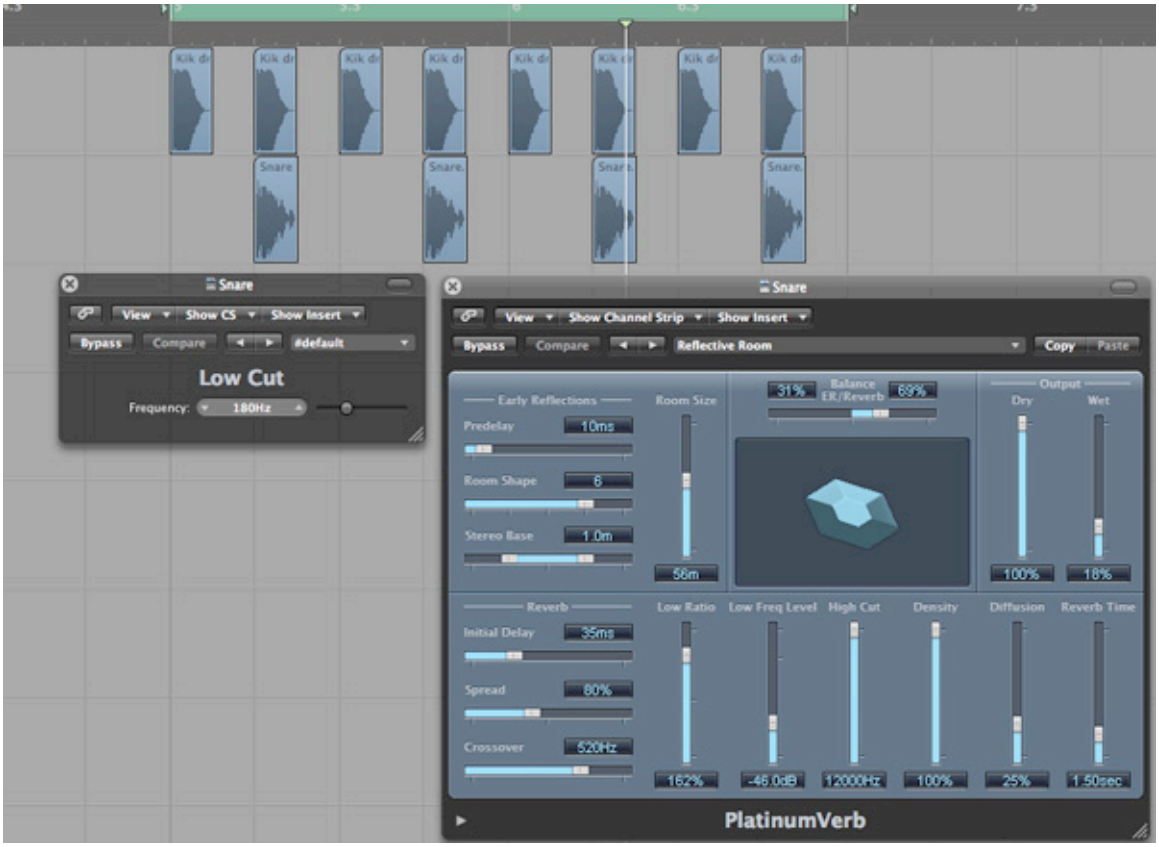
Step 3

Once the four to the floor kick is running satisfactorily you can start to add extra drums to the mix. Next on the list is a snare drum added to the third and fourth beats of every bar. This sort of programming is integral to creating a classic house sound, giving emphasis to every other beat.

Take your time choosing the right sound here, as some snares will sound great alone but won't work with your chosen kick. Of course, you can always go back and change your arrangement, as long as the two drums gel.

From this point onwards most of the drum sounds have their lower frequencies filtered with high-pass filters to ensure they don’t clash with the kick. Some room reverb has also been added here to give the sound some extra dimension.

Snare.mp3



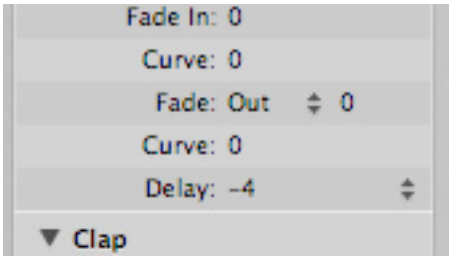
Step 4

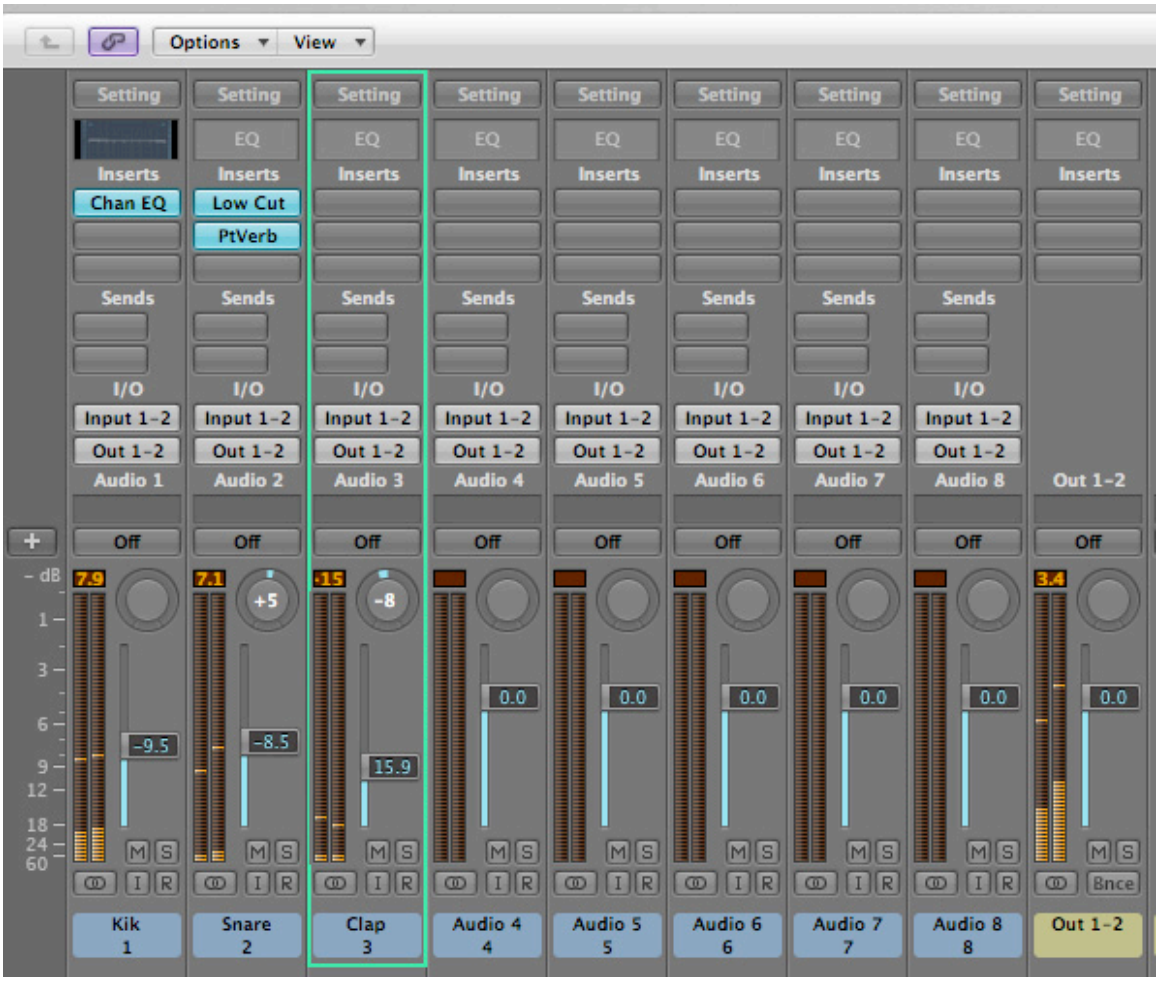
To give your snare sound some extra snap, layer a clap or higher frequency snare sound alongside it. These sounds can then be panned to create a stereo effect and some slight sample based delay can be added to one of the signals to alter their timing and add further separation.

At this point, take a look at your overall mix and make sure you are still working with a decent amount of headroom. Select all your drum tracks and lower their

volume if you need to: performing this action regularly will save you a lot of work later.

Clap.mp3





Step 5

A simple open hat on the off beat completes the basic structure of your house beat. From here on out its a case of adding extra percussion and FX to make the pattern your own. This hat has had its lower frequencies cut and its higher frequencies boosted to give it some extra bite.

Feel free to add some closed hats running at 16th intervals to add pace if needed.

Open hat.mp3

Step 6

Choose a basic percussion sound and start to build a groove by placing it in different positions between the existing drums. Once you start to find the right pattern, try layering the sound and different FX to each layer.

Pan the sounds to different areas of the stereo field to create some space and then group the sounds together to give you control over them.

Percussion 1.mp3

Percussion 2.mp3

Percussion 3.mp3

Step 7

Rather than using just a regular crash, try layering some noise-based effects samples and wooshes together. Further stereo delay or reverb can then be added to these sounds to extend their decay.

If you find these sounds start to mask other sounds in the drum pattern, send them to a group and insert a

sidechain compressor, using your kick as a key input. These will cause the FX group to duck and allow the main body or your drum track to be heard clearly.

Crash.mp3

Woosh FX.mp3

Step 8

To add some pace and further groove to your pattern try adding some percussive drum loops with their low frequencies heavily cut. Obviously not all loops will work first time and it may take a certain amount of trial and error to get things to gel.

If you like the feel of a loop but it's too noisy or is interfering with other sounds in the mix, try using a gate to clean things up.

loop 1.mp3

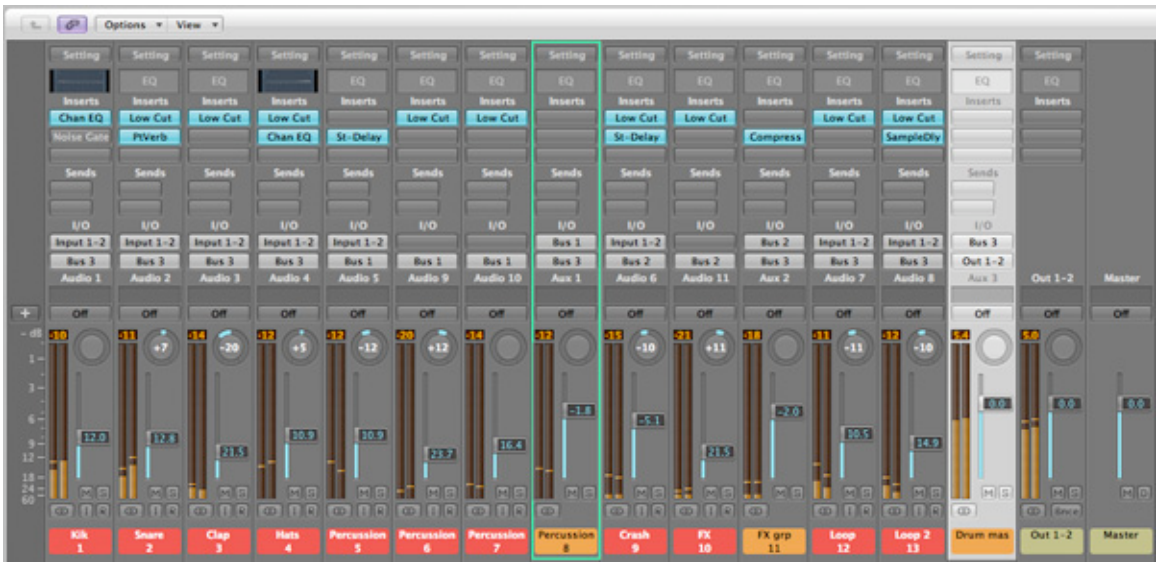
loop 2.mp3

Step 9

When you have finished constructing your loop you may have a few different groups for similar elements in your pattern, but it can be really useful to have a drum master. This will give you absolute control over your drum level as a whole and give you a chance to apply any final processing, such as EQ and compression.

You can take things one step further here and apply some parallel compression to the entire drum mix. If you need any instruction on this, check out my tut on

creating a parallel compression buss in Logic.



Listen to the finished product:

House beat final.mp3