

5 Must-know Mixing Techniques

The goal of music mix-downs is to create a great sounding mix by adjusting the levels, EQ, compression, and effects of each individual track to balance and blend them together.

This helps to create a cohesive and dynamic final mix that sounds great on all playback systems and connects with the listener emotionally.



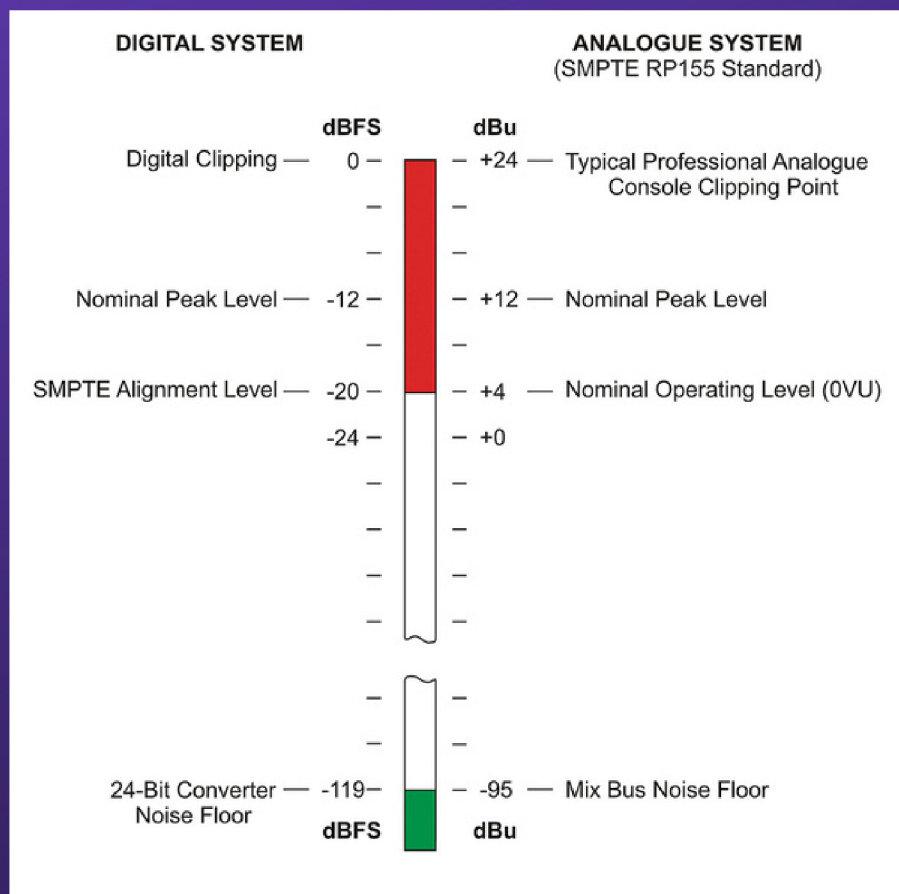
Gain-Staging

Gain staging is essentially the process of ensuring that all the tracks in your mix are leveled properly, with their levels not too low or too high. This helps prevent clipping and distortion in the final mix.

To avoid clipping or distortion when adding processing later in the mixing process, begin by adjusting each track to peak around -3 to -1 db. When using a digital DAW you are able to push your signal beyond the the normal operating threshold. Experiment with what sounds good to you.

Once you've set the levels for each individual track, you should then move on to the overall mix bus or master fader and adjust its level so that the mix is not distorted and has some room for the Mastering stage

Overall, gain staging is a crucial step in the mixing process that can make a significant difference in the quality of your final mix. Use the provided parameters as a starting point and adjust to your style of music.



Panning

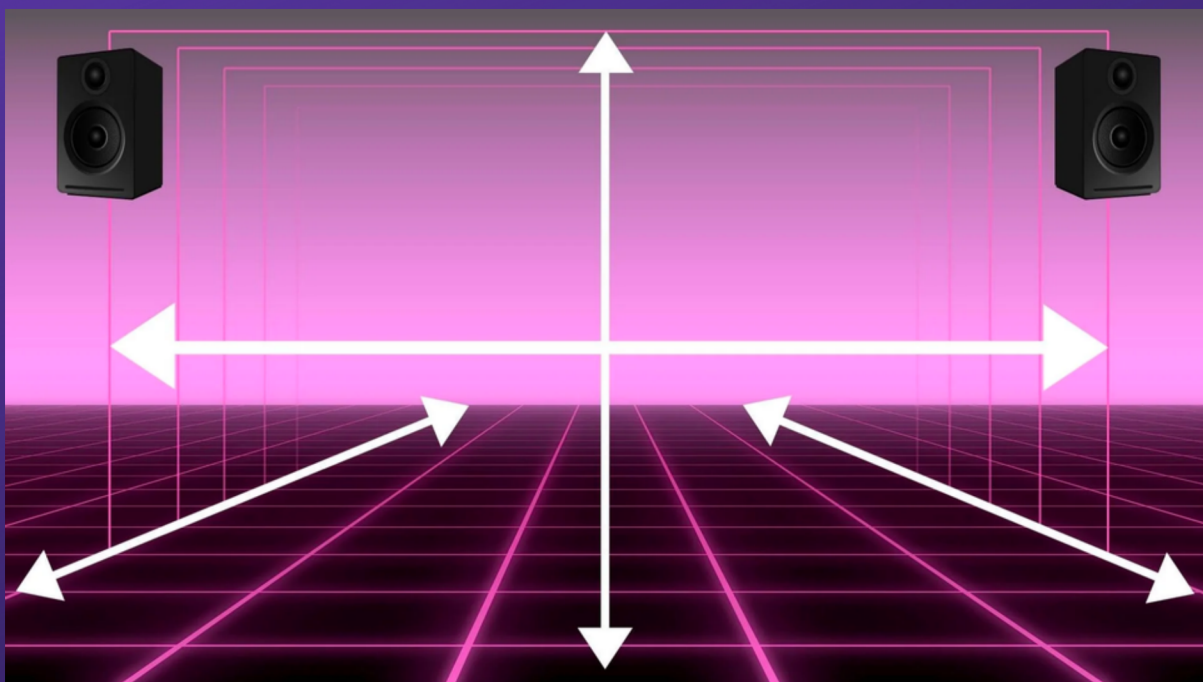
Panning is the process of placing sounds in the stereo field to create a sense of space and dimension in a mix.

Begin by panning the drum tracks when creating a balanced track. The kick and snare drums are typically panned to the center, while other drums such as toms or cymbals can be panned to the sides.

To create a balanced stereo image, aim to spread sounds evenly across the left and right channels. Avoid panning too many sounds to one side, as this can make the mix feel unbalanced.

The rule of thirds is a helpful starting point for panning sounds to create separation and distinguishability. This means panning sounds to either the left, center, or right on the stereo field.

Try different panning positions and listen to how they affect the overall balance and spatial relationships between sounds.



Mid-side Processing

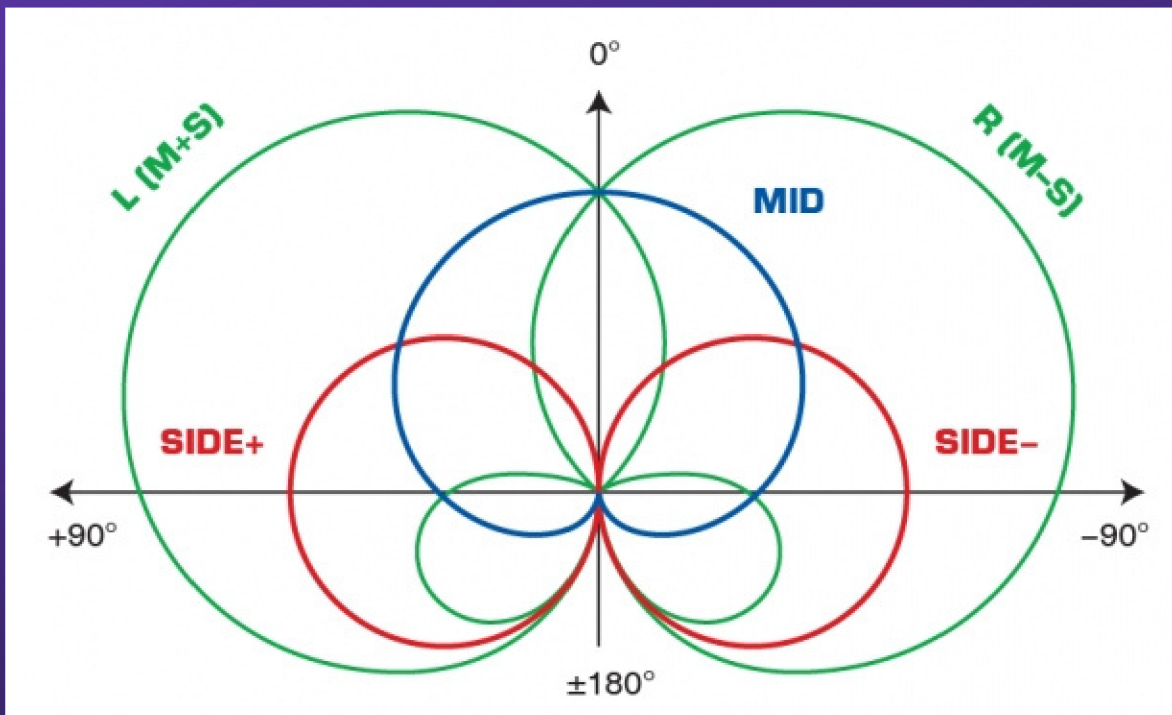
Mid-side processing is a technique that allows you to manipulate the center and sides of a stereo mix independently

The center is the mono part of the mix, while the sides are the stereo elements that appear on the left and right channels

Many modern EQ plugins have a built-in mid-side processing mode that allows you to separate the center and side signals.

To set up mid-side processing using modern DAW EQs, first duplicate your stereo mix onto two tracks and insert an EQ plugin on both tracks.

Use the EQ's to shape the sound of the Stereo and Mono elements. Be sure to blend the center and side tracks back together to create a cohesive stereo mix.



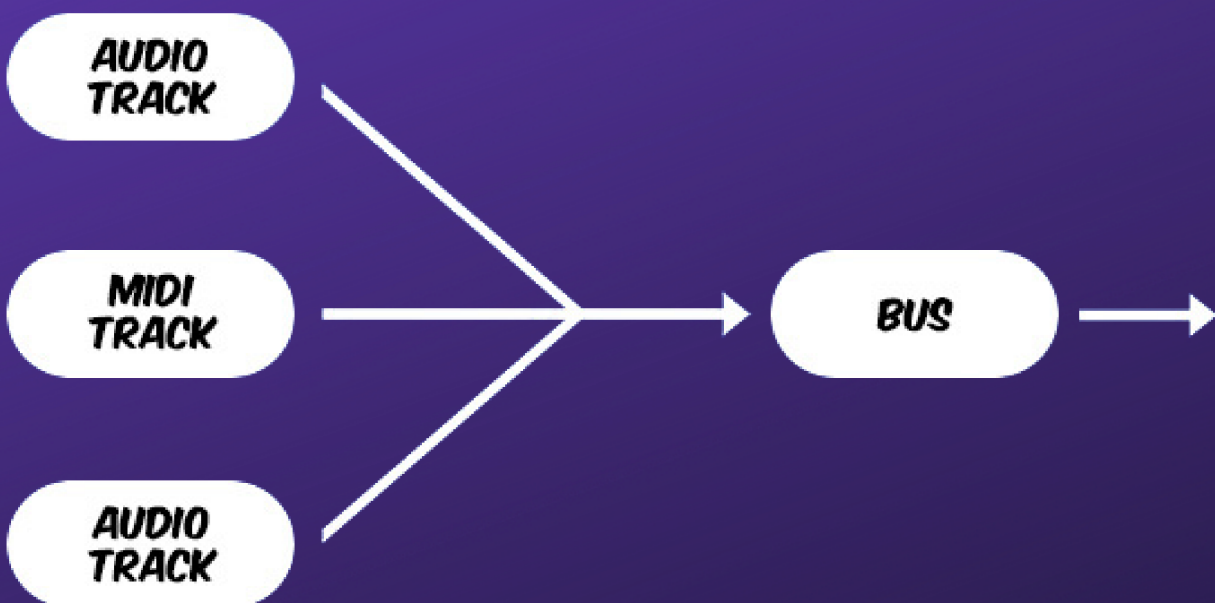
Buss Processing

Buss processing is a technique used in audio production to group similar sounds together and process them as a single unit. This technique can help create a more cohesive mix and make it easier to manage the levels and effects of different elements.

To use buss processing, start by grouping similar sounds together, such as drum tracks or vocal tracks. Then assign each group to its own bus channel and adjust the levels of each group so that they are balanced with each other.

Next, apply EQ and compression to shape the sound of each group and even out the dynamics. After that, apply effects such as reverb or delay to create a sense of space and depth. Use parallel processing to add more character and impact to a group without affecting the original sound.

It's important to use buss processing in moderation. Try to group similar sounds together to create a cohesive mix.



Volume Balancing

Volume balancing is an important step in music production that ensures each instrument or sound can be heard clearly and distinctly without being too loud or too soft.

This is achieved by a delicate balancing act between boosting and cutting frequencies, often using EQ. Compression and limiting techniques help to maintain a consistent volume level.

Automation is a common technique used in volume balancing, providing precise control over each element to ensure they blend together seamlessly.

The requirements of each mix vary depending on genre, style, and instrumentation. Volume balancing requires skill, expertise, and attention to detail. However, when done correctly, it can make a significant difference in the final product.

