

How To Mix A Kick Drum

Paschalis

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In this article I will show you how to mix a kick drum from scratch.

I may also include some VST images but feel free to use your favorite plugins. You don't need to have the exact same plugins as mine in order to make this guide work.

Let's get Started!

Starting With Equalization [EQ]

I would like to use an EQ first.

Cut around **100Hz to 200 Hz**. Normal to Wide **Q** could be fine here.

Boost around **50Hz to 70Hz** to give some Thump to the kick. 50 to 70Hz can also be heard on almost every audio playing system.

Hi Pass/Low Cut using a filter at around **30Hz to 40Hz**. This sub-bass low end doesn't have any useful musical info in there, but just possible mud.

Cut around at **100hz to 120Hz**. This way you will remove some mud, will make your kick cleaner with more definition and also create some space for the bass guitar. Too much reduction and will make your kick sound thin so, as always, let your ears make the final decision.

If your kick needs more low end use a **low shelf** from **40Hz to 80Hz**. You can also **blend a sample** here with lots of low end (and his highs cut) and blend to taste with just the volume fader. The louder the sample the more low end your kick will end up with.

If your kick "feels" buried in the mix, boost at around **6Khz to 10Khz**.

If you still feel the need to boost more try around **2Khz to 4Khz**. But take care cause these frequencies need to be used by the vocals or else you'll cause masking between them.

Important: If your kick still feels weird, buried or "wrong" chances are that the problem lies on the rest of the mix (synths, guitars). Or simply the kick was recorded in such a bad way that needs to be re-recorded or just use a professional sounding sample.

Compression

By using compression your aim is to add some **transients** and **punch** to the kick hits.

For this reason we'll use compressors such as the **SSL** Compressor and the **Distressor**. For a Distressor Plugin just [visit this page](#) and download it for free (by the way great work Antress Team).

4:1 to 8:1 Ratio with a **Slow attack** and a **Fast release** are the key components here since we use compression to create **punch**.



A **limiter** to catch the remaining sudden peaks could be useful if you use it really gently cause too much will kill your punch (limiters have ultra fast attacks and ratio more than 10:1).

For a limiter you can use the **Waves L1** as shown in the image below or [download the free famous limiter known as Gclip](#).

Automation

You can automate the kick drum **volume** or automate the **EQ** between the different song parts.

I find myself automating the kick drum on quick double pedal sections where the kick can sound **too much in your face** and loud, **bass can go out of control** or the “**smack**” of the drum is too much in your face too.

Listen to the where the problem lies and automate to taste. You can automate the **volume** or the **low/high shelves** to reduce just the low or high end instead of the whole volume of the kick.

Need More Punch?

If you still need more punch to your kick drum and you cannot re-record it then it's time to use a **Transient Designer VST**.

I don't always go for a transient designer but if after of all the above steps the kick still lacks some **punch** then this might be your last resort.



Blending Samples VS Using 100% Samples

The **low end** of the frequency spectrum is the one that can handle A LOT of procession and still fool the listener that the sound is “natural”. Or at least... not processed too much.

I’ve found myself using 100% samples when mixing metal music cause the dynamics in the metal genre are more or less the same. In other genres make sure to use some automation as mentioned above to keep a more “dynamic flow” to the different parts of the song.

But I check the kick mics first to see what I can do with them without any samples. I try to get the best out of them with no samples at all. If after all my EQ, Comps and general “tricks” can’t get what I want then I start blending samples or even discard the kick sound as a whole and use just **high quality professional** samples.

If you plan to use samples only then make sure they’re PERFECT or you won’t do any good to the mix as a whole. Here are my favorite drum programs that can get some fantastic sounds right out of the box with **minimum to no mixing** by your hands:

Conclusion

That’s pretty much what I do to my kicks.

Don’t forget to **always** let your ears make the final decision and when you’re building your mix compare your kick(s) with the different elements of your mix.

Make sure the drums sound good together and then the bass with the drums, then add the rhythm guitars and so on.

Hope I’ve helped and hope you’ve enjoyed this guide, have fun mixing!

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