How To Record On Cubase – The A to Z Guide

By
Paschalis

Recording on Cubase is easier than you think, so in this tutorial I will show you how to record on cubase by keeping it easy and simple.

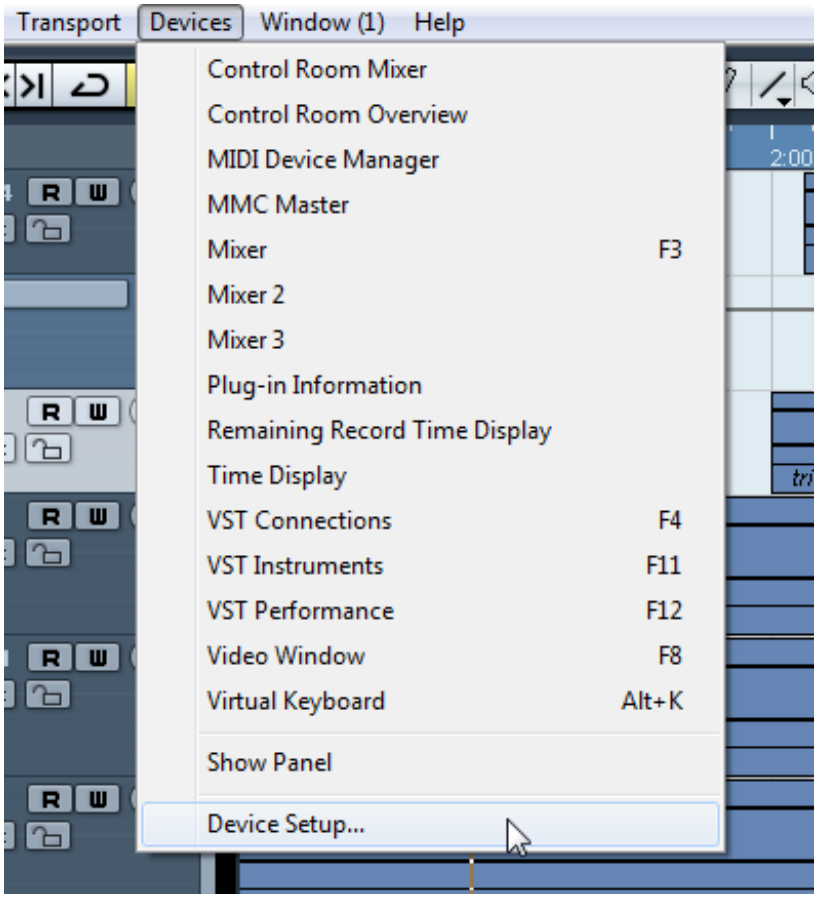
I will also show you how to record real instruments using **WAV** files (guitars, bass, drums etc) but I will also show you how to record using **MIDI**. Let's get started!

1. Configure Your Audio Interface

After the installation of your audio interface – no matter if it uses USB or Firewire connection – Cubase is now able to recognize it. The only thing you've got to do is to choose it.

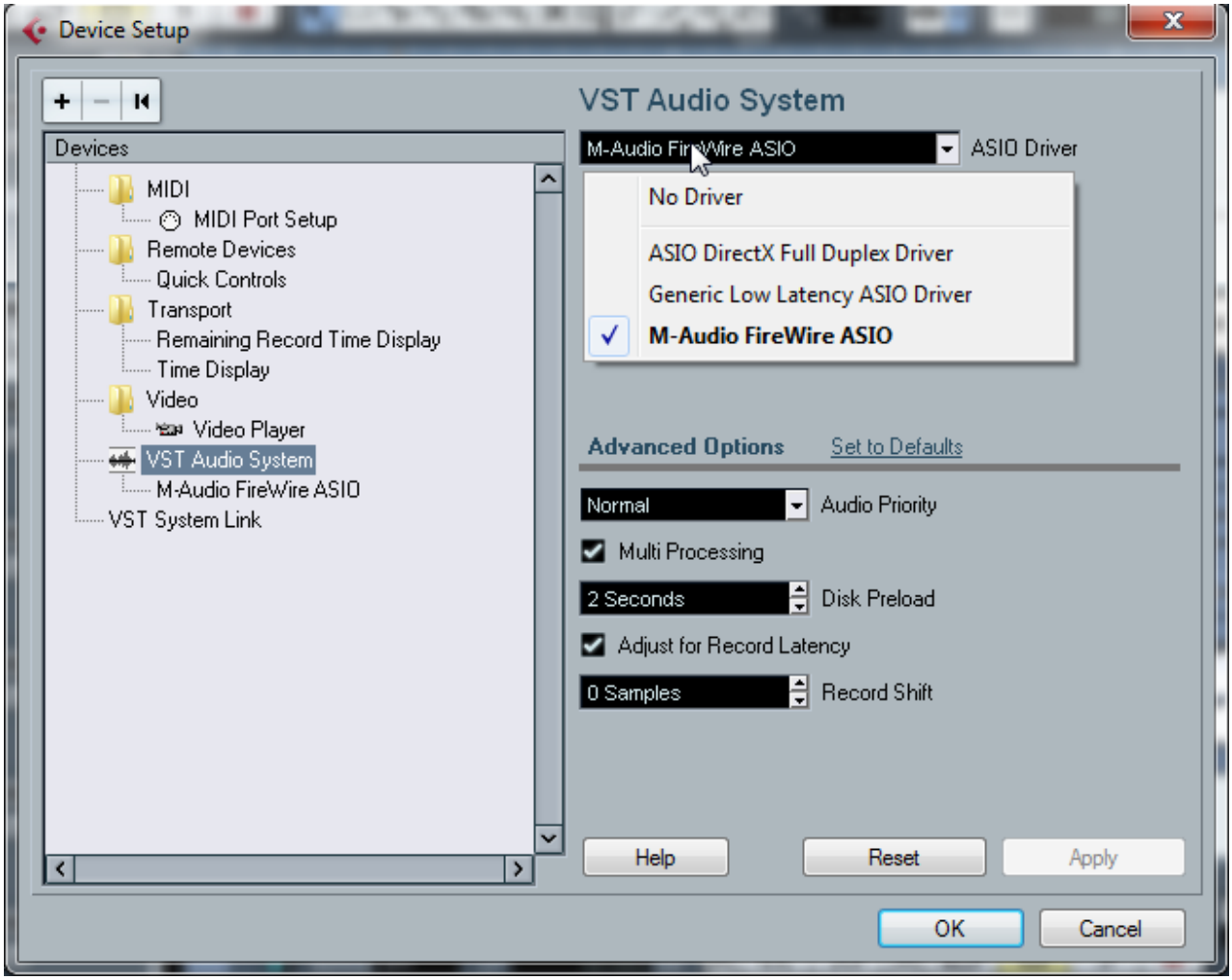
Open Cubase and click on **Devices -> Device Setup.**

Then click on **VST Audio System** and choose your (already installed) audio interface.



The place that I create the tutorials is at my home. So I needed to get a cheap sound card at home for your recording and mixing tutorials. For this reason I about a $100 sound card the M-Audio FireWire Solo.

It's pretty logical to install it first in order for cubase to "see" it, else you won't be able to find it in the list below. Please choose your sound card and click **OK**.

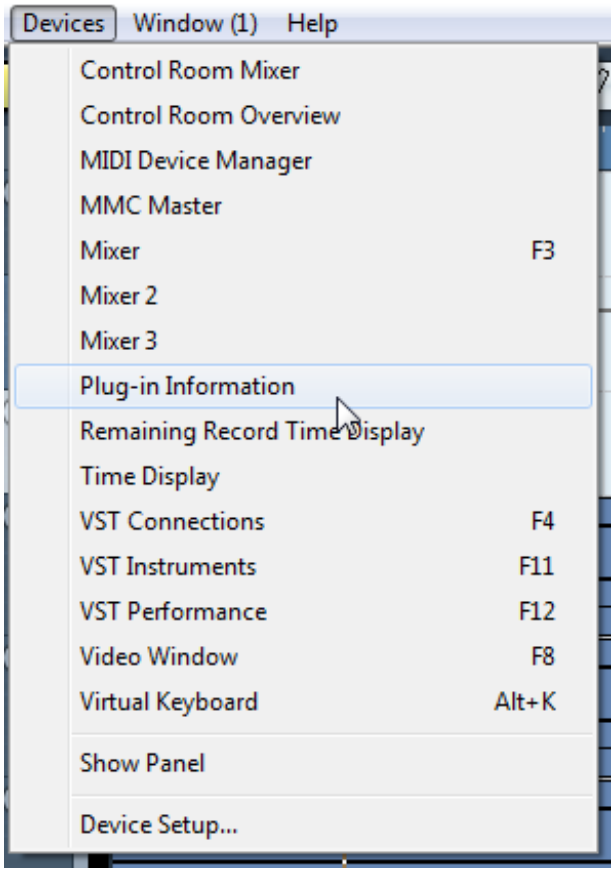


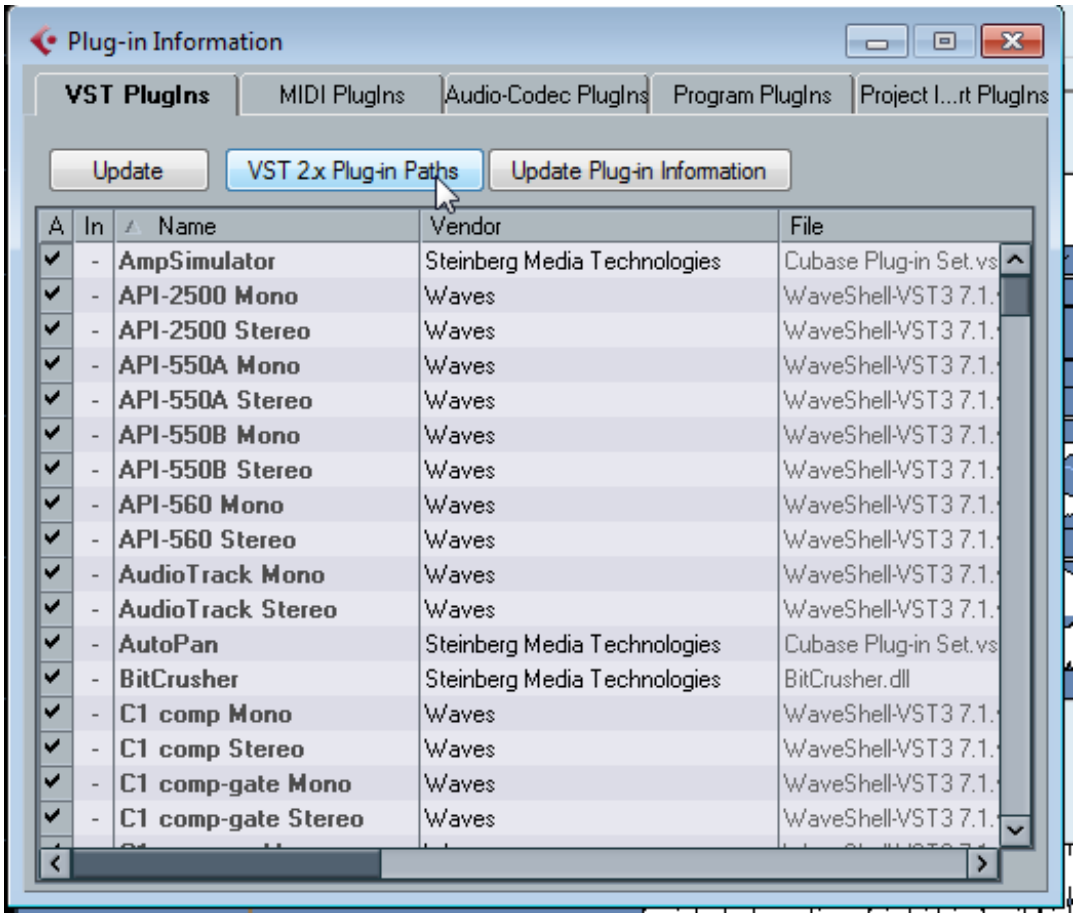
2. Configure Your VSTs

Before we create any channels it would be wise to configure our VST folder.

Click on **Devices -> Plug-in Information**.

Now click on **VST 2.x Plug-in Paths**



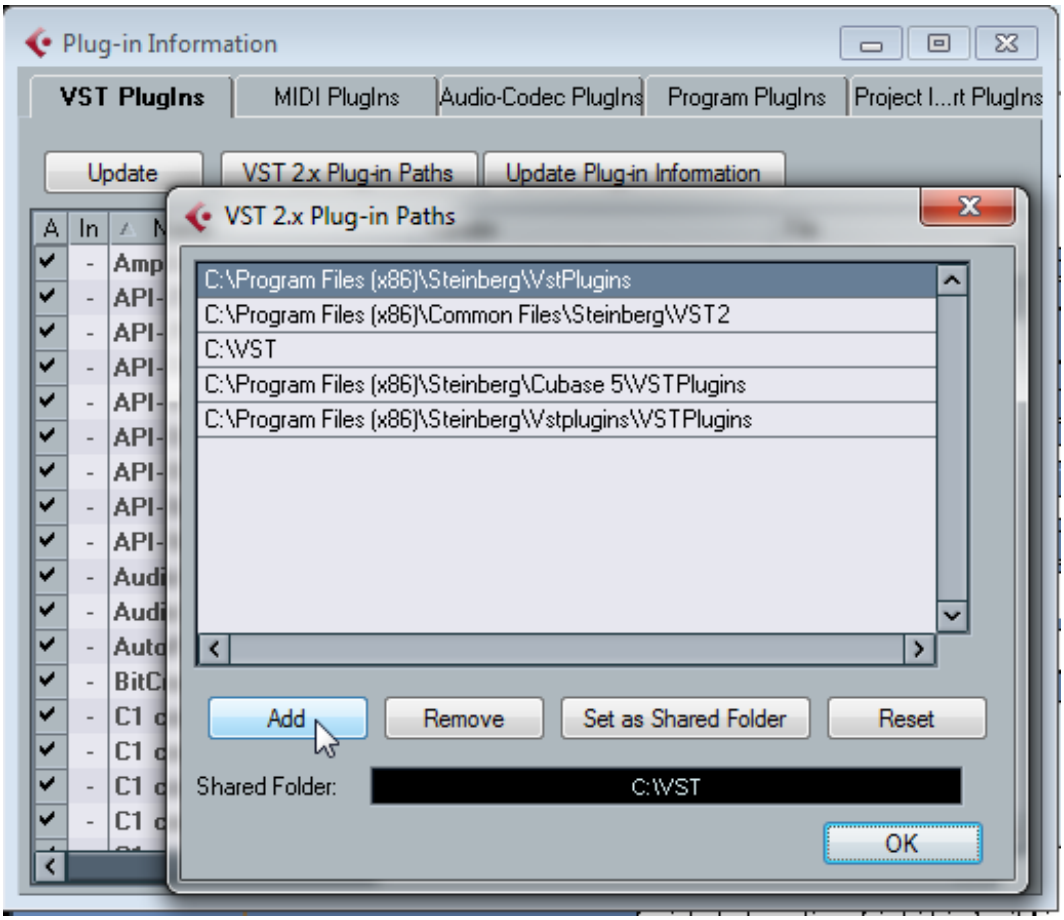


And now click **Add** to let Cubase know the folder that you will save your VSTs to.

As you can see there are some default folders but you can also create your own folder (path).

Now, everytime you are going to install a new VST **you will choose the path that you've just created during the setup wizard**. Everything will be organized your own way!

This step is really a matter of preference.



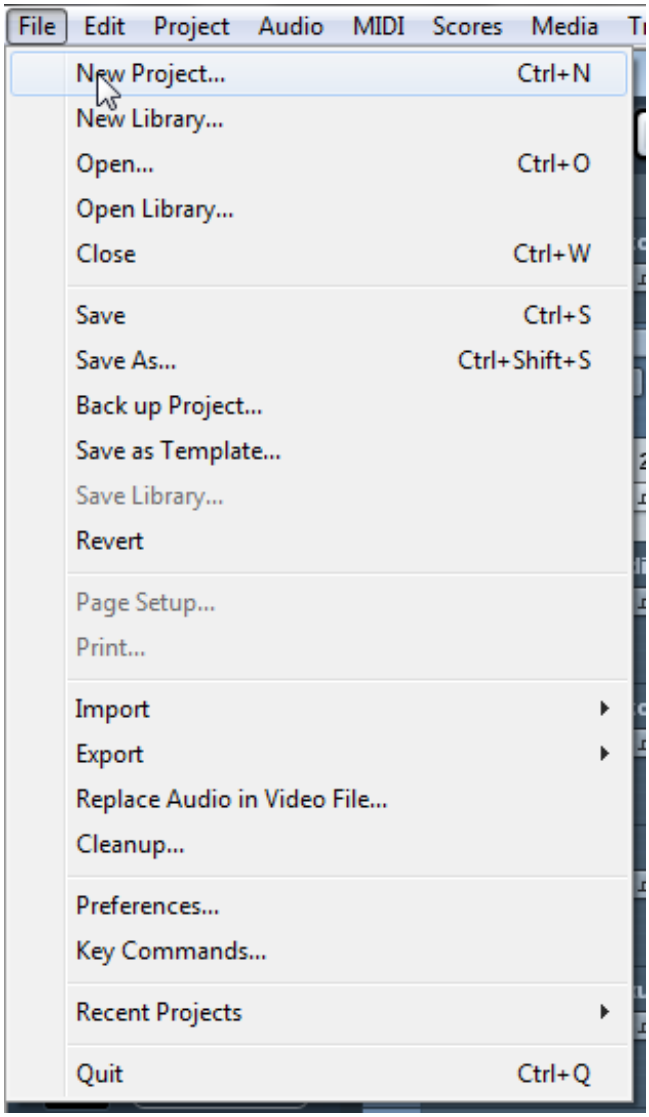
When you choose the folder/path of your liking just click on **OK** and then **Update**.

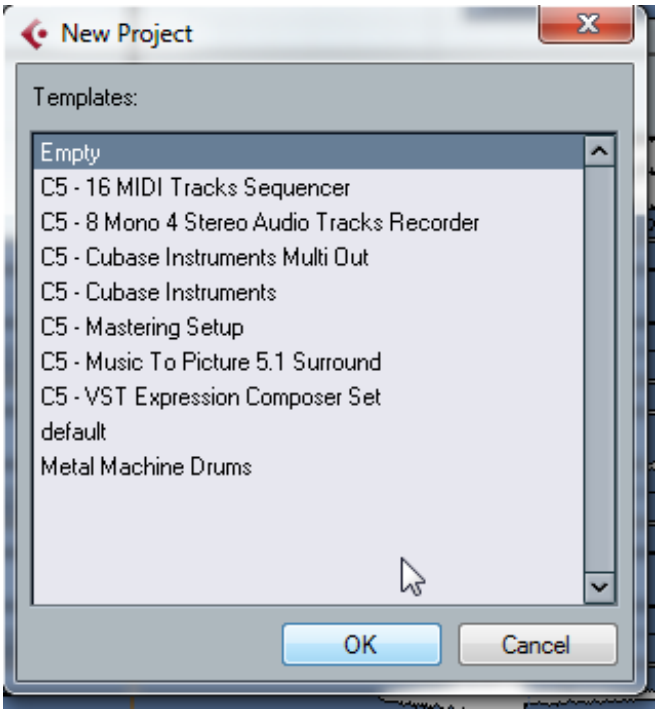
3. Create New Project

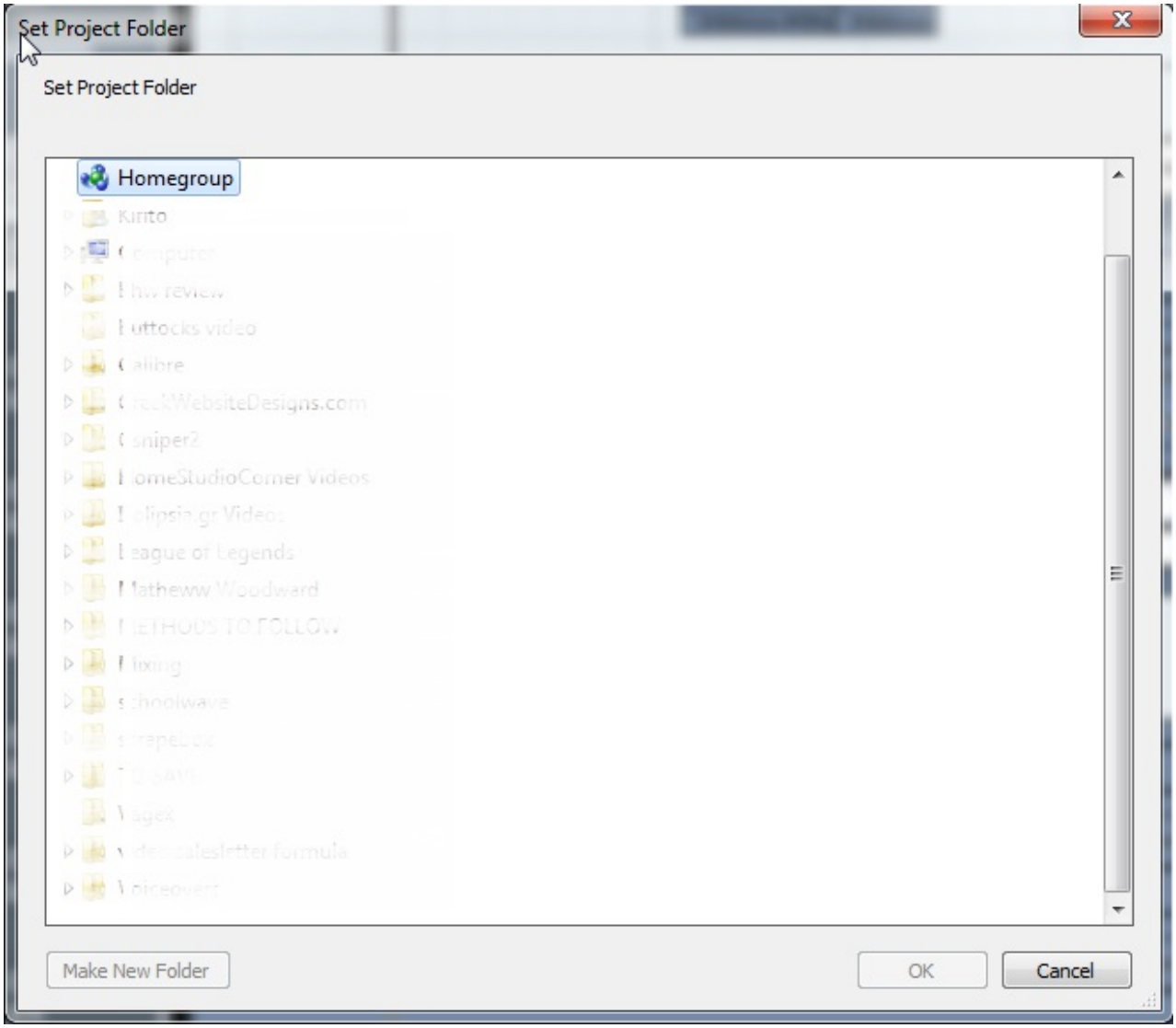
Click on **File -> New Project…**

And now on **Empty**.

Choose the folder of your liking (the one that you are going to save the current project) and click **OK**.



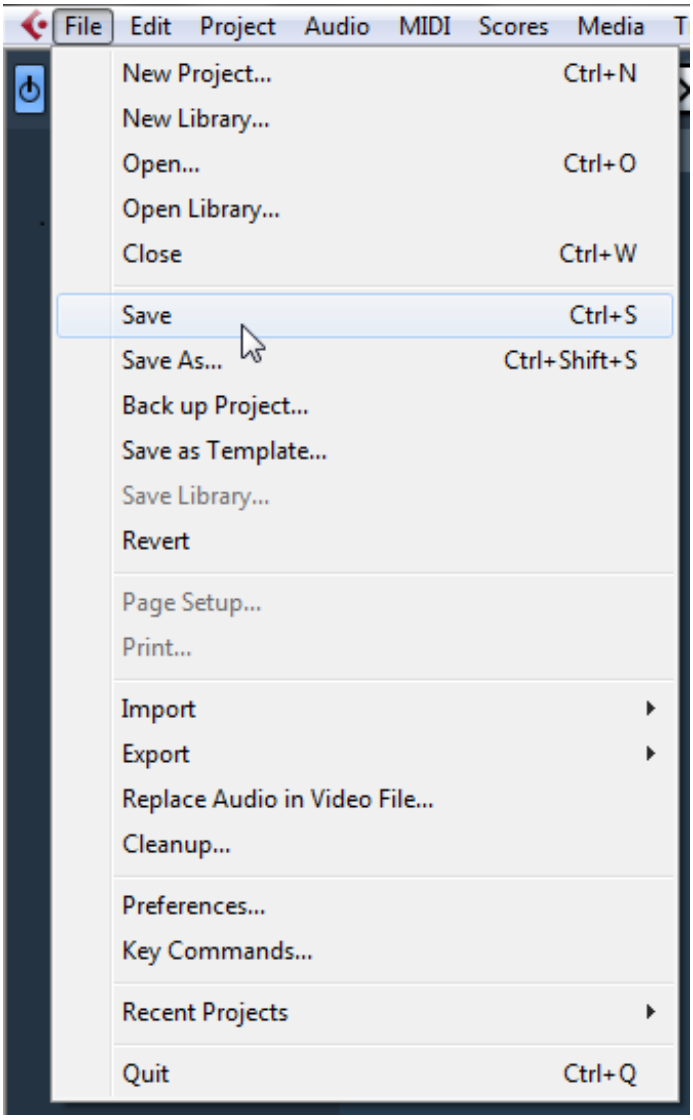




Then click on **File -> Save** and save the Project **in the same folder that you've just created above.**

4. Recording WAV Audio Tracks

(Check out Step 6 for MIDI, but please read this chapter first)



When you save your project you'll end up with an empty screen of cubase without a track, but just the cubase tools.

Before we create our audio tracks, let me first explain the difference between Stereo and Mono Track.

Stereo VS Mono Track

The Stereo Track is nothing more than 2 Mono Tracks panned 100% Left and Right. If you send those 2 Mono Tracks to a single Group then you've got a Stereo Channel.

Then why do Stereo Tracks exist;

It's really simple. Because there are music programs that produce ready-made stereo sounds and in this case you don't need to record 2 Mono Tracks to create your Stereo Track/Sound.

Also, if there weren't any Stereo Tracks you wouldn't be able to process Multiple Mono Sounds in 1 Stereo Track/Group.

So, instead of sending multiple Mono Tracks to 1 Stereo Group Track and process that track, you would need to process each track individually **even if you used the exact same VSTs with the exact same settings**.

This results in spending double or even triple CPU power – in case you're mixing digitally – and of course spending more of your time to copy paste your equalizers, compressors, reverbs, etc.

So it's better to mix using the 1 Stereo Track and not the 2 Mono Tracks;

There's no difference and it's clearly depending on your computer's CPU power and RAM.

If you've got a strong PC/MAC that can handle lots of VSTs then work with the 2 Monos. You have more freedom this way.

Let me explain.

For example, a client can send me an instrument recorded on a Stereo Track and from my left speaker… it's a mess!!! My only option to fix problems is to work on this Stereo Track since I don't have access to both of the speakers (2 Mono Tracks panned hard left/right).

If I had access to the 2 Mono Tracks I could just edit the left mono track and not even touch the right speaker/microphone (because each Mono Track is recorded using different takes, so the signal of the microphone is different).

What I like in Pro Tools is that when you insert a Stereo Track it automatically separates them to 2 Monos panned 100% L and R for the reason that I just explained. It's just a matter of ¨workflow freedom¨.

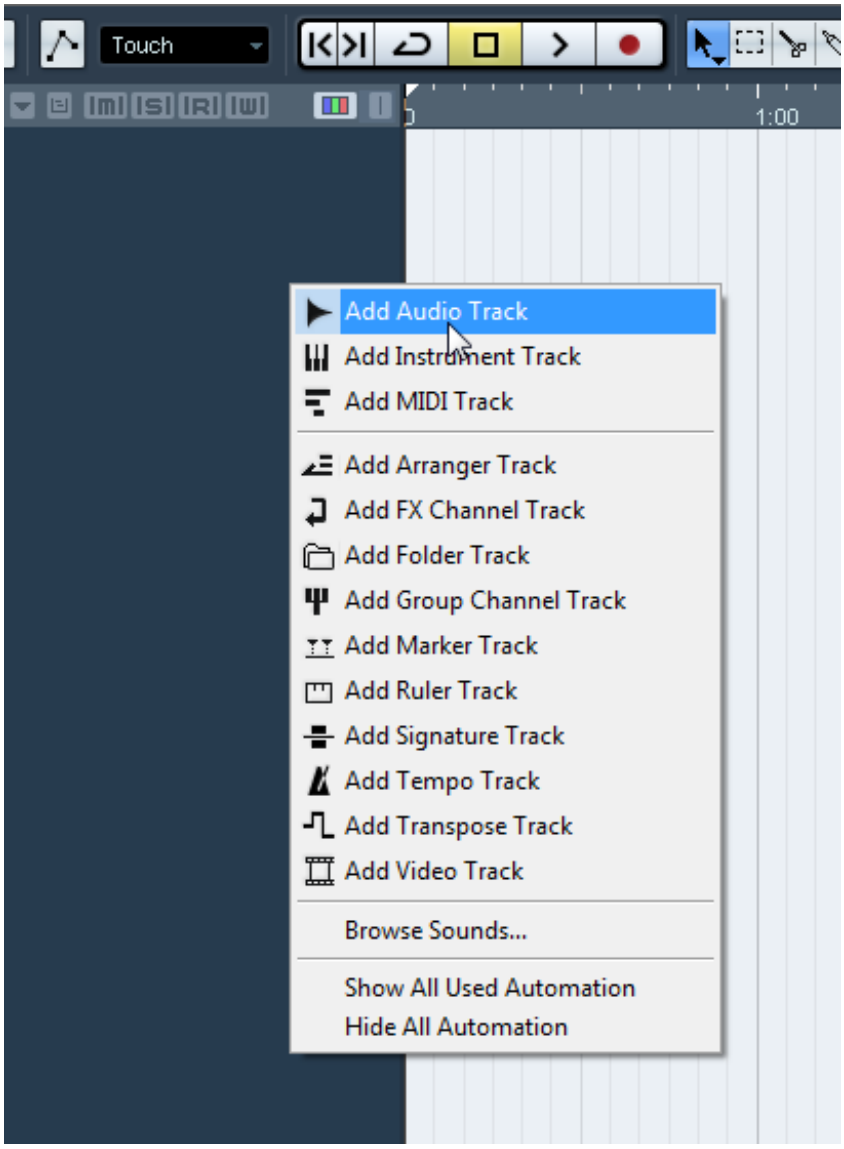
Finally, without Stereo Tracks whatever Stereo Sound that you would “drag and drop” in the software for mixing, it would be converted to Mono… and I don’t think you would like that!

Create Mono Audio Tracks

Now that we know the differences let’s create our Tracks!

Right Click on the empty space and then click on **Add Audio Track**.

Choose **Mono** (unless you have an analog synthesizer, a VSTi Synth or anything that produces Stereo Audio) and then click **OK**.



Highlight your **Track** and select your audio interface input. It should be the input that you’ve connected your microphone or instrument.

Depending on the sound card you would come across different options.

The sound card that I have at home has only 2 Inputs so there are only 2 choices – **Left** και **Right**.

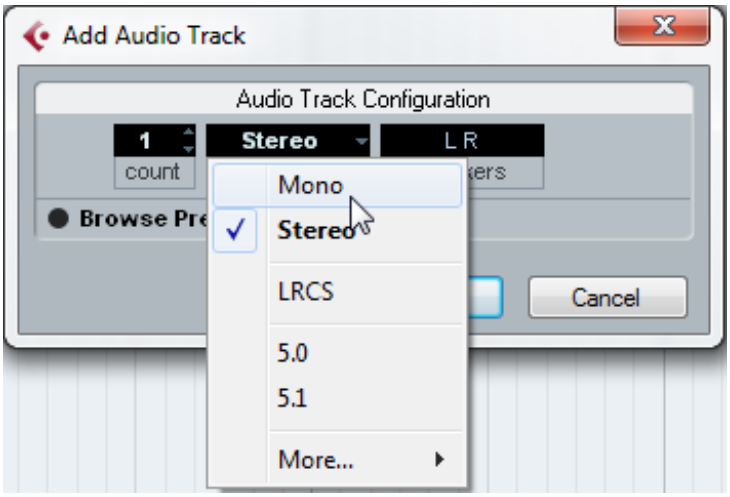
I’ve connected the microphone to my left Input so I’ve chosen **Left**. Please choose your own input.

Arm the channel **(click the small red button).**

This “tells” Cubase that “When I’ll press the Big Red Recording Button I want you to record this channel”.

You can **Arm** many channels depending on how many Inputs your sound card has.

If you can connect, for example, 3 instruments you are able to record all 3 at the same time, by **arming all the 3 channels**.



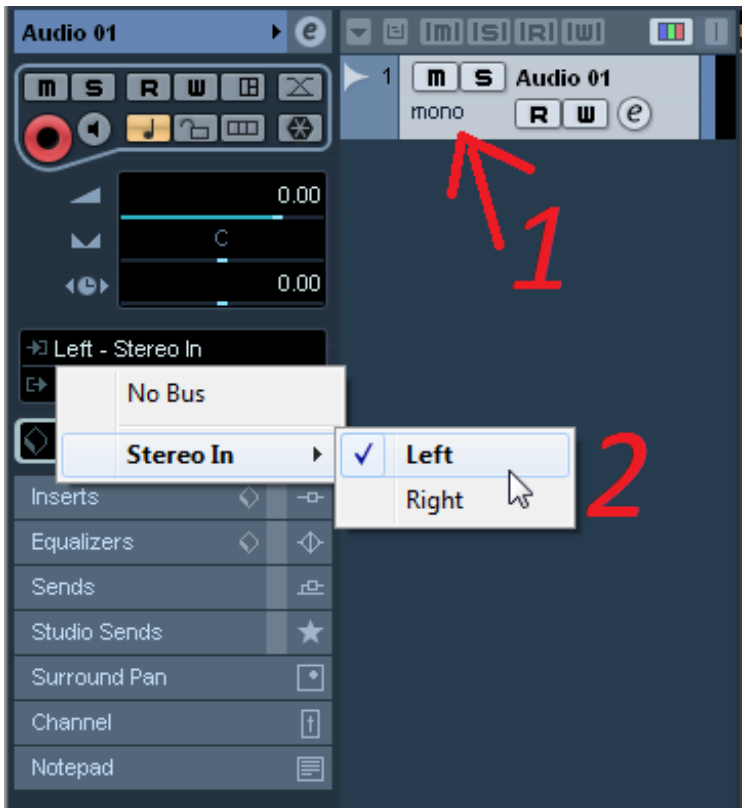
If you want to the **Arm** button to be displayed on every simple track for faster movements then click the little arrow just like the image below.

Now choose **Default** or **Recording – Minimal**.

When recording you are also able to hear the sound you’re recording coming out of your speakers (Playback). Click on the **small orange Monitor Icon** just like in the image below.

It’s not necessary to have the monitor icon enabled in order to record though. **Arm** is for recording and

Monitor is for listening to what you're recording.



Small Tip:

You usually use them together, but some home studio owners don't have enough room space, so they are obliged to put the guitar cabinet with the recording microphone next to the speakers. In this situation there's no need to enable monitoring.

Then click **Channel** to see the volume balance.

The recording volume can be configured from the "Gain" knob of your sound card and not by the channel itself.

The channel fader must be at it's default position just like the image below (if you are unsure about it just Control + Click the fader and it will return to its default position).

"Play" with your audio interface's **Gain** knob. Adjust it till the signal peaks at **-3db maximum**.

Before recording we should setup our song's **Tempo,** else it would be too late to change the tempo later!

Right Click on the empty space again and click **Add Tempo Track**.

By clicking inside the bars you create new **Tempos** that you can adjust.

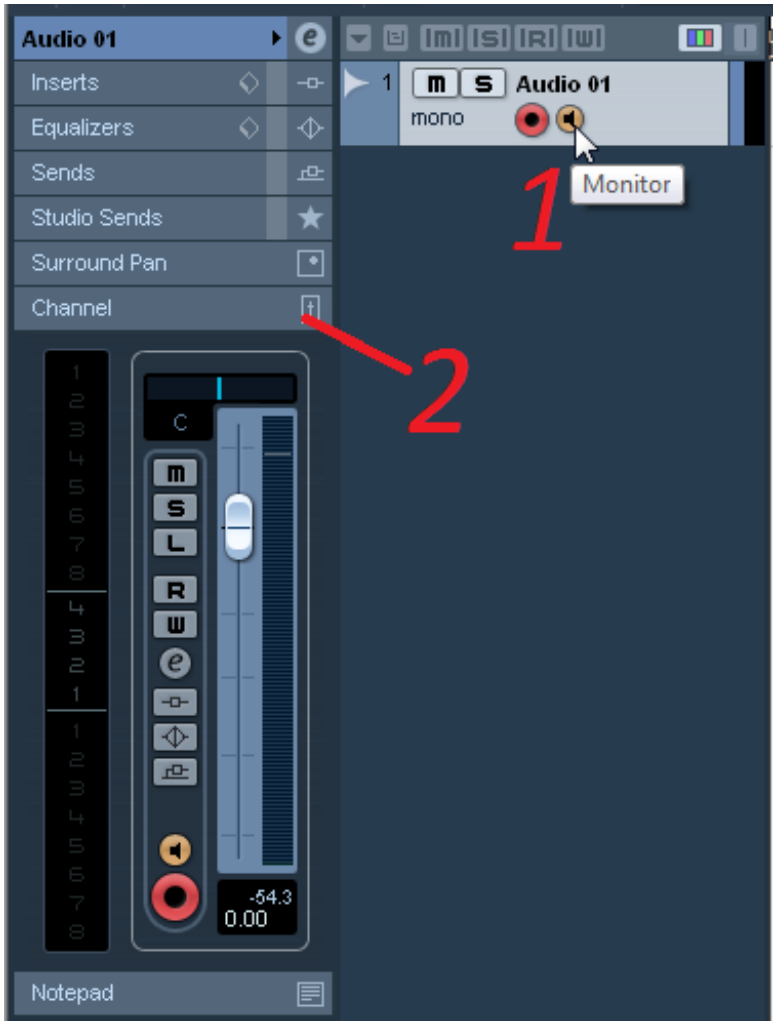
For example, if you want **Bar 5** to play on **140bmp** you just click on bar 5, create a new spot and **drag and drop this spot up and down to choose the bpm of your liking**.

You can also hit **Ctrl + T** to open a new window with your Tempo Track and Zoom In.

Don't forget to enable **Bars+Beats** and **Snap**.

Bars+Beats show you the bars of the song instead of time (minutes) and **Snap** "snaps" your clicks on the nearer bar for easier workflow.

Audio 01
Default
Recording - minimal
Editing
Mixing
Track Controls Settings...
0.00
C
0.00
Left - Stereo In
Stereo Out
No Track Preset
Inserts
Equalizers
Sends
Studio Sends
Surround Pan
Channel
Notepad


Audio 01
Inserts
Equalizers
Sends
Studio Sends
Surround Pan
Channel
Notepad
1
Audio 01
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Monitor
1
2
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-54.3
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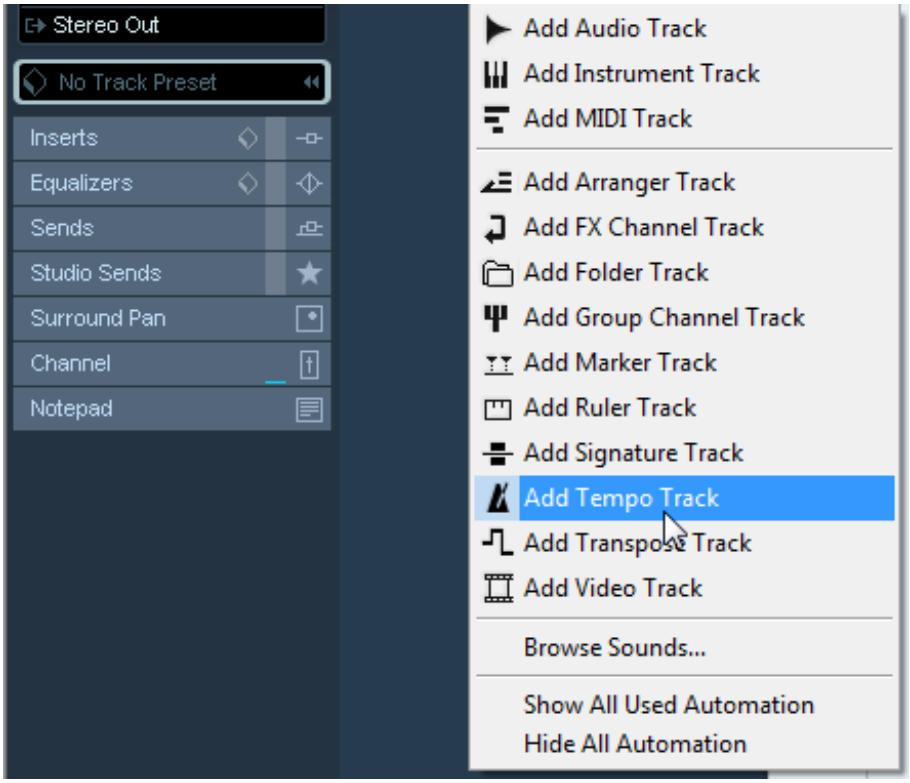
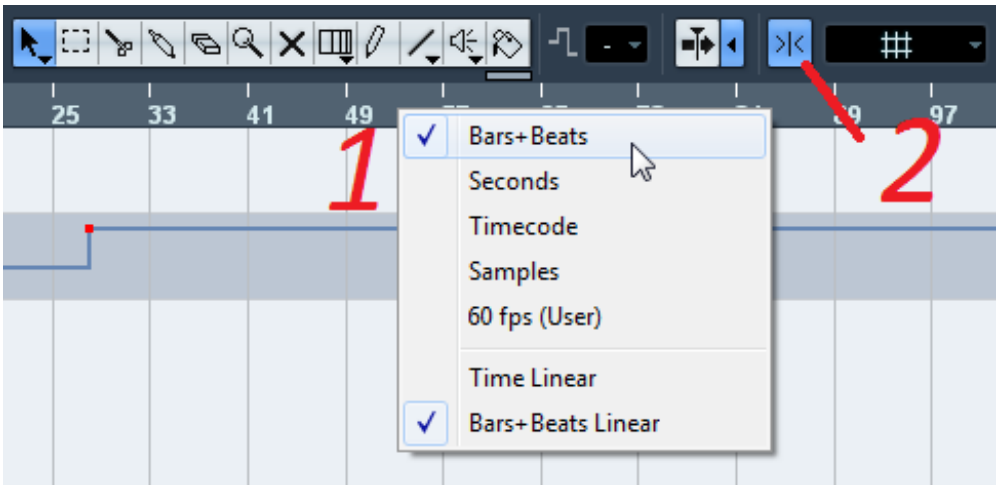
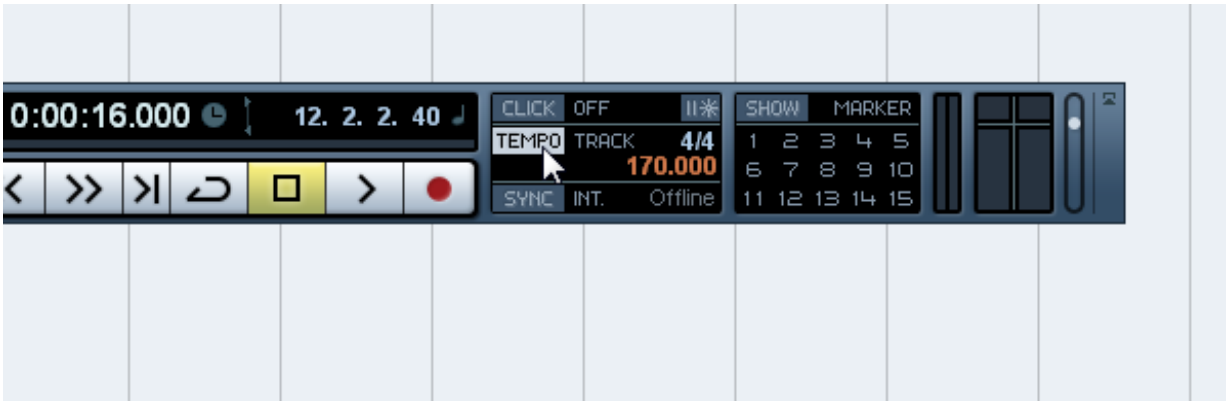




Also you need to Enable **Tempo Track** or Cubase won't take into consideration your configured BPMs.

Just hit **F2** and click like in the image below:

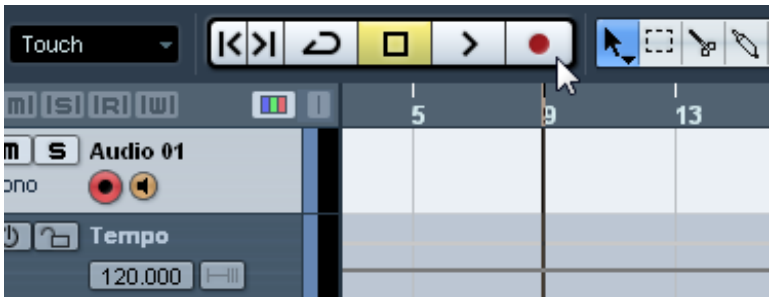


You've configured everything!

Just hit the big red button **(Record)** and… Happy Recording!

You can stop recording by hitting **Space** on your keyboard.

When you record your first take a new folder will appear – inside your saved project folder – with the name **Audio.**



DO NOT DELETE IT.

In there, you'll find all your **recording takes** and deleting it is not a good idea.

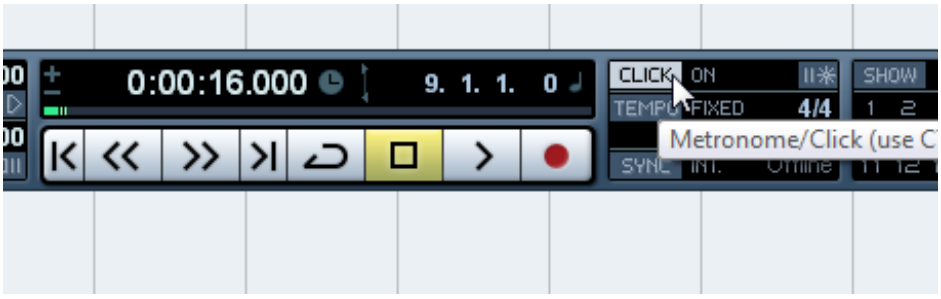
5. Play With Metronome

No Mixing Engineer can save a bad recorded song.

I am sure you know that there are tools to fix time issues but there's nothing better than working with experienced musicians and perfectly recorded takes.

Enable The Metronome

Just hit **F2** click **ON** like in the image below.



By **Control Clicking** we open a new window with the **Metronome Options:**

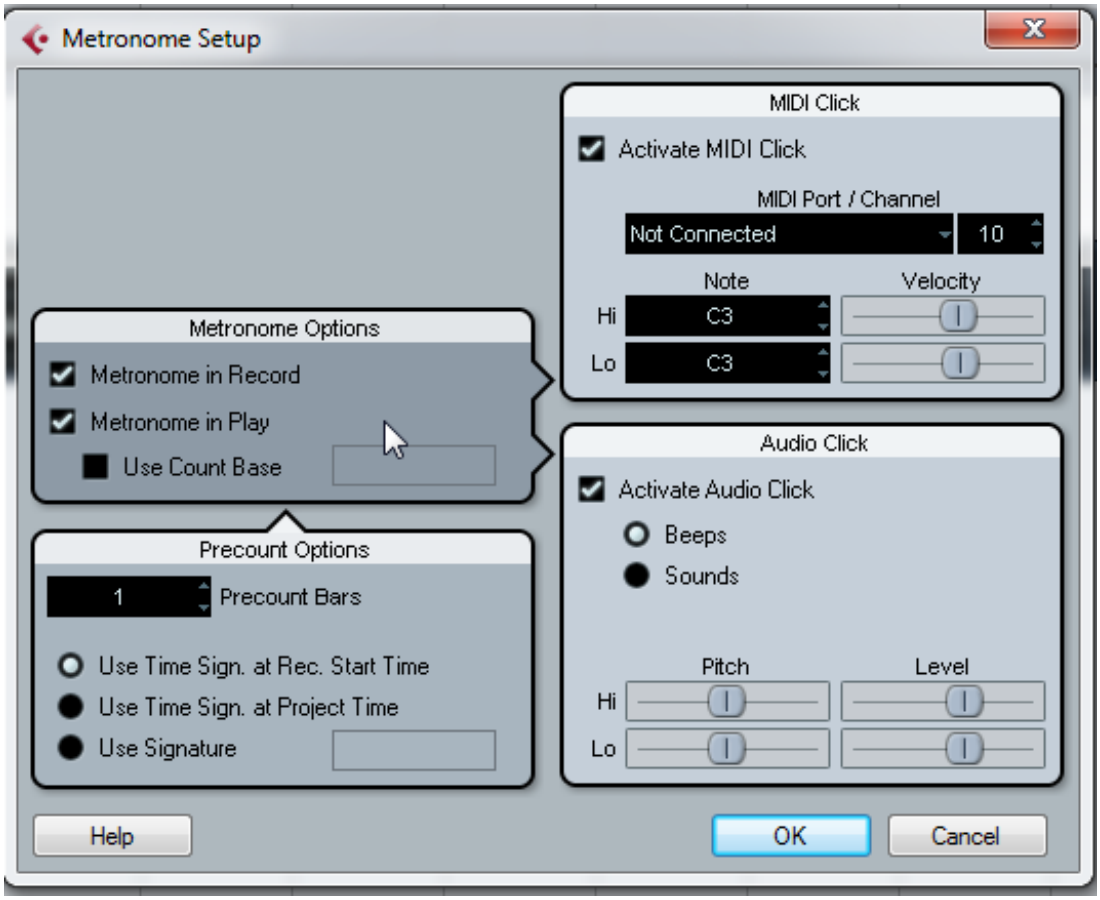
Metronome in Record: Enables Metronome while Recording.
Metronome in Play: Enables Metronome when Hearing (Playback).

Precount Bars: Choose how many bars you want the metronome to play on, before recording.

This is perfect because it gives you the opportunity to give yourself some time before you start recording. It's like someone singing to you "1… 2… 3… 4…" just to "get in" right.

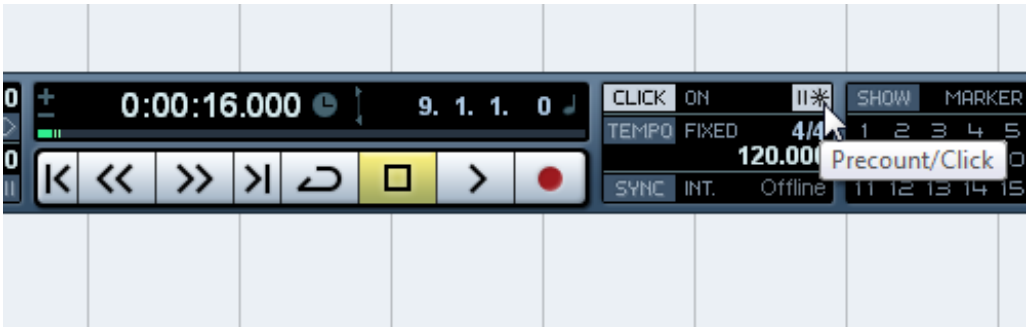
Audio Click: Here we can configure the volume of the Metronome.

We can also choose different volumes for **1 (Hi Pitch)** and for **2-3-4 (Low Pitch).**
Pretty Cool huh?



No matter the quantity of the **Precount Bars** that you've chosen, you also need to enable the precount bars.

Just click like in the image below to enable it.



6. Record MIDI

The way we record MIDI is almost the same with the way that we record WAV. The only difference is that now we are going to create MIDI tracks.

I will use a Cubase VST of my liking but if you want to use a third party VST that you've paid for it, it's pretty logical to install it first before following the steps below.

Recording Midi – The Steps

Click **Devices -> VST Instruments** or just hit **F11**.

Choose the software of your liking.

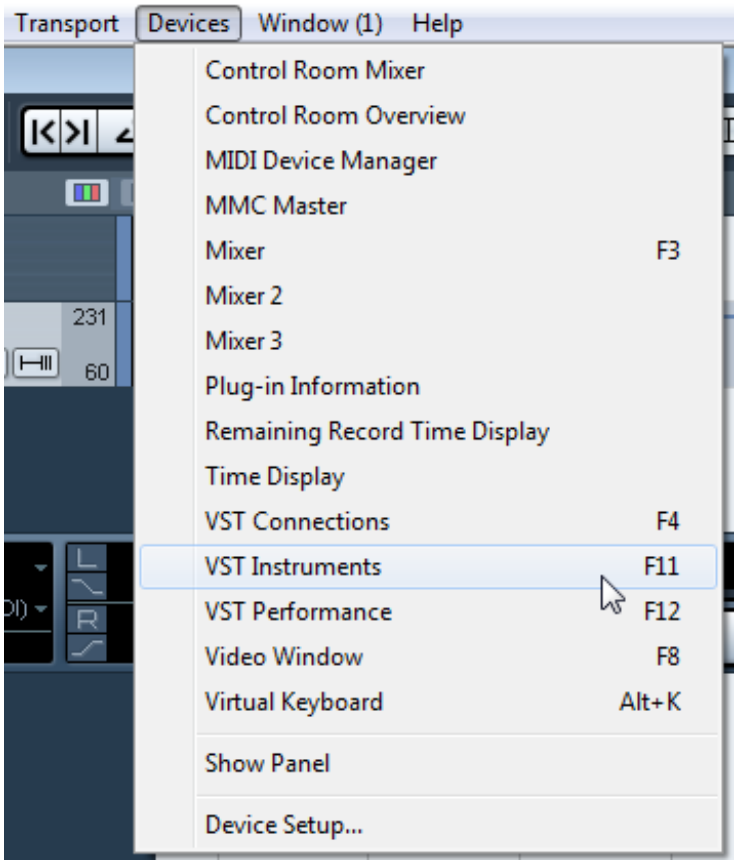
In this example I will use **EZ Drummer**.

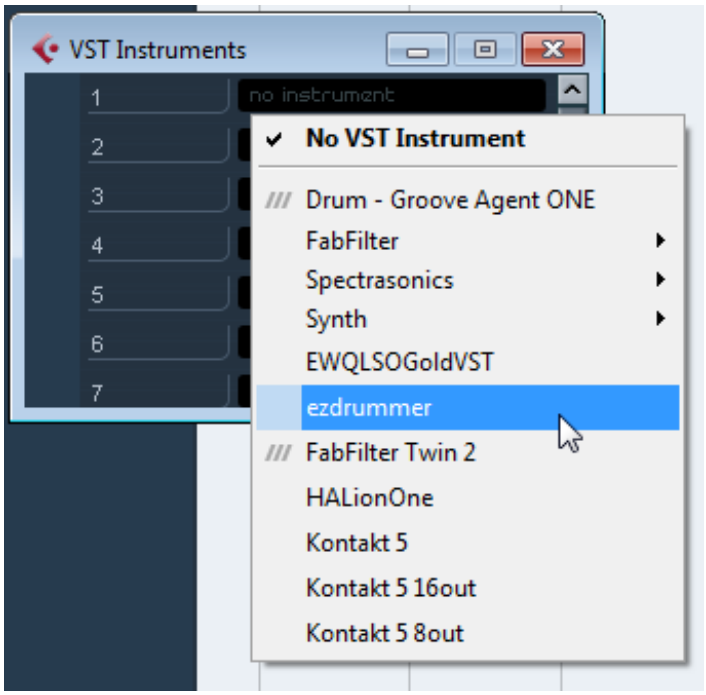
Click **Create** on the window that will pop up.

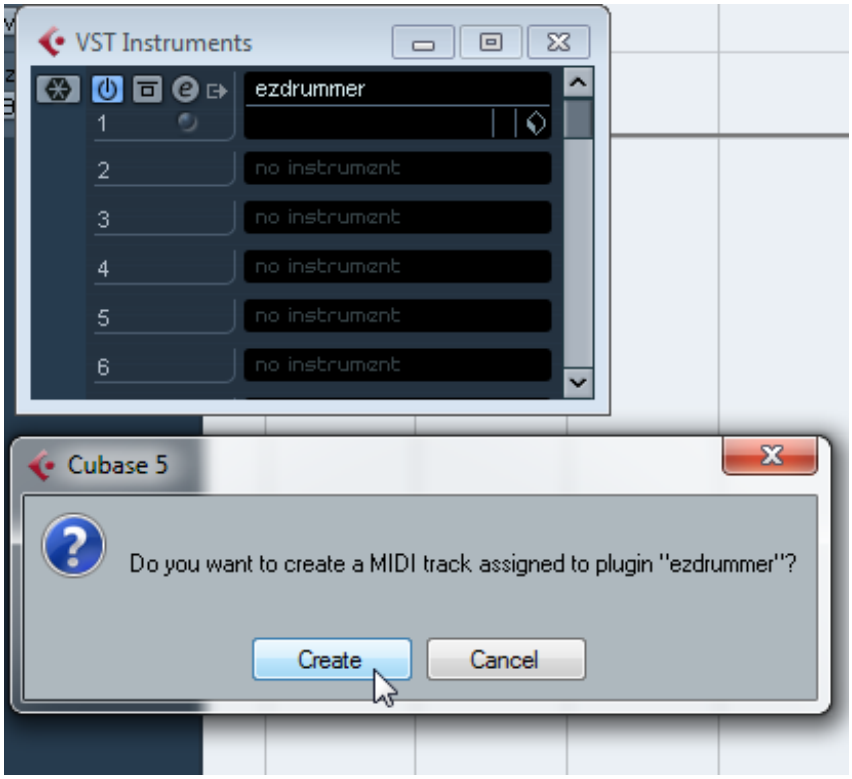
A **MIDI** channel will appear that will get automatically get “connected” with your software/synth/VST.

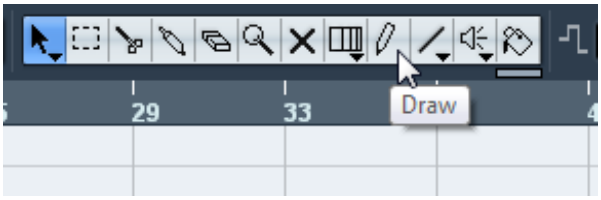
Choose the little **pencil tool (Draw)** or just hit **8** on your keyboard.

And **“draw”** on the bars that you want to compose music.

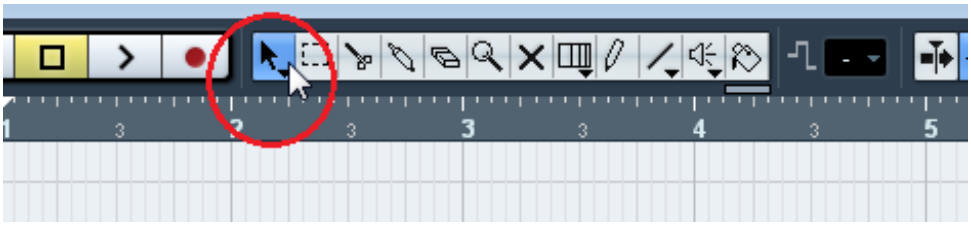




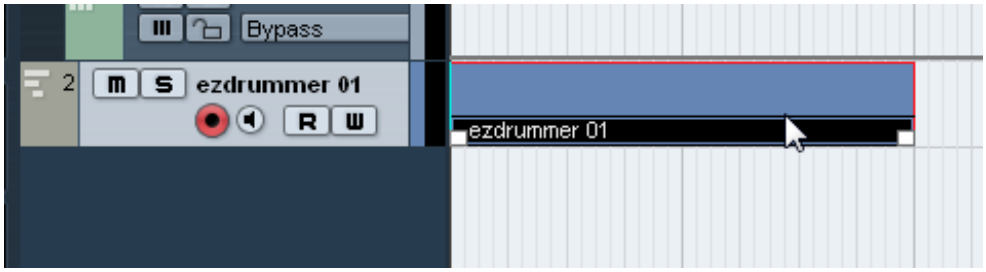




Change from the **pencil tool** to the little **arrow** by clicking it or by just hitting **1** on your keyboard.



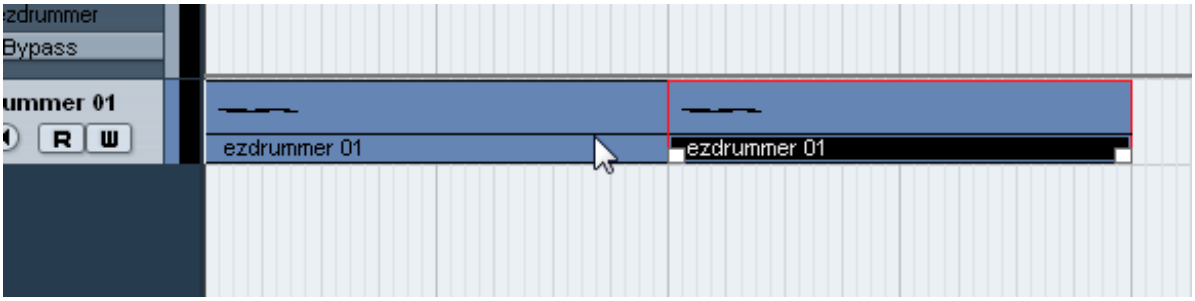
Now **Double Click** the box that you've just drawn.



In this window you can “draw” **notes** and also configure the **dynamics** of the notes.

Notes are displayed as **horizontal bars** and the dynamics as **vertical bars** at the bottom of your window.

By selecting a box and hitting **Ctrl + D** (Duplicate) you create a duplicate box right next to the original one.



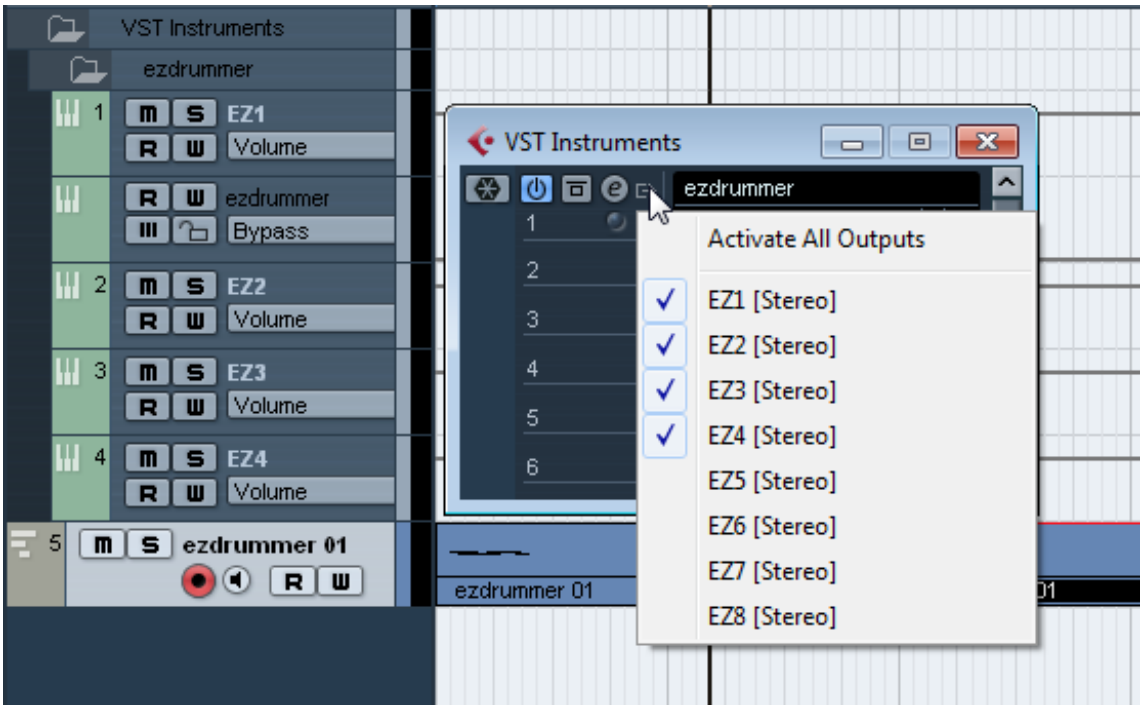
By clicking the **yellow piano icon** you can open your program’s window.

If the program you're using has **more than 1 Outputs** hit **F11** again and Enable them, just like in the image below.

Some VSTi have only **1 output** which is always enabled by default.

On the contrary, there are many programs like the **EZ Drummer** that need more than 1 outputs/tracks (for the Kick, Snare, Hi-hat, Toms etc)

As you can see, with each **Output** that you enable **cubase also creates the corresponding track.**



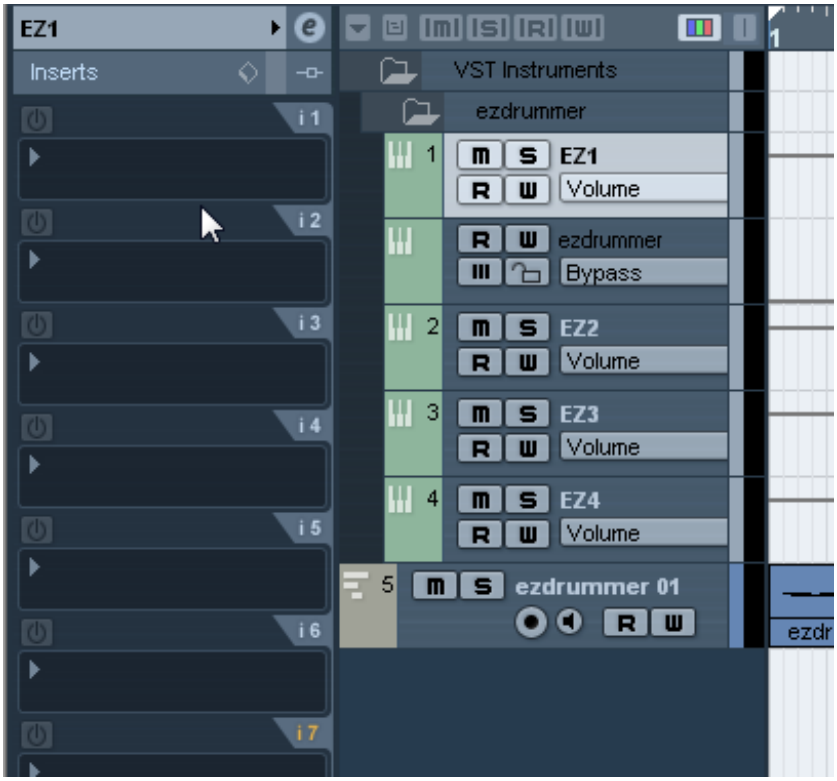
You're ready!

Now, **you can insert Effects and Processors on every single track!**

MIDI Track VS Instrument Track

Cubase also gives you the option to create **Instrument Tracks**.

What's their difference with the MIDI tracks? Is is better to use these Tracks or just follow the guidelines that I've shown you above?



The Difference Between the MIDI Track and the Instrument Track

The way of setting up the tracks that I showed you above is for me the most "correct" one. By what do I mean by correct?

Programs like EZDrummer and Nexus can produce more than 1 sounds. For example, EZDrummer, can produce multiple sounds like the Kick Drum, Snare, Toms, Overheads etc… so you need many outputs/tracks.

The way of setting up the tracks that I showed you above allows you to use every single program no matter how many outputs it needs. **No matter if you need 1 output or multiple outputs you are able to use everything** .

On the contrary, the **Instrument Track** needs less clicks and less time to setup your software but it works only for software **that needs only 1 output.**

VSTi programs like piano, harp or bass can easily be used with the Instrument Track since you won't need multiple outputs/tracks.

As you can see, there's no "worse" or "better" track. It really depends on the program that you want to use.

What I like to do is to use the **Instrument Tracks** on my bass VSTi – since it produces 1 sound, the bass guitar sound – and MIDI tracks on my Drum VSTi in case I want to blend some drum sounds with the drum sounds of my acoustic kit.

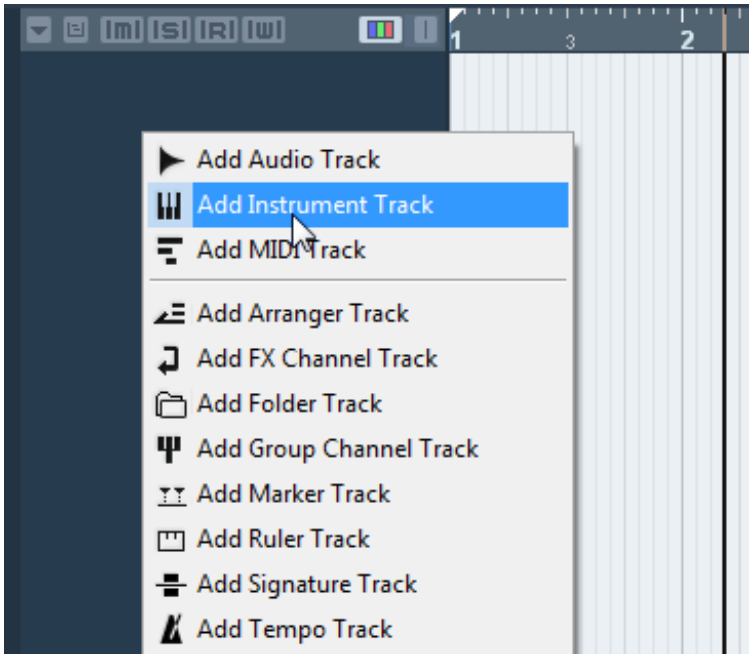
Let's See How To Setup A VSTi Program Using The Instrument Track

Right click on the empty space and then **Add Instrument Track**.

Choose a VSTi that needs **only 1 output**.

1. By clicking the little **piano icon** you open your program's interface window.

2. Click on **Inserts** to insert your VSTs there.



It's easier than it seems

I know that when you visited this page you thought "what is this thing?!".

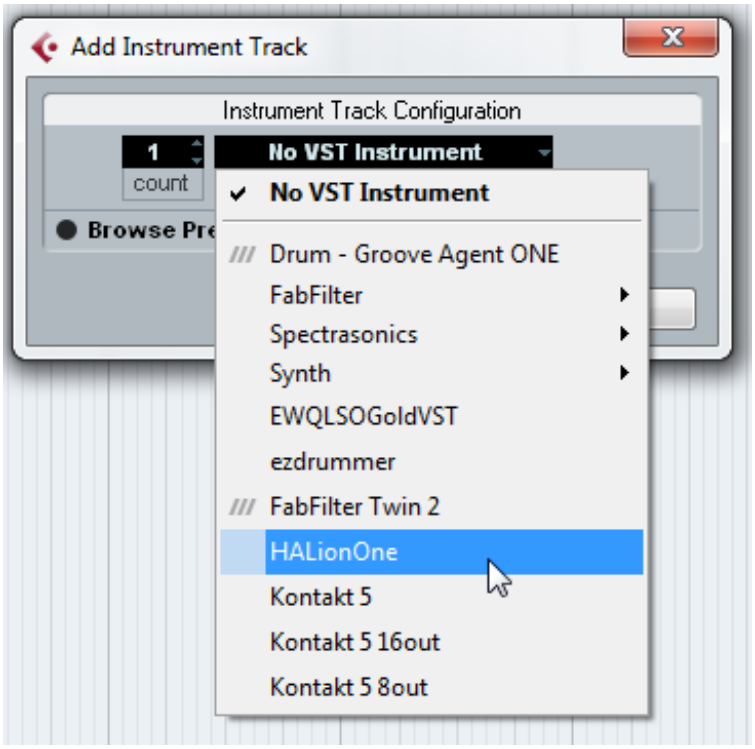
The tutorial is a bit long yeah, but I would like to help you understand everything and not leave you with unanswered questions.

I guarantee that you will get used to it really fast.

Just follow step by step this tutorial and I am sure that you will be able to record without the help of this tutorial in just a couple of hours!

If you wanna thank me for this guide consider sharing this guide and leaving a comment below

Happy Recording!



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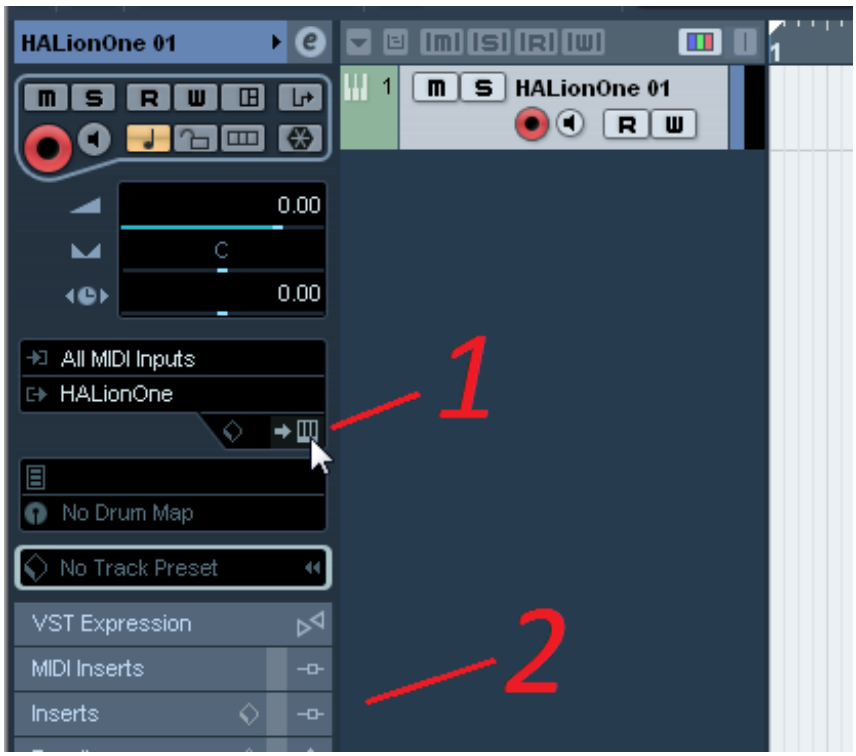
HALionOne 01
0.00
C
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All MIDI Inputs
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1
No Drum Map
No Track Preset
VST Expression
MIDI Inserts
Inserts
2
HALionOne 01