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EXPORT FOR MIXING

HOW TO EXPORT SINGLE TRACKS
FROM CUBASE
FOR EXTERNAL MIXING



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INTRO

It's done!

After weeks or months of hard work, your song, EP, or album is finally produced. The last missing step is to make it sound right to keep up with your favourite artists or references!

And after your work as a producer, a professional mixing engineer with fresh and professional ears should take care of that. Great decision!

But what is the best way to export individual tracks from Cubase? And should all the effects be deactivated or not? They actually sound good as they are ... maybe it's better to do everything yourself in the end?

There's no need to panic exporting stems from Cubase to have them mixed by a professional, is going to be quick and easy with this guide!

VOR DEM EXPORT

In order to make the transfer to an external mixing engineer as fast and smooth as possible, you should pay attention to a few small details beforehand.

Production done?

To save the mixing engineer unnecessary work, you shouldn't add new tracks after she/he has started her/his work.

So make sure that you are really finished and satisfied with your production.

'Mixing consoles are no sewage treatment plants'

That's what engineers say in Germany.

Keep in mind that a mixing engineer can't turn bad productions into gold. If your tracks are overdriven, sloppy, or sound significantly different from what you want for your project, you may want to rework your tracks. Don't expect the mixing engineer to fix your mistakes.

Editing is not part of the mixing process!

However, if you haven't edited your tracks yet and don't have any experience with it, talk to your engineer to see if she/he offers editing and can take over. Even the best mix won't help if you have unedited tracks or editing errors.

Export necessary?

If the mixing engineer also works with Cubase, you might be able to skip the whole export process (steps 8-11) and just send a cleaned up project file or the project folder.

The question of all questions

'Should I disable the plugins or leave all the effects active?'



The answer: 'It depends!'

You can distinguish between artistic effects (delay, phaser, autotune, octaver, automations, ...), which tend to belong to the production process, and the more technical effects (compressor, equalizer, ...), which tend to belong to the mixing process.

It's better to leave the latter to the engineer, because these effects are what the mixing process is all about. There should also be no plug-ins on your master track.

If you have not yet created any "artistic" effects or if you are not satisfied with your settings, these can of course also be created completely by the mixing engineer (in this case just jump directly to the instructions).

If you have applied artistic effects yourself and are completely satisfied with them, you can keep them when exporting. However, if the effect plug-in is located directly on the respective audio track, that can be a problem. For example, if you send out a vocal track with reverb on it, the mixing engineer is not able to deal with the voice and reverb separately. If, for example, a compressor is applied to the track to emphasize the vocals, the reverb could also become more intense. The mixing engineer is therefore clearly limited in his/her ability to get the best out of your song.

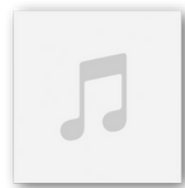
To prevent this, you should work with "parallel processing". This means that you do not place the effect plugin directly on the audio track, but send the signal of the audio track to a parallel effect track (called bus track, send track, aux track). On this second track the effect is put with a mix value of 100%. This way you have both a 100% dry and a 100% wet track. The intensity of the effect can then be controlled by the volume ratio of the two. If you use effects in this way, you can send the raw signal and the effect signal to the mixing engineer in two separate tracks. This allows the mixing engineer to control the intensity of the effect as well as the raw signal and the effect separately.



EXPORT AUS CUBASE

1. Create a demo version:

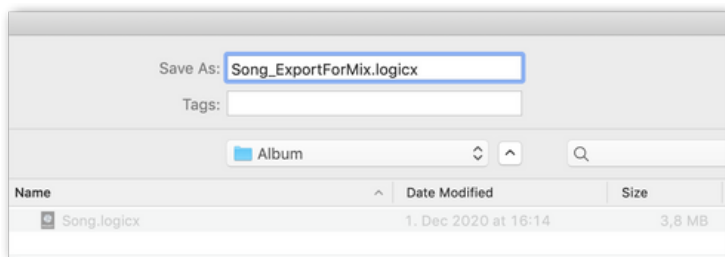
Before you change anything in your session, bounce the current version of the song as a demo. This can help the mixing engineer orient himself/herself and serves as a helpful reference as to whether all tracks of the song are present, for example.



DEMO.wav

2. Save the project:

Next, to be safe, save a new version of your project file and mark it with "ExportForMix" after the existing name so you don't get confused later.



3. Take out the trash:

Delete all the elements that aren't supposed to be in the song. Like ideas that are already discarded but are still present in the session as disabled, or muted elements. Also delete all plug-ins. As mentioned earlier and if present, leave only the effects on the Aux Tracks enabled to deliver your effects as separate effects tracks.



4. One track per element:

Check that each element in the song has its own track. The shaker in the verse does not belong on the same track as the chorus tambourine, nor should clean guitars share a track with distorted guitars.

5. Prepare MIDI drums & percussions (if present):

Again, make sure that each element has its own track.

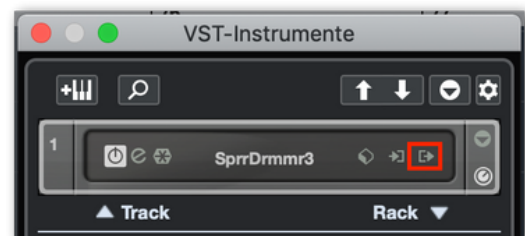
To avoid CPU overload from multiple instances of the same plugin, you can instead route the different elements to an individual aux track containing that plug-in.

With drum plug-ins like Superiordrummer/EZDrummer, Studiodrummer, Addictive Drums, etc. you can even subdivide into the individual microphones.

To do this, open the "Studio" menu via the menu bar and click on "VST Instruments". Then click on the "Output" icon of the MIDI instrument that you want to divide into several audio tracks and activate "All Outputs".

Separate tracks have now been created in your

MixConsole, which can be connected to those of your drum plugin. Instead of a stereo track called "Drums" you now have tracks like "Kick_In", "Kick_Out", "Snare_Top", "Snare_Bottom", "OH Left", "OH Right", and so on.



6. Name the tracks:

Name the tracks as briefly, clearly and above all factually as possible. Also use meaningful abbreviations. „Benjamin_Strat-ChorusShredding_Left(Final)“ becomes "Git_L_Chorus".

The track names will be automatically applied to the file names later during export.



7. Edit and clean the tracks:

First, make sure your song doesn't start left-aligned right at bar 0. If this is the case, move EVERYTHING 4 bars to the right to create some space before the song starts.

Cut out unwanted gaps where noise or mouse clicks can be heard and add fades to the beginning and end of the regions. Be careful not to cut away any breaths on vocals (it tends to sound unnatural). Use short crossfades for overlapping regions.

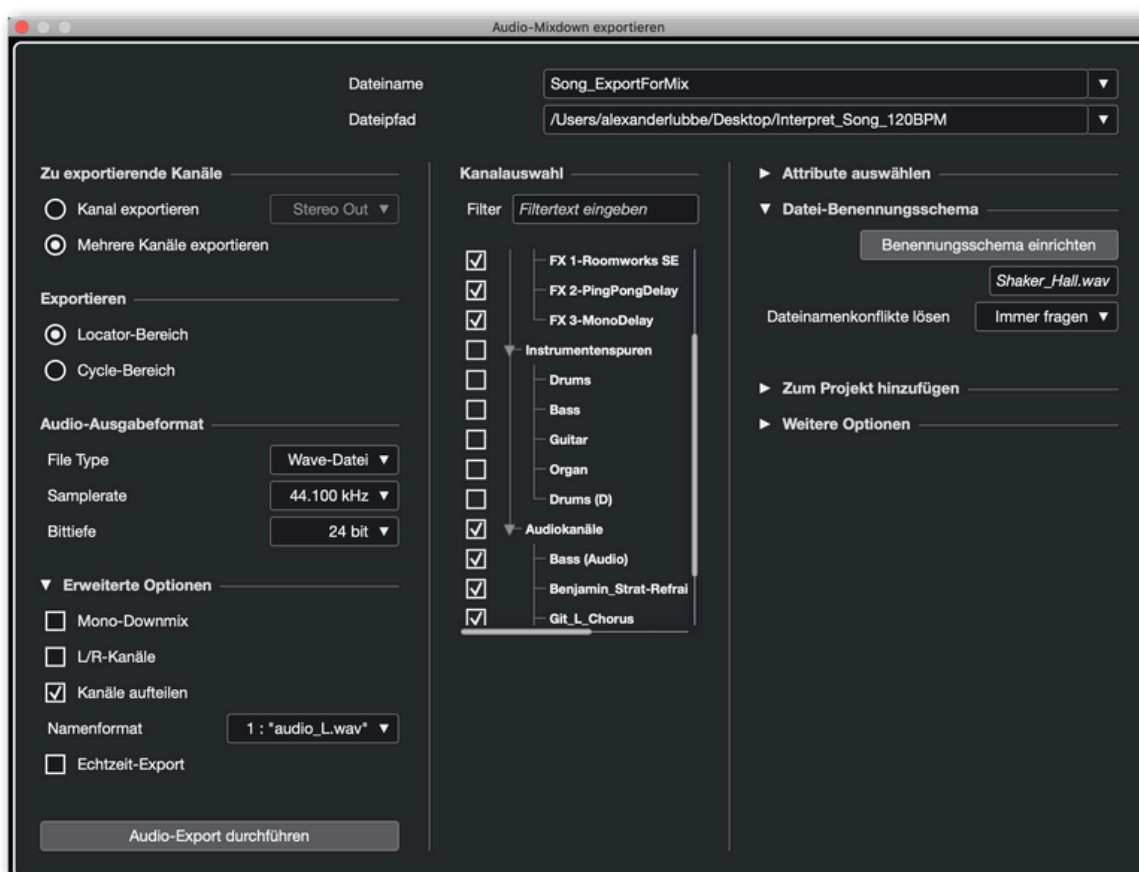
8. Set Locators for the export:

Place your Start Locator left-aligned at the beginning and the End Locator at the end of the project.

Make sure that the End Locator is also placed behind decaying reverb tails and delays so that they are not cut off during export.

9. The export:

Go to "File - Export - Audio Mixdown..." in the menu bar to open the window for exporting all tracks. First click on the field next to "File path" and create a new folder. The folder name should consist of the artist name, the song name, and the BPM (tempo) value of the song. In the "Channels to export" section, activate the "Export multiple channels" option. This will open the "Channel Selection" window. In addition to all audio tracks, select the individual effect channels and, if applicable, the VST outputs mentioned in point 5. Select the existing settings of your project as audio output format. Also, under "Advanced Options", check the "Split Channels" box and select the first option as the name format. Finally, you can set up a naming scheme under "File Naming Scheme". If you have named your tracks carefully as described in point 6, the attribute "Channel name" is sufficient here.



Now click on "Perform audio export".

All audio files should now be in the folder you created earlier. Also move the demo you created in step 1 to this folder.

Do not divide the folder into further categorized subfolders.

10. Export MIDI files (if wanted):

Cubase offers the practical possibility to export a "Multitrack" MIDI file, in which all MIDI tracks are merged.

Go to "File - Export - MIDI File..." from the menu bar at the top. Select your newly created export folder, simply name the file "MIDI" and click "Save" to save the MIDI file in the same folder as all your other files.

Then uncheck all the boxes in the "Export Options" window and click "OK".



11. Double check:

Test out if everything worked by importing the export files into a new, empty project and checking if everything is correct.

CHECKLIST

DONE!

Now your project is ready for shipping.

To summarize, here is a checklist:

1. Create a demo version of your song.
2. Save a separate version of your project before you begin preparing it for export.
3. Make sure that unwanted and unnecessary tracks, regions, plugins, etc. are removed from the project.
4. Check that each element in the song has its own track.
5. Create individual tracks for midi elements (if existing).
6. Name your tracks in a structured and understandable way.
7. Edit and clean up your audio tracks.
8. Set the Start- and End Locator for exporting.
9. Export all tracks.
10. Export MIDI files (if wanted).
11. Check your export independently.

Did everything work?

Then send the folder via a platform you trust (Wetransfer, Dropbox, Google Drive, ...) and away with it!

I hope I could help you and bring you a big step closer to your next release!

If you have any questions, feel free to send me an email at
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I'm looking forward hearing from you and your project!