

Project 2: AABA Rock

Objectives

- Use loops in Mixcraft to create a piece in ternary form, in which the music returns to original material after a bridge section.
- Split loops in Mixcraft
- Use markers
- Add digital effects to the master mix.

Class Time Required

You should be able to complete this lesson well in two one-hour sessions.

Procedure - READ ALL OF YOUR INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE BEGINNING

1. Create a folder in your Music Technology folder on your flash drive. The folder name for this project should be your LAST NAME, FIRST NAME and the TITLE OF THE PROJECT (i.e. VonGlahnJohnAABARock)
2. Launch Mixcraft 8. Go to the Specify Settings section and be sure to set the parameters that you will need (at minimum for this project).
 - No video track
 - No instrument tracks
 - Minimum of 4 audio tracks
 - Send tracks not needed
 - Master Track - your decision
 - No performance panel/sets
 - Snap Setting to Grid
 - Mode to Beats
 - Tempo (if asked to change it in a dialog box later - click yes)
 - Key (if asked to change it in a dialog box later - click yes)
 - Time Signature - your decision
 - Auto Beatmatch - leave empty

Once you've made your decisions - click OK in the bottom right corner of the dialog box.
3. Go to File > Preferences > Recording - be sure to set your Default Project Folder to the folder on your flash drive by using the Browse feature. Once you have that correct, click Ok in the bottom right of the dialogue box.
4. Save your project immediately. Go to File > Save As and then use the dialogue box to find your project folder you created earlier on your flash drive. Give your project name the title of LAST NAME, FIRST NAME and the TITLE OF THE PROJECT (i.e. VonGlahnJohnAABARock). It is a good idea to save your song every few minutes as you go through the project. You can do so easily by clicking the Save button (it has a

picture of a floppy disk on it) or by selecting File > Save. You can also use the shortcut key combination Ctrl+S.

5. In the lower part of your screen, the Details section, select the Library tab. This is where you can access hundreds of loop from within Mixcraft.
6. Look for the Category drop-down option on the right side of the loop Library screen. Select Song Kit as your sort category and then choose a song kit for your song in the panel below. You'll now see loops in that song kit listed on the right in the Library. Click on the play head (the green triangle) beside any of these loops and audition some of them. Find a drum beat or other rhythmic pattern with which to begin your song.
7. Click and drag the name of the loop you chose, and in a track on your Region editing window. If you see a dialog box that asks you whether you wish to switch the tempo of your song or the key to the tempo of the loop or key you selected, click Yes, and your song will now follow the exact tempo (speed) of the loop you chose. If you drop it in the wrong place, you can always grab its name bar and move it to the right place.
8. The first section of your song will be 16 measures long, so if you have chosen a loop that lasts 16 measures, you don't have to duplicated it. If your loop is shorter than 16 measures, duplicate it until it fills the track up to the number 17 (the end of the sixteenth measure) on the timeline. If your drum loop is longer than 16 measures, you will need to cut it to fit. Click on the loop's title bar at the point where you want to cut the loop and select Edit > Split. You could also the shortcut key combination Ctrl+T, or you can right-click on the loop right under the number 17 and select Split from the drop-down menu. Now select the second half of the newly split region by clicking the loop's name bar and select Edit > Delete or press Delete on the keyboard.
9. Move the horizontal scroll bar to the right so you can see numbers 25-33 on the timeline. Drag the same drum beat (the one you used at the beginning of the song) from the loop Library into the first track so it begins at Measure 25. You may need to duplicate it so it fills up the track to the number 33 (the end of the 32nd measure). If your drum beat is longer than eight measure, you will need to cut it to fit.

Click in the loop's title bar at the point where you want to cut the loop and select Edit > Split. You could also use the shortcut key combination Ctrl+T, or you can right-click on the loop right under the number 33 and select Split from the drop-down menu. Now select the second half of the newly split region by clicking the loop's name bar and select Edit > Delete or press Delete on the keyboard.
10. Move the horizontal scroll bar to the left so you can see Measures 17-32. There should be a gap in your drum beat at this point. Select a new drum beat and drag it from the Loop Browser to fill the gap. If the loop is shorter than eight measures, you will have to duplicate it. If it is longer than eight measures, you will have to cut it. There is no need for alarm if the loop you drag in covers something you've already added. When you split

and delete the part you don't need, you will see the underneath loop again.

11. You have now created an AABA structure in your drum loops track - eight measures of A repeated (16 measures), eight measures of B, and eight measures of A again. We call this ternary form, as it has three distinct sections - an opening, a bridge, and then a return to the opening material.

It helps to have markers in a song to see where you are in the structure (this becomes crucial with longer songs), so right-click on the number 1 on the timeline and select Add Marker from the drop-down menu. In the next dialog box, type "A Section" in the Title field, select a color in the Color field, and click OK. You will now see a colored marker flag in the timeline where the A section starts.

Add a marker for "A Section Repeated" at Measure 9, "B Section" at Measure 17, and "A Section Return" at Measure 25. You can use the color option to color-code your sections' marker flags. Now when you are listening to your song, you can use the keyboard shortcuts Ctrl+spacebar to skip forward to the next marker and Ctrl_Shift_spacebar to skip backward to the previous marker. These shortcuts will really help when you're mixing.

12. Audition some bass loops in the Loop Browser. Try to remain within the same Style category if you can. Find a bass loop for the A sections of the song and add that in to Measures 1-16 and 25-32. If you see a dialog box that asks you whether you wish to switch the key of your song to the key of the loop you select, click Yes, and your song will now follow the same key of the loop you chose.

Find a bass loop for the B section and add that in to Measures 17-24. Cut or duplicate the loops as you need to make them fit into the sections. Listen to your music from the beginning to see whether your loops work well together. Make changes if you need to.

13. Add another instrument to your song. Find some loops you like and add them in to the song. Make sure you keep the AABA structure as you add in the new loops. You can have different instruments in the different sections if you'd like. The AABA Rock example that accompanies this lesson has electric piano in the A sections and electric guitar in the B sections.

14. Now select the Mixer tab. As you listen to your song, use the volume faders to adjust the relative volume of each track so that every instrument is equally audible but does not light the red warning lights at the top of the volume strips. Use the L-R sliders above the volume faders to adjust where your instruments are from left to right in the mix. Imagine where you would like them to be on stage as if it were a live performance and reflect this by mixing them to the appropriate side in the mix. You can adjust the Hi, Mid, and Lo response in each track by turning the knobs in the EQ section of the Mixer.

15. Click on the FX button above the Main Mix fader. This brings up the Global Effects

menu, where you can add some digital effects to the overall mix to thicken up your sound. Select the first slot in the Effect column. (Click the down arrow beside <Select An Effect>.) Select the Classic Compressor. A compressor will even out the sound of your mix by boosting the quiet sounds while keeping the loud sounds in check.

Select one of the presets in the Preset column. (Click the down arrow beside <Preset>.) Most of the presets are self-explanatory. Choose one you think might suit your music. You can see what the compressor looks like by clicking the Edit button. Listen to your music again by pressing the Play button. (You might have to drag the compressor out of the way to get to the Play button.) See whether you can discern a difference as the mix plays through the compressor. If the red light on the compressor turns on, the compressor is working to smooth out your sound.

Click the X in the top-right corner of the compressor to hide it. Even though it is hidden, it will still be working as long as the FX button at the top of the Main Mix fader is selected and the compressor is checked in the Global Effects menu.

16. Add the Classic Reverb unit to the Global Effects menu for the Main Mix fader. Choose a preset to create the digital effect of re-creating the natural reverberation of a place where your music might be performed. Because music is often recorded in a dry studio with no reverberation, it is really important to add reverb to bring a natural feeling to your mix.

You can see what the reverb unit looks like by clicking the Edit button in the Global Effects menu, and you can close it again by clicking the X in the top-right corner of the reverb unit. Do remember, however, that the reverb unit is still working, even if you can't see it. Also note as you select presets in the Classic Reverb that there is no difference in the versions of presets that have the work (send) after their name—at least, not for the purpose of this project.

17. Now that you have added effects into the mix, you will need to listen to your song again and check that the red warning light on the Main Mix fader does not light. You will probably find that the optimum level for this master fader is lower than it was before you added in the effects. This does not mean your music is quieter because you have to reduce the master fader—it just means that you no longer have to boost the level as much to ensure a good, full sound. This is a good thing.

When you are satisfied that your song is the best you can make it and that the volume indicators never go into the red, click on the button to mix your song down to an audio file or select File > Mix Down To > MP3. If Mixcraft asks whether you would like to save your changes before mixing down, click Yes.

Select a location for your mixed-down song and save it as an MP3 version. Now you'll be able to listen to your song on your iPod or other MP3 player or use it as a ringtone on your phone. Make sure to play your song for friends or family members to see whether they like it.

Extensions

After you have mastered making a song with an AABA form in 32 measures, make another song with 64 measures (16 measures per section). Also, try adding in more instruments to the song, but still start with drums and bass.