

# VST Drum Sessions

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## Getting Started

Welcome and congratulations on your purchase of VST Drum Sessions, the new way of adding real drums to your VST arrangements!

We have put a great deal of effort into the concept, creation and production of VST Drum Sessions. This was done not only to make them sound better than anything you've ever used before, but also to offer unparalleled flexibility and to make them as easy to use as possible. We designed VST Drum Sessions to match your songs, not vice versa, making your creativity the limit—not your patience.

All you need to know in order to use VST Drum Sessions is how to play back, arrange and edit recordings in Cubase VST.

If you feel you're experienced enough, just go ahead and groove—there's nothing special to the handling of VST Drum Sessions.

However, we recommend that you take a few minutes to read the following guidelines, in order to take full advantage of the concept and its vast possibilities. It's time well spent, believe us!

## Why VST Drum Sessions?

Although computers, synthesizers, MIDI and digital audio equipment allow us to create virtually any sound we need, real drum recordings have been ›unaffordable‹ for most of us. Programmed drums aren't a satisfying substitute either. In the best case a drummer programs them. Still, they might sound sterile since there's rarely more than one kick, snare

or ride sample available, which means that all beats from a certain instrument sound the same. In the worst case, people program drums without ever having touched a drum kit, let alone being experienced drummers.

Even the lucky among us, who work with a real drummer, miss the control and flexibility of MIDI tracks. When the drummer's left the house, there's hardly anything you can do about song tempo, groove pattern or quantization.

Vst Drum Sessions combine the best of both these worlds—without the disadvantages.

### What's the Difference?

If you're using Vst Drum Sessions for the first time, there's an important rule to remember: Think different!

Why? Well, if you have been working with real drummers, you won't be used to the flexibility Vst Drum Sessions offer: Have you ever changed the tempo of a real drum recording? Requantized it? If you think of Vst Drum Sessions as a real recording, you're missing out.

Then again, if you're used to MIDI drums, you'll notice how big a difference it makes when every beat of a Kick, Snare or Hi-hat sounds slightly different, and when a fill fits right in, instead of just filling the bar.

Vst Drum Sessions provide a significant change, improving the overall quality of your music while making your life easier. Sounds like music to your ears? Here are more advantages and features:

- ◆ The sounds, track configuration and mixing options of authentic multi-track drum takes—combined with the editing options of MIDI.
- ◆ Drums are recorded onto separate tracks. Thus, they can be processed individually, using dynamics, EQ, effects, automation, etc. Try doing that with drum loops or ready-mixed grooves!

- ◆ The dynamics and sound quality of the original recordings are preserved. This is not the case with programmed, sampled or electronic drum tracks.
- ◆ The tempo of a song can be varied by up to 30 bpm in either direction. That's impossible with traditional drum recordings.
- ◆ Patterns can be mixed and matched as desired.
- ◆ You can process patterns by removing and inserting events; you can also edit or combine preset grooves manually, to create totally new grooves.
- ◆ You can quantize grooves to any desired value—for instance change the feel from straight 16ths to swing.
- ◆ Since every pattern is also available as a MIDI track, individual instruments can be replaced or layered with samples. You can even use the MIDI tracks for creating printed scores or triggering effects—why not gate your synth pad with the feel of a live hi-hat?

## How Does It Work?

As with most success stories, Vst Drum Sessions are based on 10% brilliant thinking and 90% hard work.

While most of the process of producing multi-tracked, Recycled drum recordings are beyond the scope of this document, here's a brief overview how we achieved the unique capabilities of Vst Drum Sessions:

- 1 A set of useful grooves was decided on.
- 2 Recordings were made, track by track, by professional musicians playing top-notch instruments in a completely professional studio environment.
- 3 The recordings were processed, to ensure the highest possible sound quality, while still leaving the final sound character open for you to shape.

- 4 Steinberg ReCycle was used to slice the recordings into single beats. Silence was removed, and the results were saved as REX files.
- 5 The REX files were imported into Cubase Vst. Here they were quantized according to the original groove.
- 6 All audio recordings were mirrored as MIDI files.

The result: Vst drums sounding like the original recording, but with all the editing options of MIDI!

Believe us, there was a lot more to it than these 6 simple steps, but please don't lose any sleep over that—just enjoy the result!

## No Installation Required!

Since Vst Drum Sessions are basically Vst songs containing REX files, there's no complicated installation process.

The only thing to remember is that before using a song, we recommend that you copy the files to your hard drive, for several reasons:

- ◆ Vst can access the data much faster, for smooth playback. CD-ROM drives are simply too slow to play back multi-track recordings.
- ◆ Files on a hard disk can be edited. Files on CD-ROM can not.
- ◆ If you store the drum files with your Cubase documents you can back up all files at the same time.

If you have plenty of hard disk space, we recommend that you copy the entire contents of the CD-ROM(s) to your hard drive.

## Quick Guide to Using Vst Drum Sessions

Let's say you have a great song lying around that was recorded half a year ago. Now that you've got Vst Drum ses-

sions, you're thinking it's time to replace those boring programmed MIDI drums with the real thing. Here's how:

- 1** Find the groove that fits your song best, by browsing through the audio demos on the separate audio CD. Theoretically, tempo is not an issue at this stage.
- 2** Once you've found a groove that you like, copy it to your hard drive by dragging its folder into your song folder.
- 3** Open the drum song and your original song in two separate windows.
- 4** Drag the drum tracks, from the drum song, into your song.
- 5** Cut, lengthen, duplicate and change the new tracks, just like MIDI tracks, to fit your song's structure.
- 6** Apply the quantization of the drum parts to the parts in your song. This is done just as when quantizing MIDI tracks, so we'll not go into detail on this. Be careful with fills, since these often use a different quantization or may contain flams. You may want to leave them out by applying cuts around the fill before you apply quantization.
- 7** Set up a mix in the Channel Mixer, and add effects and EQ to your liking.
- 8** Refine the arrangement by adding or editing parts—add a percussion part from another drum song, vary the density of the groove by deleting or adding events in the editors, double up the kick with a sample triggered via MIDI, and so on.
- 9** Create the final mix, possibly including automation.
- 10** Master your song!

Although you can vary the tempo of the drums by at least 30 bpm in either direction, you may want to pick a groove with a tempo close to your song, for musical reasons—the playing will simply fit better.

Since the drum tracks are ReCycled, they will automatically match the song tempo.

## Loading a Song

Once you've found a song you'd like to use we recommend that you copy it to your hard disk rather than trying to play it from CD-ROM (see the ›No installation required!‹ section for an explanation of why).

Once the song is on your hard disk, all you need to do is load it using the Open command on the File menu. Unless you use the same audio hardware as the songs were saved with (Sound Manager under MacOs, DirectX under Windows)

you will be presented with a dialog telling you all bus settings will be lost. Don't worry, there aren't any in the song, so that's not a problem!

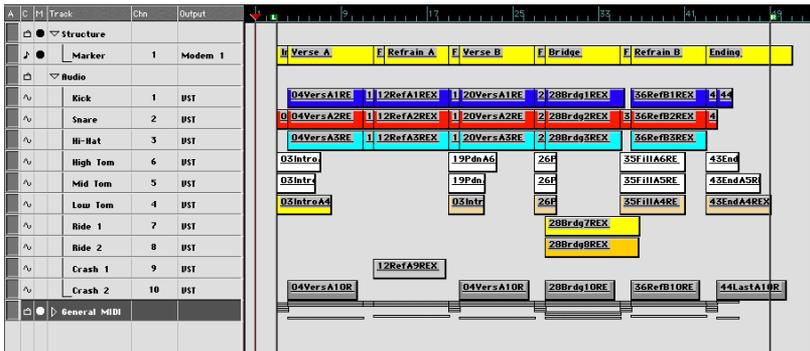
Since Cubase keeps track of exactly where the REX files for a song are stored, and you just moved the song from the CD-ROM to a hard disk, you may be presented with a dialog that looks like this:



Don't panic—just click on Manual and locate the folder containing the REX files (if you haven't changed anything, the program will default to the song folder). Cubase VST will then automatically load all the REX files.

## Song Content

After opening the song you will be presented with an Arrangement that looks like this:



It contains three folders:

- ◆ The ›Structure‹ Folder consists of empty parts with names like ›Intro‹, ›Chorus‹ and ›Ending‹, depicting the song's

structure. Use these for setting locators, auto-selecting a certain section or for navigating through the song.

- ◆ The ›Audio‹ folder is open. It contains the audio drum parts, the core of Vst Drum Sessions.
- ◆ The ›General MIDI‹ folder is an exact mirroring of the Audio folder, except it contains MIDI parts rather than audio. You can play these parts using drum kits in any GM compatible device. They can be used to replace or double up audio events with external drum sounds. They can also be used to trigger effect processors like gates or filters.

## After Opening

Once the song is open you may want to start by tweaking the song to your taste, the musical style it's used for, and your environment.

We strongly recommend that you do this, since the default setup of the song is a plain vanilla setting that does nothing more than play it back. This was done intentionally to leave plenty of room for improvement and customization.

Here are the basic settings for the songs on the CD-ROM:

- ◆ In the Channel Mixer, volume, pan and effects are set up for a rough monitor mix.
- ◆ The reverb used is Wunderverb since it is the only reverb that all Vst users have access to. You may want to switch to your favorite studio reverb or switch it off completely.
- ◆ We haven't used any EQ in Vst, although we strongly encourage you to do so!

By only changing the mix, the EQ settings and the effects, you are able to get extremely varying sonic character from a single Vst Drum Session—and this even without considering using weird and esoteric plug-ins like Filters or Distortion units.

## Track Assignments

Tracks are set up in the same order in all songs:

Track	Instrument
1	Kick
2	Snare
3	HiHat
4	High Tom
5	Mid Tom
6	Low Tom
7	Ride 1
8	Ride 2
9	Crash 1
10	Crash 2
11	Perc. 1
12	Perc. 2

If a certain instrument is missing in a song—e.g. if the groove does not incorporate Percussion—the tracks below the missing track are shifted upwards, accordingly.

Depending on the groove you might find more (or fewer) tracks or minor variations, but basically all songs stick to this concept. This makes it easy for you to mix and match entire patterns or tracks from more than one song.

## Song Structure

Every song is broken down into *patterns* as follows. For example, the difference between verse 1 and verse 2 may be as little as a hi-hat variation or it might be a completely new pattern. In any case, there are never any duplicates of parts, all parts are unique.

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Intro	Verse 1	Chorus 1	Verse 2	Bridge	Chorus 2	Ending
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Like in real (drummer) life, there is a fill or variation at the end of a part, when appropriate. This means that an 8 bar

verse or a chorus is usually broken down into two parts—one 7 bars long and one 1 bar long. You can of course easily change this, just as with a MIDI file.

The density and direction of fills, breaks and variations match the musical context. There are *descending* fills—from chorus to verse—as well as *ascending* fills—from verse to chorus.

## Naming Conventions

The names of the parts conform to a standard which contains information that might be useful when using parts or patterns in different songs.

A part name may look like this:

BL\_04\_01

- ◆ The first two letters tell you about the CD and song. In this example CD >B< and Song >L<. In the VST Drum Sessions series, every CD and every song has a unique one-character ID. This way potential filename confusion is avoided when you combine parts from different CDs in the series.
- ◆ The second part (>04< in our example) identifies the original start position (bar position) in the song.
- ◆ The last part (01 in our example) identifies the instrument as indicated in the track table above. The number 6, for example, always means Low Tom, regardless of how many tracks there are in the song. This is useful when combining patterns from different songs.

Although the part names may be hard to decode initially, you'll soon discover how they help you keep things neatly organized.

If you want to use MIDI tracks, always be sure to have the MIDI folder open when you perform global edits like requantizing, moving all parts or cutting bars. This is because the Select All function only applies to open folders.

## What Is the MIDI Folder for?

Here's an example of when the MIDI tracks can come in useful. Let's say you want to use the sampled kick, toms and crash you always use and love, but wish to combine them with some real hi-hat from the Vst Drum Sessions. To do so, just trigger your samples from MIDI tracks and play the hi-hat from audio track(s).

You can also use the MIDI tracks to trigger effects or synthesizer modules like gates, filters, envelopes etc, to create pads or patterns that match the groove.

By default, the Vst drum sessions contain a General MIDI program change which selects a GM drum kit on channel 10. This program change can be found in the first part on the track called ›Structure‹. In order to disable this function, simply mute the track.

## What Can I Do with Vst Drum Sessions Parts?

You can handle drum parts from the Vst Drum Sessions like you would any REX file or MIDI part.

You can cut, delete, shorten, move, copy, and even quantize them as with a MIDI drum groove. You may change the order of parts, move a hi-hat part from chorus to verse, create new parts, lengthen existing parts—it's a breeze!

## Event Editing

Sometimes you may want to perform more detailed editing like deleting a single beat from the kick drum part, delay the cabassa off-beats a bit, or add extra snare beats. This is done in the Cubase Vst editors.

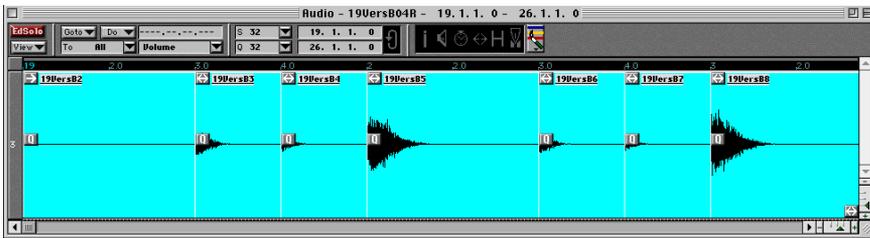
If you double-click a REX part in the arrangement window to open the Audio Editor, you'll see each beat in the part as a separate entity. This means that you can treat each beat indi-

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## What about Using REX Files Only?

vidually. All normal Cubase Vsr audio editing applies, for example:

- ◆ Moving or quantizing beats individually
- ◆ Copying beats within the part or to another part
- ◆ Deleting individual beats
- ◆ Quantizing beats separately



Here's something you should avoid:

- ◆ Do not lengthen a slice! If you do, you will create an overlap, which reveals an ugly click noise!

## What about Using REX Files Only?

You might be tempted to import individual REX files directly into another Vsr song. We don't recommend that you do this, since these files only contain the sliced original recording. All the quantization and other detailed edits, which are such an important part of the concept, are not included in these files.

In other words: Do not import REX files directly. Instead, drag the part from its original arrangement to the arrangement you are working on.

## Combining Grooves ...

Sooner or later you will run into a situation where you want to combine elements from different songs (even in different styles). This is not a problem:

Cubase Vst allows you to copy parts, tracks or whole patterns from one arrangement into another. However, since there can only be one song document open at a time you need to proceed as follows:

Make sure both songs use the same type of quantization. If they don't, simply requantize the source parts to match the quantization of the destination song.

- 1 Open the song you want to copy *from* (the source).
- 2 Save it as an arrangement.
- 3 Open the song you want to copy *to* (the destination).
- 4 Open the arrangement you just saved.
- 5 Now copy any parts from any arrangement to another using the standard clipboard functions cut, copy and paste.

The 'Vst Drum Sessions' parts will automatically adapt the destination song tempo.

- 6 Currently direct dragging of Vds parts between arrangement windows is available on the Macintosh only. Here, you can also drop any selection of parts on the desktop before dragging them to the destination arrangement.
- Upcoming Cubase Vst Pc versions (4.0 and newer) will also feature drag and drop functionality.

## Questions and Answers

### How far can I change the tempo?

That depends on the song—we guarantee  $\pm 30$  bpm without any side effects, but usually it's a lot more. Just try it!

Please note that while you can change the tempo over a wide range, the musical feeling of the groove is usually only retained within a range of  $\pm 10$  bpm (this naturally varies from pattern to pattern). At any rate—completely different

tempo settings can create completely new grooves and feelings, so just go for it.

### **What if my computer isn't able to play 12 tracks at a time?**

By today's standards, twelve tracks isn't that much, so our recommendation is actually to get yourself a faster computer.

While you wait for the new machine to arrive, you can reduce the number of tracks by using the Export Audio/Mix Audio function in Cubase VST, to mix down any number of tracks to a stereo track.

Note that after using the Export Audio/Mix Audio function you won't be able to change the tempo.

### **What if my computer can't run as many plug-in effects or as much EQ as I want?**

You can free up some CPU power by using Export Audio/Mix Audio to bounce down tracks including their effects and EQ settings. You can then deactivate the plug-ins and EQs. Please refer to your VST manual for further information.

### **Updated Info, New Titles and More**

Check our VST Drum Sessions Page at

<http://www.wizoo.com/docs/english/vds/vstdrumsessions.htm>

### **Online FAQ**

At <http://www.wizoo.com/docs/english/vds/faq.htm> you will find an FAQ that is updated frequently according to user input.

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