Using Automix – the Snapshot Method

Automix can be a great tool for mixing. This "primer" will cover using the Snapshot method of using Automix. For information on using the Real-Time method of Automix, check out Burton's writeup (you can find it on my FAQ page: http://www.ps139.com/880ex/pages/FAQs.html)

While Automix is great, not every setting can be stored using Automix.

Here are the settings that can be recorded when using Automix. Items in **bold** are those that can be changed via faders or knobs.

INPUT MIXER
Fader
Pan
Effect 1 Send Level
Effect 1 Send Pan
Effect 2 Send Level
Effect 2 Send Pan
AUX Level
AUX Pan

TRACK MIXER
Fader
Pan
Effect 1 Send Level
Effect 1 Send Pan
Effect 2 Send Level
Effect 2 Send Pan
AUX Level
AUX Pan

STEREO IN
Fader
Balance

EFFECT RETURN
Effect 1 Return Level
Effect 1 Return Balance
Effect 2 Return Level
Effect 2 Return Balance

MASTER BLOCK
Master Level
Master Balance

Master Effect 1 Send Level
Master Effect 1 Send Pan
Master Effect 2 Send Level
Master Effect 2 Send Pan
Master AUX Send Level
Master AUX Send Balance

EFFECT
Effect 1 Program Number
Effect 2 Program Number

FYI, this is all in the Appendix manual…so if it's wrong, blame Roland ;)

Preparing for Automix

There are a few things I suggest you consider doing before you start to record
Automix information:

Make detailed notes about what you want to do with Automix.
For example, I normally have a timeline or layout of the song, with changes
noted. The times don't need to be exact; you just want them as a point of
reference when you get started. Usually my notes consist of the "big"
changes…here's an small example:

Intro – mute acoustic guitar
End of 1st verse – bring in acoustic guitar
Start of 2nd verse – bring lead vox down

Consider clearing all existing markers.
While you can certainly have regular markers along with Automix markers, if you
want to go back and edit existing Automix markers, it can get confusing as to
whether the marker location is a regular marker or an Automix marker.
Remember, once you clear all your markers, you can't get them back, so make
sure you are OK with that. For me, by the time I'm ready to mix, I've got my
detailed notes, so I don't need to reference any regular markers to move to
specific points in time.

Create a Scene for things that Automix doesn't record.
For example, Automix doesn't record any individual channel/track EQ settings or
the ATT setting. Once I've played around with the song and have the proper
channel EQ and ATT settings, I create a Scene so that I always have the same
starting point. Now, what if you want to change a channel's EQ setting half-way
through the song? Well, Automix won't help…you'll have to manually change the
settings as the song plays.

<u>Plan out your use of effects.</u>
Automix cannot record changes within an effects patch. For example, if you are using a Reverb effect and want to change the reverb time from 1.0 second to 3.0 seconds at a certain spot, Automix can't record that. Instead, what you'd want to do is have 2 effects stored as user effects (one with reverb time set at 1.0 second and the other with reverb time set at 3.0 seconds) and use Automix to switch between the effects. For that matter, any effect patches that you modify need to be saved before starting Automix…otherwise, when you take your first snapshot in Automix, it will pull up the version of the effect patch as it was last saved.

Recording Automix via Snapshots

To use Automix, press the AUTOMIX button so that it lights up.

At this point, each channel's STATUS button, as well as the EZ ROUTING button (which, in Automix, controls all the master block settings, including master volume), will be in one of three different states:

> *Not lit:*   *Automix is disabled on this channel*
> *Lit:*   *Automix is enabled for playback*
> *Flashing:*   *Automix is enabled for both recording and playback*

Whenever I do Snapshot Automix, I tend to always leave all channels flashing.

Now that the appropriate channels are enabled (flashing) for Automix, let's run through the process of doing Snapshots:

Go to the beginning of the song. If you have a Scene with all your non-Automix settings, recall that scene.

Set an Automix marker at the beginning of the song. Do this by holding down the Automix button and pressing TAP. In the display, you should see an asterisk (*) next to the Marker # at the top left. An asterisk means that there is Automix data stored at that marker.

Either play the song or move to a specific point where you want to do your first change. I'll frequently play the song until I get to the part I want to change, and then press stop. From here, I'll use the "Preview To" or "Preview From" buttons and the jogwheel to move to the exact point in time when I want to do the change.

Once at that point, you can either make the change with a physical fader or knob, or call up the track's parameter listing and use the jogwheel to set the new value. I tend to use the latter, and here's why. Let's say I've got a vocal track that

jumps up in volume at a certain point. When I dial in that point in time and bring up that tracks parameters, I can see what level I'm at (for example, TRK 1 MIX LVL = 87). I can then simply use the jogwheel to turn the level down to 77. If I didn't know what level I was at, it would be much harder to figure out where to set the new level to...but maybe that's just me. ;)

Now that you've made whatever changes you want (fader, pan, effects, etc), simply hold down AUTOMIX and press TAP. Viola…another snapshot marker. Continue through all the spots you want to make a change, placing snapshot markers wherever you need them.

When you are done, simply go to the beginning of the song and press play. The Automix changes you recorded will be played back for your listening enjoyment.

Editing Existing Automix Markers

So, you've played back the song and you notice that the volume change you put in vocal track (step 4 above) was too much or too little. Can we change that easily? Yep.

Press the "Marker Previous" or "Marker Next" button until you get to that specific Automix marker. If you're not sure which marker it was, you can bring up the track's parameter screen and cursor to the MIX LVL= screen. Now press "Marker Previous" or "Marker Next" and you'll see what the level was at each marker. Again, if you have regular makers and Automix markers, you'll want to change the Automix ones (the ones with an asterisk next to the Marker #). OK, back to our example. At Marker # 000* (the beginning of the song), our vocal level is set at 87. At Marker # 001*, our vocal level is set at 77. The vocal is still a bit too loud at this point and we want to lower it even more. When you are at Marker # 001*, simply dial the level down to, say, 73. Now hold down Automix and press TAP.

OK, what just happened? We replaced the Automix information at Marker # 001* with new information…and the only thing we changed was the level. All the other parameters are exactly as they were when you first placed that Automix marker.

Here's another tip…after you change the information at that Automix marker, just rewind a few seconds and hit PLAY. If the change is still off, go back to that marker by pressing "Marker Pervious", dial in a new change, hold Automix and press TAP, and play it again.

When placing Automix markers, the markers must be 0.1 seconds away from each other. If they are not, then the existing Automix marker that is within 0.1 seconds away will be replaced.   That's nice…you don't need to "delete" an

Automix marker and then "add" a new one…you can simply "replace" the information at that marker and continue on.

Moving Automix Markers

Let's say we play back our song, and notice that one of the Automix markers isn't exactly where we want it. Well, you can't really "move" a marker…because a marker is tied to a specific point in time. What you need to do is place a new Automix marker at the proper time and then delete the "old" Automix marker.

If the Automix marker needs to move forward in time (say, from 1:07:05.23 to 1:07:06.02), it's easy. Press "Marker Previous" or "Marker Next" until you get to the marker at 1:07:05.23. This will pull up all the Automix markers for this point in time. Now, use the jogwheel and move to 1:07:06.02. Hold down Automix and press TAP. This new marker looks identical to the "old" marker, it's just a bit further in time. Now, press "Marker Previous" to get back to the marker at 1:07:05.23. Press the "Play/Display" button so that you are in the normal display mode. Now hold down CLEAR and press TAP. The marker at 1:07:05.23 is gone. You've basically "moved" the Automix marker from 1:07:05.23 to 1:07:06.02.

It's a bit harder if the Automix marker needs to move back in time (say, from 1:07:05.23 to 1:07:04.42). Depending on how many changes were implemented at that marker, you might need to write them all down. The process is a bit like the above…call up the marker at 1:07:05.23 and note whatever settings you changed. Then, turn the jogwheel to get to 1:07:04.42. Make the changes and hold Automix and press TAP.

Now, before you erase the "old" Automix marker, you can use the "Marker Previous" and "Marker Next" buttons to toggle between the "new" marker and the "old" marker. This will allow you to verify that all the parameters are the same between both markers. Once you're satisfied, move to the marker at 1:07:05.23 and hold CLEAR and press TAP.

Adding New Automix Markers

So, you're listening to your song, and you notice that there is a spot where the bass really pops a note that really is too loud. What to do? Add a marker before and after that bass note. But, it's easiest if you do the "after" marker first. Find the spot just after the bass pop and put in an Automix marker. That marker will have all the same settings as whatever Automix marker proceeds it in the timeline of the song. So, doing this marker first will automatically bring the track back to the same settings as they were up until this point. Now, go back in time to just before the bass pop. Adjust whatever settings are necessary, and put in an Automix marker. Nice and easy.

Using Gradation

Gradation is a way to transition between 2 consecutive Automix markers. I normally use this for level and pan changes, but you can use it for anything really. To use it, you must already have 2 Automix markers. Technically you can have the current point in time anywhere between these 2 markers, but I normally like to position myself directly at one of the markers. So, let's say that you've got a guitar track that you want to pan across the stereo field, and the pan should sweep for a total of 10 seconds. You'd need an Automix marker at the beginning of that 10 seconds (with the pan set hard left for example), and another Automix marker at the end of that 10 seconds (with the pan set hard right). Use the "Marker Previous" or "Marker Next" to position yourself at the marker at the beginning of the pan. Hold down the Automix button and press "Marker Next". The VS will ask "Gradation OK?". Press Yes. The VS will automatically place a bunch more Automix markers between the 2 you created, and each of these new markers will have the pan moving from left to right (in this example).

The same thing can be done with volume levels. For example, on most of my songs, I set an Automix marker at the last note of the song, and then place another Automix marker about 5-10 seconds later. This last Automix marker has the master level at 0. Then I use Gradation to do a "master fade out".

Editing All Automix Markers

Unfortunately, there isn't an easy way to edit all Automix markers. Why would you want to do such a thing? Well, suppose that after you created and edited all your Automix markers, you realize that some track (like the lead vocal) needs to be just a bit louder throughout the entire song. While there isn't an all-in-one way to change the lead vocal track, there is a fairly easy way.

Position yourself to the first Automix marker at the beginning of the song. Pull up the vocal track's parameter screen and cursor to MIX LVL=. Maybe we've already made changes to the level of the vocal track via Automix markers already. No problem. If all we want to do is drop every vocal level at every point along the song, we can quickly move thru all the Automix markers, change the level, replace that Automix marker, can go to the next one.

OK, you're at the first Automix marker and have the vocal track's MIX LVL = screen up. Let's say we want to drop the level by 4. Simply turn the jogwheel so that the MIX LVL drops by 4 (say from 74 to 70). Hold down Automix and press TAP to replace that marker. Now press the "Marker Next" button. Use the jogwheel to set the MIX LVL down by 4. Hold Automix and press TAP. Now continue to the next marker, and so on.

Even with 20 markers in a song, it should only take you about a minute or two to make all these changes. Not that big of a deal to make the vocalist happy, right?

A Quick Word About Effects and Automix

As I mentioned earlier, using customized effects with Automix can be a bit of a pain, as you have to have these versions stored as User Effects. One other thing is that Automix doesn't record the turning on or off of effects within each track or across the master block. Therefore, if you want to have an effect for just one part of a song, Automix can't capture the change from FX1=OFF to FX1=PostFade. One way to do this is to have your initial Scene contain the setting of FX1=PostFade for the specific track(s). Then, each Automix marker should have the FX1 Send = 0 set, as Automix will record the effect send levels. Once you get to the point where you want the effect to be heard, create an Automix marker with FX1 Send = 100 or whatever value you need. Then, when you want the effect to be off, create another Automix marker with the FX1 Send = 0.

Obviously, the same thing applies when using FX2. I've never attempted to turn on/off an INSERTed effect with Automix, but I don't think it's possible, since it doesn't appear that insert send levels are recorded via Automix. In this case, you might need to have 2 separate User Effects defined…one which has the actual Insert Effect, and the other which basically does nothing.

Also, in the first example in this section, you could also control the Effect's Overall Level (in the Effects Mixer) to control the level of the effect. But, if you have multiple tracks using the same send/return effect, it might be better to setup the Automix on the actual track instead of the Effects Mixer.

I'm sure I've left stuff out…if you find anything you have question on, or if you find things that are just wrong, let me know!

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