



Getting Your Kick Drum To Sit With Your Bassline in The Mix

Getting your Kick drum and your Bass to sit well together is one of the hardest parts of mixing down a track. And unfortunately, there is not a simple solution to the problem. Depending on the style of music you are mixing, the type of sounds you are using and how you want your mix to eventually sound will alter the way in which you need to treat your track. The aim of this tutorial is to try and put you in the right mindset, and tell you what you need to look out for so that you can work out for yourself how to get your track sounding the best possible.

Imagine the low end of your mix to be like the foundations of a house. Without good solid foundations, your house will not fall down! Well...your Kick and Bass are similar... getting your Kick and Bass to sit together well will allow you to build the rest of your mix around them, and help create that solid, clear sound that you are after.

1. First of all you will need to be able to hear the bass accurately, so you will need a good pair of monitors with a low frequency response (or a sub woofer) and if possible an acoustically treated room. You may have to move around the room when monitoring, as different frequencies will be more prominent in different areas. For example, if you are closer to your speakers the bass will sound louder, and different to when you stand back from your speakers. Its worth standing back every once in a while, as this gives you a better representation of how others will hear your track.
2. Now you need to decide on how you want your low end to sound...do you want a tight punchy kick and a deep subby bass, or do you want a big boomy kick and a more prominent bass? The kick and your bass must peak at different frequencies to allow them to be separated from one another. It is no use having a huge fat, subby kick drum with a deep subby bassline as well, as they will make the mix muddy and confused.
3. To make sure both your Kick and Bass sit well together, add a separate Parametric Equaliser to the bass and the kick. Here

we use the Parametric EQ in Logic Pro, as this has a Spectrum Analyser which allows us to view which frequencies are playing. But you can use any Parametric Equalizer you wish...

4. Try playing the bass track on solo. Look at the Spectrum Analyser, and more importantly listen to the sound, and try to decipher which frequencies are most dominant. Then try and think about which frequencies you could do without to make room for the kick. Basically, you are looking to take the most prominent frequencies from your Bass, and cut out the same frequencies out of your Kick, so they don't overlap, and vice-versa.



Here, the bassline we have used is quite organic sounding and peaks just below 100Hz. There is not much activity in the sub harmonic frequencies, so for now we are going to put a cut below 70Hz and get rid of most of it.

5. Now play your Bass along with your Kick, and listen carefully to see which frequencies are clashing, then try and notch out these frequencies.



We found that the Kick (left) had a nice, subby bottom end, but also peaked a bit at just over 100 Hz, which interferes with the bass.

You will need to fiddle around for a while until you get to a stage that sounds good to you. This can be quite painstaking, but its will show in your final mix.... so be patient!

- To help you decide on how to EQ your kick, try soloing it and turning up your system quite loud. For a harder, punchy kick that feels like its hitting you in the chest, put a gain at around 100-160Hz, or for a deeper kick that hits you more in the stomach, add a gain at around 50-100Hz.
- To get rid of any unwanted frequencies in the bassline, try boosting by about 10Db, with a small Q factor, (Q Factor determines how sharp or wide your EQ frequency is) and sweeping through the frequency band. Any obtrusive or nasty sounding frequencies will be amplified, showing you where you need to make a cut. Also, don't forget the higher frequencies of the bass and the kick (1-10KHz), as gently boosting these can really help them cut through the mix.



Here you can see the how the kick and the bass are now peaking at different frequencies. We put a cut on the bass at around 250Hz as it was sounding a bit wooden and muddy, and boosted it at around 4KHz to brighten it up. We boosted the kick at around 50Hz for some more sub harmonics, and also at 150Hz to give it a little more punch. There was no high end in this kick so we decided to layer it with a small click sound to help it cut through the mix better.

- Often EQ-ing alone is not enough. Using a Multi-band Compressor (see *Tutorial 'Mastering Made Easy in Logic'*) can be a good alternative or addition. If you still can't get the right sound, you should think about layering your kick and/or bass with other sounds until you can. Also, you could think about loading your kick into a sampler and using the Envelope Generator to 'shape' the kick if the tail is too long. But however many plugins or effects you use, don't forget to listen to it! If it sounds good, and its what you were looking for, you're onto a winner. Compare it to similar tracks which have been successful and see if you are on the right track. Play it on different sound systems, especially if your monitoring system isn't the best. Monitor at different levels, but most of all, take your time to get it right, because once you have, the rest of the mix will begin to fall into place.

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