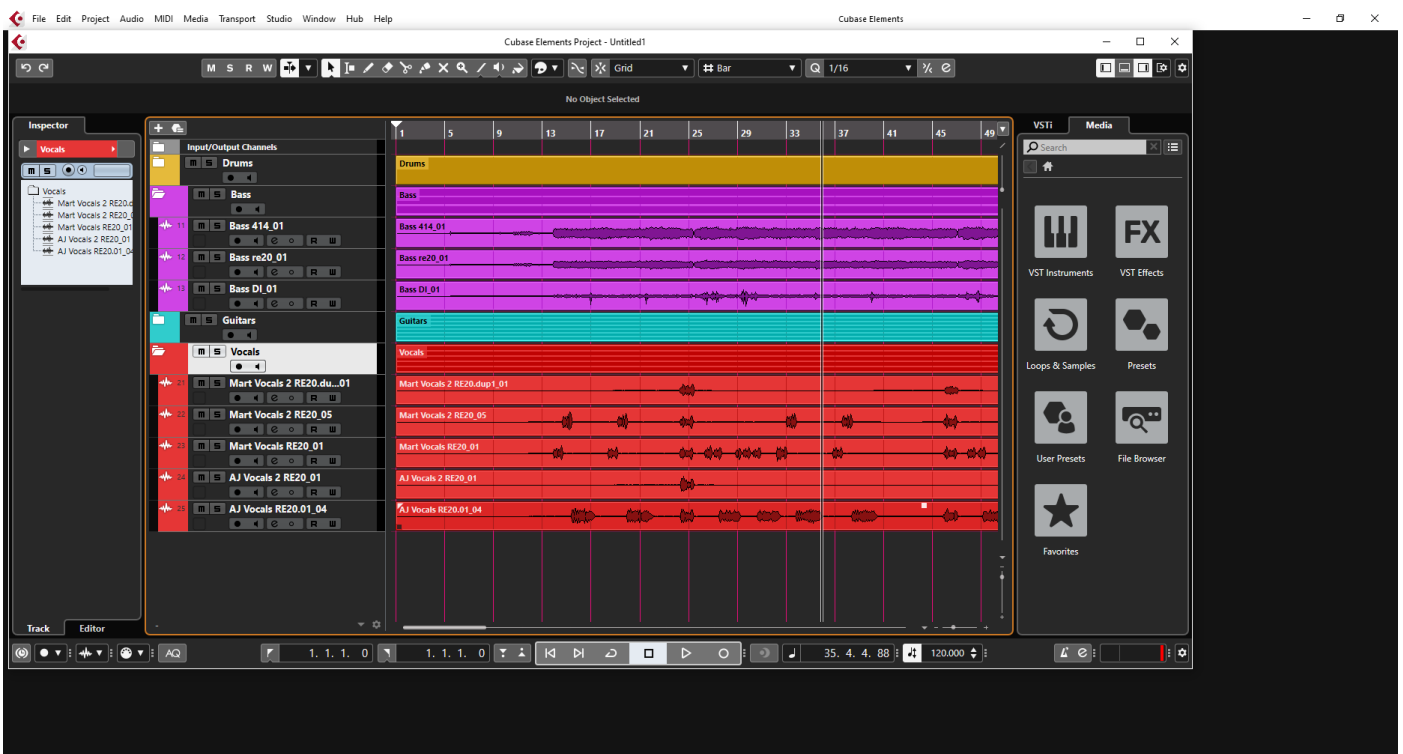


Studio Engineer: Programme Notes

Track 1: State of Decay – Free Mind

The first track I went for was this one simply because it's in a style I'm intimately familiar with, it's a hardcore punk song reminiscent of early works from the 1980's such as, 'My War' by Black flag and the self-titled 'Suicidal Tendencies.' This is particularly evident in the vocal delivery opting for outright shouting as opposed to more melodic screaming/singing (although AJ seems to break into false chord screaming at points) which is typical of the earlier hardcore scene. There are also hints of motorhead in the instrumentation with galloping sound of the instrumentation. Despite this the song was in fact recorded in the 2000's and can be seen as a homage to the earlier works. The actual message of the work is a bit vague with repetition of metaphorical chains and being oppressed but not identifying the oppressor (though reasonable assumptions can be made as to what).

To begin the mixing process, I just did some basic gain staging and some panning so that all the parts were audible due to a lot being drowned out at the start, also colour coding parts and putting them in folders to make it easier to segment my work. (Pictured below)



When mixing I was bearing in mind the muddiness of 80's hardcore and often the rather dry sound; this had a big impact on the choice of reverb opting for a very short dry sounding reverb. The bass was also something of importance to the style as it's a very driving bass and it needed to dominate without obscuring anything in the mix. I achieved this through the compression on both bass tracks and through low-mid boosts. My overall restrained use of

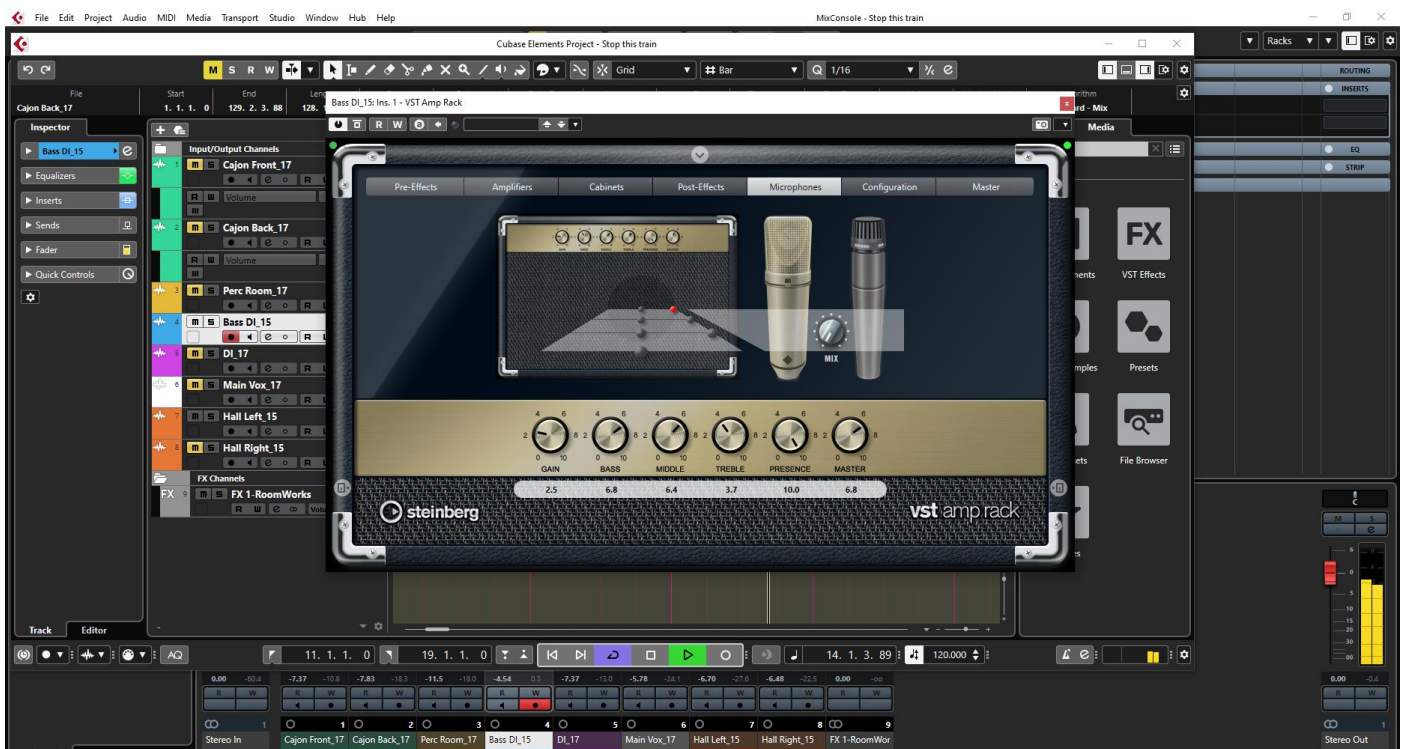
compression throughout the track helps give it a more analogue sound allowing the dynamics a lot of room to breathe especially in regard to the guitars.

Track 2: Sarah Passmore – Stop This Train

This track is an acoustic folk song which compared to the previous track is quite minimalistic in its recording having only 8 tracks total. It's reminiscent of the works of Elliott Smith however it differs in only having a singular track for guitar and for vocals whereas Smith would often layer these extensively. Other folk inspirations like Mumford and Sons can be heard on Sarah's work particularly the early 'Sigh No more' sound of the group.

Sarah is from Swansea, writing her own music in a mature style focusing on fingerstyle for her guitar work which is typical of a lot of folk music. (Layne, 2019)

I followed a similar process mixing this track, beginning with the rhythm section and moving through however, a key difference was that I needed to virtualise an amplifier for the bass. Due to using Cubase I only had guitar amps to use but managed to create a decent sound on the bass overall using the settings pictured below.



My use of reverb was far more liberal on this track to add some much-needed space to the DI tracks opting to use a bright sounding plate reverb to emphasise the high ends especially on the guitar arpeggios. There was also a lot less mud in the EQ for this track focusing a lot more on the high-end frequencies and cutting some unnecessary mids to remove a lot of the boxy sound, notably on the cajon. Of course, there was still low ends coming from the bass however being mindful not to allow it to overpower the rest of track. I panned the Hall mics hard left and right to make the most space with the few tracks. Careful normalising was required on the vocals because almost half of it was inaudible so it had to be boosted

without too much of the guitar bleed coming through. I used automation to fade out the end of this as it was rather abrupt on the recording (gradual fade starts at 4:07).

Track 3: Beatrix – Maintain the funk

The third track ‘Maintain the funk’ by Swansea based duo Beatrix has a clear influence from the late 1980’s and early 90’s hip hop movement. This was defined by artists such as Tupac Shakur and groups like Public Enemy. There’s also elements funk genre as hinted in the title of the track harkening to the 1970’s era.

To achieve the late 80’s/90’s golden era sound heavy compression was an important part of achieving that sound as it was the time the loudness war started to really kick off. This was due to the popularisation of CD Technology at the time which was constantly allowing for louder levels for playback. (Southall, 2006.) This led to heavy use of compression through this period.

With this in mind I used a compressor with a quick attack and a high threshold to give the effect of this; I did however have to be mindful not to remove the dynamics of the song. I did this early on so I could keep the levels balanced as I went along.



I used delay on the last vocal passage (2:08) to create tension towards the end of the song as until this point I’d used a short reverb creating a contrast from the rest of the song. I then used a little bit of automation at the end to blend with the natural fade out on the recording.

References:

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<https://localentertainmenthub.co.uk/artist/sarah-passmore/> (accessed 18th May 2021)

N.Southall, (2006) '*Imperfect Sound Forever*.' Available at:

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