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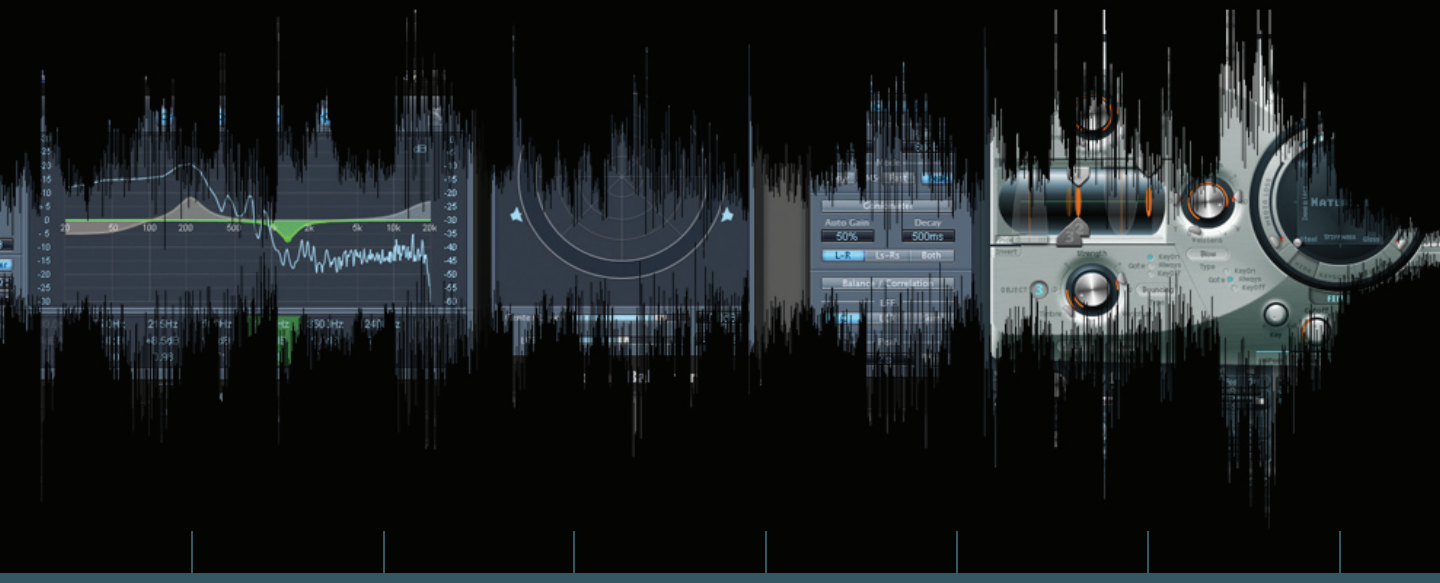

4

Starting a Project

4.1 Introduction

Laying the successful foundations at the start of your project is vital to the long-term success and seamless workflow of realizing audio and music production work in Logic. Of course, not all projects start the same way, but we're going to begin by looking at the process of recording audio into Logic – in effect, using it as a modern day replacement to the multitrack tape machine. This is also an excellent way of covering some important essentials of working in Logic, like creating tracks, using the transport controls, the bar ruler, and basic monitoring. We'll also start to explore the various aspects of data management involved in working with Logic – more specifically, how and where you should store your project data, and what a Logic project is actually comprised of.

If you're short of inspiration or just needing something to kick-start your creative process, we'll also take a look at importing and working with Apple Loops. Apple Loops – contained within the multitude of Jam Packs installed with Logic Studio – are an instant resource of loops, instrument, and vocal passages, all copyright-free and ready to be used in your compositions.

Besides the basics of track laying, we'll also review various ways with which you can make a recording session run even more smoothly – either providing a dedicated headphone mix for musicians, for example, or using plug-in effects to better understand how your instrument might eventually appear in the mix. All these factors will create a more comfortable recording experience for you and your musicians, allowing you the musicianship, engineering, and performance qualities to become more focused.

Of course, this is only the starting point to your creative work in Logic, as we'll also be looking at how to edit this newly recorded material in Chapter 5, and then about integrating the range of virtual instruments and MIDI sources in Chapter 6.

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4.2 Assets and Projects

The basic currency of Logic is a project, which will contain all the relevant assets for the song you're creating. In respect to Logic, the term "assets" corresponds to the collection of separate files and data that a song can be composed of. For example, in a song file, which contains all the important arrangement information, you could easily assemble any amount of audio files, sample data (for the EXS24 sampler), and movie files, all of which will reside in the main project folder. By organizing your data in this way, both you and Logic can keep better track of your creative process, making backing up, or moving to a different Logic 9 setup, for example, considerably easier.

The starting point of your creative process is to create a new project (File > New). Logic will then present you with a series of possible starting points, including some interesting options for composing or producing music in Logic, either based on genre or production objectives, like surround mixing, for example, or mastering. If any of these templates meet your particular needs, then it might be appropriate to select them, otherwise select the Empty Project as a suitable initialized starting point for production. Note that you can also automatically select this option by holding down Alt as you select New from the File menu. Assuming that you've selected an Empty Project as your starting point, Logic will prompt you to create an initial track to work with. To get the ball rolling, select Audio under the track Type option and press the Create button to insert a single track. We'll take a deeper look at creating tracks in Section 4.3.

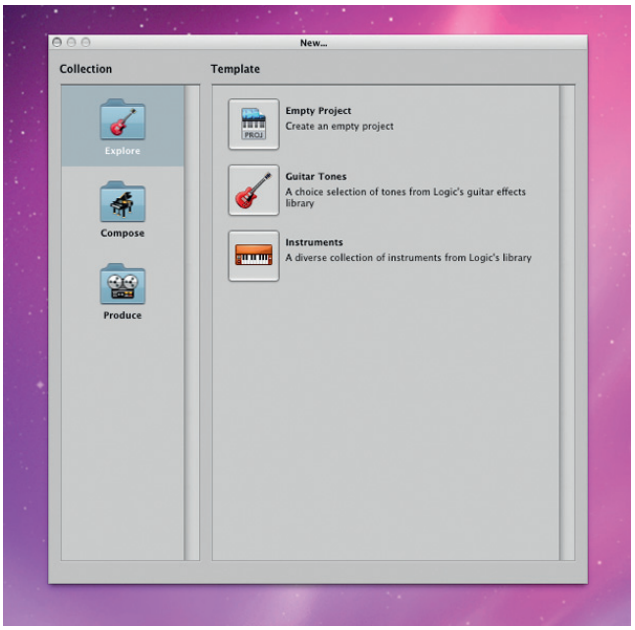

Figure 4.1
Creating a new project (File > New) will present a number of starting templates. Select Empty Project if you want a simple initialized starting point.

Save As…

Before you go any further, it's worth saving your project, if only to allot a particular location for your project folder. If Logic hasn't already opened a Save As dialog, you'll need to do so (File > Save As …). Besides specifying the name of your project, you can also instruct Logic to automatically save the relevant assets to your project folder, under the Include Assets option. It's also worth checking the advanced options, as this will allow you to differentiate between whether Logic simply collates your respective audio files or added extras like EXS sample data, instrument files, impulse response, movies, and so on. Ultimately, if you're unsure, there's no harm in selecting all the options, but this will use a correspondingly larger amount of drive space.

Knowledgebase 1

What are Assets?

Assets are Logic's collective term for the various data files that can be associated within a project. Of course, the project file – or song – is only the beginning of the data you'll amass over time, with the full set of assets including audio files, movie files, EXS24 sampler instruments, ultrabeat samples, and space designer's impulse responses. Ultimately, if you don't have some organized strategy for looking after these files, you'll soon find that a project becomes difficult to manage, especially when it comes to either archiving a project or moving it to another system.

By keeping the files in a single folder, Logic offers at least one way of organizing this data, although if you've got an alternative system, you can always decide to manage this yourself. Theoretically, this can prevent certain unnecessary file duplication, which can easily become an issue with large EXS24-based projects. To change the current project's Asset settings at any time, select File > Project Settings > Assets, where you can, accordingly, switch in and out the different parts of the asset management. By default, Logic concentrates on audio files, including automatic sample rate conversion of files imported that don't match the current project settings.

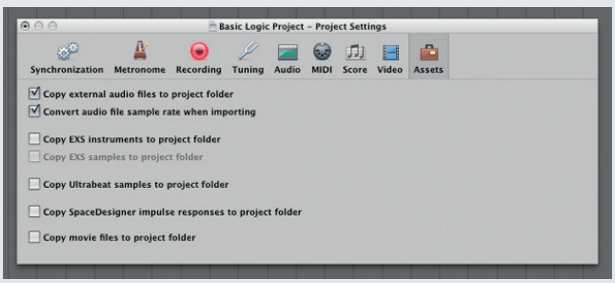

Figure 4.2 Managing the assets related to your project will allow you to create better project archives as well as move between different Logic setups in a more effective way.

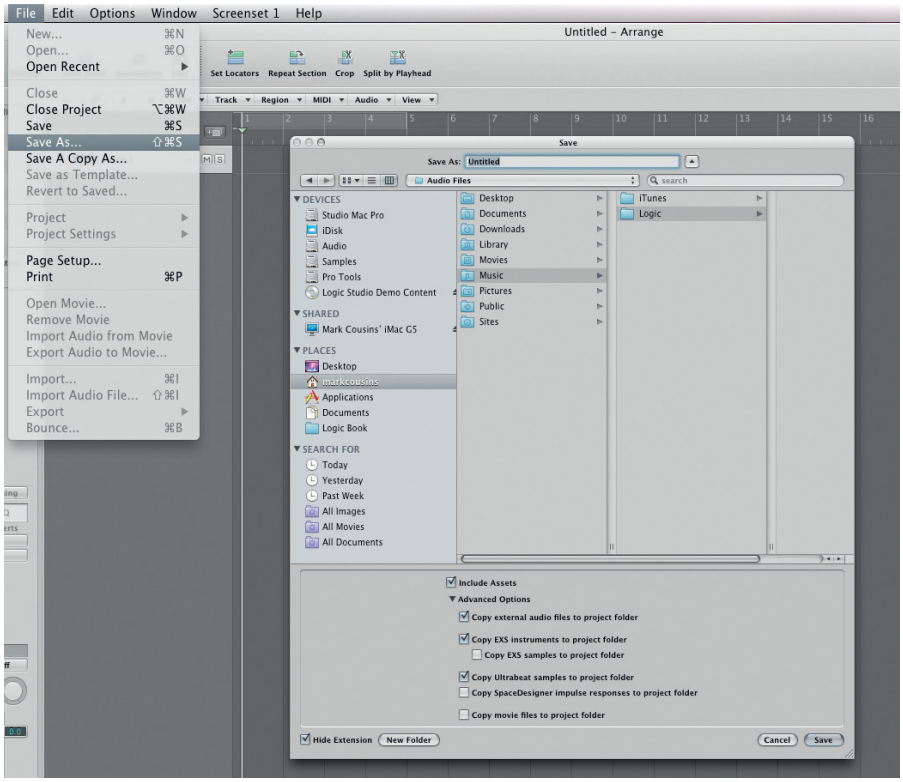

Figure 4.3 The Save As dialog allows you to create a root folder for your project, as well as to check what assets will be saved with it.

Although this initial project management can, initially, appear time consuming (especially if you just want to get on with making music!), it's worth pointing out that good data management is a vital part of music making on a computer. Spending time to ensure that you know where your data is being stored will reap plenty of dividends in the long run, making it far easier to recall projects several months down the line, or indeed, work more effectively between different computers.

4.3 Working with Tracks

Assuming you've selected an Empty Template, the next task is to create a series of tracks to record your audio and MIDI information into Logic. For example, if you're recording a band using a number of microphones, you'll need to create an accompanying collection of audio tracks representing each instrument or microphone you're using. If you intend to create a track largely using virtual instruments, with a few vocal overdubs, you'll want to create 16 or so instrument tracks combined with one or two audio tracks. Of course, you can always

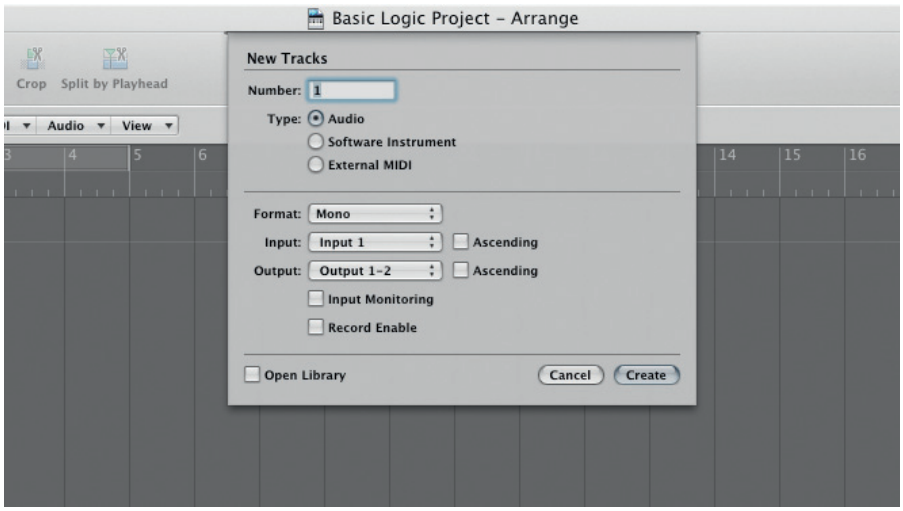

Figure 4.4 Create a number of empty tracks to correspond with the instrumentation you want to record. The New Tracks feature includes several ways of speeding up this process.

add, remove, or reorder tracks from your project at any point in the production process, so don't feel obliged to preplan your complete track list at this point.

To create a track, click on the small + sign on the top of the track list, or, if no tracks are present, Logic will ask you what tracks you initially want to create. The dialog box that accompanies track creation allows you to specify both the exact type of track that is being created, as well as several options for creating multiple tracks, output and input assignments, and so on.

Audio

An audio track will allow you to record an audio signal being fed from a corresponding input on your audio interface. This is the primary focus in this chapter.

Software Instrument

Use a software instrument track if you want to record music using any of Logic's integrated virtual instruments (EXS24, EVP88, ES2, and so on), or indeed, any third-party Audio Unit instruments. We'll be taking a closer look at the process of working with virtual instruments in Chapter 6.

External MIDI

External MIDI tracks correspond with MIDI hardware like synthesizers and samplers that you have externally connected to Logic (usually through a USB interface). Again, we're going to spend more time looking at this functionality in Section 6.5.

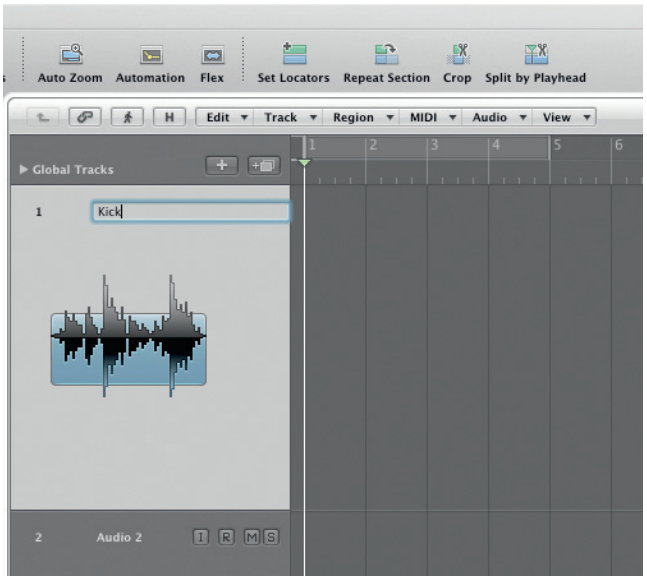

Figure 4.5
Naming tracks will allow you to keep a better handle on your Logic arrangement, as well as being used to automatically name the audio file and region that you create.

As you're creating your first set of audio tracks, you'll notice a couple of important options to speed up your workflow. For example, if you intend to record from the first 16 inputs of your audio interface, you might wish to increase the number (of track) parameter to 16, and click on the Ascending Input option – that way, each subsequent track will take a different input number. On the whole, most users tend to monitor their session from a single output, so you'll probably want to leave the output setting out of its Ascending option. Whether its format is mono or stereo will depend on the type of signal input being fed to your audio interface – a pair of drum kit overheads, for example, will be stereo, whereas a vocal (recorded with a single mix) would be mono.

With your basic tracks created, you'll want to also create some initial track names. Not only will this make the navigation of Logic's Arrange window and Mixer much easier, but you'll have better chance of keeping track of the various project audio files with names like "kick drum" rather than "audio 01." To name a track, simply double-click on the existing track name as part of the track list. Once named, any subsequent recordings on that track will adopt the name accordingly.

4.4 An Introduction to the Audio Mixer

Although we don't need to go too deeply into mixing at this point, it is worth introducing the concept of the audio mixer, mainly as an alterative way of looking at the tracks you've created for your project. While the track lanes of the

Figure 4.6 The Mixer window (accessible from the Mixer tab or by pressing X) displays an alternative view of your newly created tracks.

Arrange area work horizontally, the Mixer area shows us our current project in the form of a traditional vertical mixer, which each track represented as a different channel strip. You can open the Mixer at any point using either the Mixer tab at the bottom of Logic's Arrange window or from the keyboard shortcut X.

Figure 4.7

Common to both the Mixer and Arrange area's track list are a series of function switches, each of which govern how the particular track or channel is working at any given point in time.

Input Monitor (I)

Input monitoring is a simple one-click means of directly monitoring, or listening to, the current selected input

for that given track or channel. At first, this might be a good initial way of establishing what's coming into your inputs, and, using the meters on the channel strip, setting an initial gain on your microphone and line inputs. Note that in most cases, this will be done directly from the interface itself (or the interface's control software, if you're using something like the digitally controlled Apogee Ensemble) rather than adjusting the fader's position. In this case, the fader is simply setting the monitor level, rather than any form of recording level as it might do on a conventional console.

Should you wish to change a track's particular input, this can be done from the Mixer, clicking on the small input and output (I/O) box above the fader. The list presented should tally with the inputs available on your audio interface. For example, a typical USB audio interface will present two available inputs, whereas a FireWire interface could offer 10 or more possible inputs. Clicking on the small circle button on the bottom of the fader will also change track between mono and stereo operation, with a corresponding change in the input selection – input 1, for example, would become input 1–2.

Figure 4.8 Use the I/O box on the channel fader to change a track's input status, with the number of inputs corresponding to the type of interface you're using with Logic.

Figure 4.9

Record Arm (R)

Record arming a track or channel indicates to Logic that you're about to make a recording. Again, you'll be able to see your input levels accordingly, and hear the signal routed through to your main outputs. Once you press record on the transport, Logic will actively record the input as a new audio file (more on this in a moment!).

Figure 4.10

Mute (M)

As you'd expect, mute silences the track or channel in question. What can be confusing, though, is how this differs between the Arrange area and the Mixer. As the controls are independent (unlike the record arm or Input Monitor options), you won't find changes on one reflected on the other. Instead, use mute to silence the track or channel. For example, you might run several track lanes for the same instrument (like different takes of a vocal) where mute would silence one of those. Muting the channel, however, would silence any signal being directed to that strip.

Figure 4.11

Solo (S)

Solo will play the chosen track or channel in isolation, and, like the mute function, works independently so that you can either solo an individual track lane or a number of track lanes being fed to the same channel strip.

Working between the Mixer and the Arrange area is an important part of the day-to-day usage of Logic. For example, note how a selection in either window is mirrored in the other – selecting the vocal track on the Arrange area, for example, will also bring it up on the Mixer.

4.5 Using the Transport and Timeline

As with any multitrack recorder, the transport bar – found toward the bottom of the Arrange window – is what provides the master control for recording, playing back, and looping in Logic. For example, having created your tracks and record-armed them, pressing Record on the transport will tell Logic to engage its playback (of any existing material) and record each track as an individual audio file. The rest of the controls (play, pause, rewind, fast-forward, and so on) need little introduction, although it's worth noting how the transport controls are also influenced by settings in the Arrange area's bar ruler.