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TRACKTION 3

MUSIC PRODUCTION SOFTWARE



**QUICK-START GUIDE
VERSION 3.0**

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Tracktion 3

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Note: Tracktion originated in the mind of Julian Storer, an English programmer with a love of audio. Stateside Tracktioners* will notice a distinctly British flavor to the user interface. To help you understand Tracktion better, the manual was written with a British accent (thank you to Adam Starkey). So sit back, imagine yourself watching the sunrise over Stonehenge (or in an English pub if you prefer), and enjoy Tracktion!

*People who use Tracktion

Welcome to Tracktion

Welcome to Tracktion! Tracktion is a powerful audio and MIDI sequencer, designed with simplicity and ease of use in mind.

Do not be fooled by Tracktion's uncluttered interface however; ease of use in this case does not equate to a lack of features. Tracktion is capable of delivering professional results that only a few years ago would have required a significant investment in expensive hardware. When you open Tracktion, you have at your disposal all of the tools necessary to turn your musical ideas into great sounding mixes.

Section 1: Launching Tracktion for the first time

Tracktion 3 has an easy-to-use first run wizard, which will guide you through the process of selecting your audio and MIDI devices, and registering your copy of Tracktion online. The wizard runs automatically the first time Tracktion is opened (Fig. 1-1).

This section of the quick-start guide will walk you through the first run wizard. By the end of this section, your copy of Tracktion will be installed, configured, and ready to use.

The wizard will run automatically (Fig. 1-1), the first time Tracktion 3 is started.

Click the button labelled *next* to move to the next page, where you will be able to select your audio device (Fig. 1-2).

The available audio devices can be selected from the drop down list at the top of the page. This is the device to which you will connect your audio inputs (mic, guitar, keyboard, etc.) and outputs (speakers, headphones, etc.). Typically the correct device will be selected automatically. If for some reason an incorrect choice of device is shown in the selection dropdown (Fig. 1-3), simply select your desired device from the list.

Tip: If you are using a PC laptop with built-in audio, normally you will choose "DirectSound" as the audio device.

With your preferred audio device selected, you can choose which inputs and outputs you wish to make available to Tracktion. Input and output devices can be

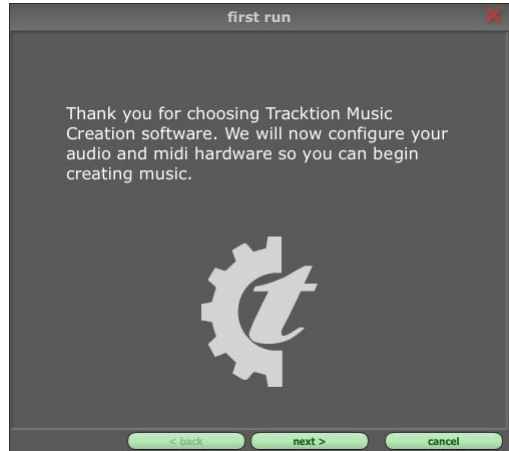


Figure 1-1

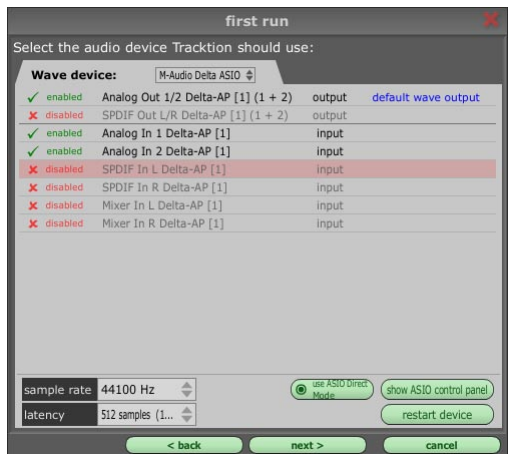


Figure 1-2

toggled on or off by clicking the enabled / disabled column to their left.

Now you must select a sample rate and latency. The sample rate defaults to 44100 Hz, which is CD quality, and a safe choice for most purposes. If you wish to choose another rate, simply select your preference from the drop down list.

The final option is *latency*, and this defines how much of a buffer will be used by Tracktion when transferring audio to or from your audio device. A buffer is necessary to achieve reliable recording and playback performance. If your computer is temporarily unable to keep up with the demands of real-time audio, and the buffer size is too small, data loss is likely to occur. This data loss will be audible to you as pops and clicks. For more information on pops and clicks not related to latency, see the “Troubleshooting USB and FireWire” PDF on the Tracktion 3 Installation disc.

Setting the ideal buffer size unfortunately requires a trade-off; on the one hand you need a buffer large enough to provide error free performance, but on the other hand, if the buffer size is too large, you may begin to notice a delay between Tracktion processing a sound, and the sound being audible through your monitors. This delay is called “latency,” and it is this latency that is being referred to above. Too much latency may be noticeable to you when playing live, so ideally latency should be set as low as your computer can handle without introducing errors into your recordings.

Perhaps the best strategy for determining the ideal latency setting is to start high, say 11 ms or so and, over time, adjust the value downwards until you reach a level that is comfortable when playing live, and yet yields reliable, error-free playback and recording.



Figure 1-3

Note: All of these settings can easily be changed at a later stage from the Settings tab, so don't worry if you are unsure what to do. The default settings are normally good enough to get you started, and you can re-run the wizard at any time from an option in the *help* menu.

When you have finished with this page, click the *next* button to begin setting up your MIDI devices (Fig. 1-4).

On this page you can select which MIDI inputs you wish to use with Tracktion. Simply click the enabled / disabled column on the left to toggle an input on or off.

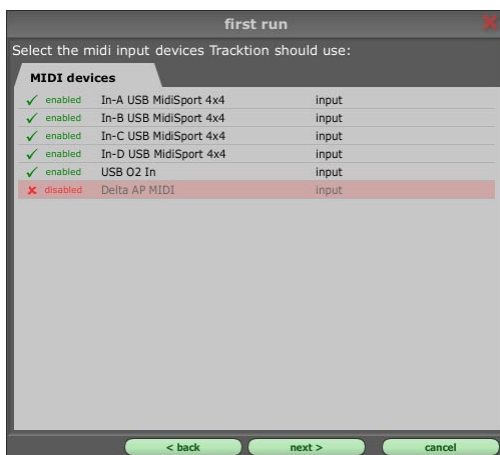


Figure 1-4

As only one application may use a given MIDI device at any time (in most cases), it can sometimes be useful to disable MIDI inputs if you intend to have Tracktion and another MIDI application open together. Any MIDI inputs that you disable will be available to the other application. Also, if you have many devices listed, but are not using all of them, it may be tidier to disable those that you do not need.

When you have finished with this page, click the *next* button to select which MIDI output devices you wish to make available to Tracktion. The MIDI output screen looks virtually identical to Fig. 1-4 and the principles described above apply here also.

The final stage of the wizard is the registration screen (Fig. 1-5). Here you can unlock Tracktion online, or with a previously downloaded key-file.



Figure 1-5

If the computer upon which you are using Tracktion has an Internet connection:

- Click the *unlock* button at the centre of the dialogue box. A second window appears.
- On the new window, click the *unlock online* button (make sure you are connected to the Internet at this point).
- You will be prompted for your email address, password, and license number. If you have never created a registration account with Mackie, simply place your email address and your choice of a password into the first two fields. If you do have an existing account with Mackie, you should just enter the email address and password you previously chose. Enter the license number for your copy of Tracktion. You can find this number on a card that came with your Tracktion DVD. We strongly advise that you copy the license number on the inside cover your printed Tracktion Quick-Start Guide if you have one, or keep it safely with your install DVD at all times!
- Once you have entered the required information, click the *register* button. Tracktion will then authorise itself, and if necessary, create a new Mackie registration account. You can use this account to log into the registered-users area of the Mackie web-site (<http://my.mackie.com>).

If the computer upon which you are using Tracktion does not have an Internet connection:

- Click the *unlock* button at the centre of the dialogue box. A second window appears.
- On the new window, click the *unlock offline* button. Write down the machine ID shown in this dialog and leave the window open.
- You first need to register your Tracktion license. Use another internet enabled computer to go to <http://my.mackie.com> and login to your account, or create a new one if you have not done so already.
- Once logged in, click the “Mackie Product Registration” button and choose “to register a Mackie Software product.” Then choose “Tracktion 3 music production software.”
- Follow the prompts to enter your Tracktion license number, found on a card that came with your Tracktion DVD.
- Now you must add the Machine ID to the account and download the keyfile. Return to Your Products list and click on the Tracktion 3 license.
- Click the yellow button under Step 2, “Click Here to Set/Change Your Machine ID(s)” (Fig. 1-6).
- Enter your machine ID and click, “Change Machine Numbers.”
- Under Step 3, click the text saying “Click here to download your Tracktion keyfile.” Download it to a USB drive or other removable storage such as a CD-R.
- Back on your Tracktion computer, click the “unlock with keyfile...” button, navigate to the keyfile you just downloaded on the USB thumb drive or CD-R, and click open.
- Tracktion should now be authorized.

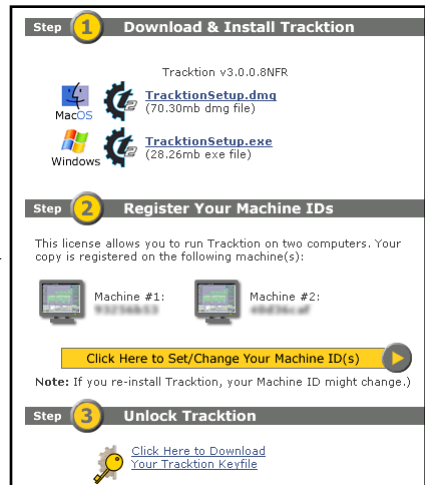


Figure 1-6

Note: It is not necessary to register at this time, so if the computer you are installing Tracktion onto does not have an active Internet connection, or if you are a trial user, then you can skip this section and finish the first run wizard. You can always access the registration screen later by clicking the *about* button and then choosing *unlock...*

Mackie distributes Tracktion updates and special offers to registered users, so it is worthwhile to register Tracktion as soon as possible and visit the registered-users area of the Mackie website (<http://my.mackie.com>) regularly to see what's new.

Section 2: Playing one of the demo songs

This section will walk you through opening one of the demo songs and playing it. This will give you a chance to test that everything is working as it should be. You will also learn a little about Tracktion's projects page, and will become familiar with the concepts of projects, items, and edits.

To get started, switch to the projects page (Fig. 2-1) by clicking on the *projects* tab at the top left-hand corner of the Tracktion window.

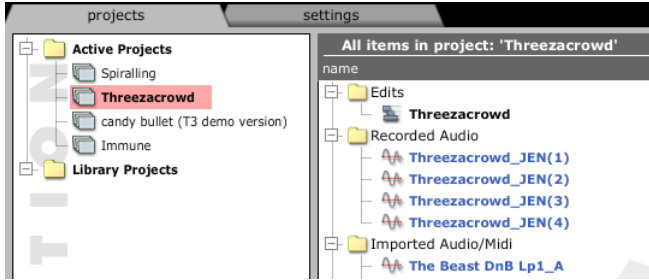


Figure 2-1

There are two main parts to this page. On the left there is the *projects* list, and on the right there is the *items* list.

A project can be thought of as a container for a complete song. It will always consist of at least one arrangement, or version of the song, referred to as an *edit* in Tracktion. In addition, it may contain audio recordings, MIDI files, and movie files.

Collectively, these project contents are referred to as *items*, and it is these items that are shown in the *items list* on the right hand side of the projects page.

Note: The projects page is an extremely powerful aspect of Tracktion. It can greatly ease the task of organizing your work, and offers many tools for making backups, finding lost material, and charting changes to a project over time. If you would like to learn more, the reference manual covers the projects page in detail.

When Tracktion is first run, the projects list will contain two folders. The first of these is called the *active projects* folder. We'll be looking at this folder in more detail below. The second folder, the *library projects* folder, is a special folder that is used to store resources that may be shared between projects.

You'll notice that the *active projects* folder already contains a number of entries. These are the demo songs that are included with Tracktion. In time, your own projects will be listed here too.

To open one of the demo songs, click on the project entry in the projects list. Notice how the items list updates to show the contents of the selected project.

At the top of the items list, you will see a folder called *edits* and inside this folder will be one or more edit items. You can open one of these edits by double-clicking on the item, or by clicking once to select it and then clicking the *open for editing* button (Fig. 2-2), which is now shown in the properties panel at the bottom of the page.

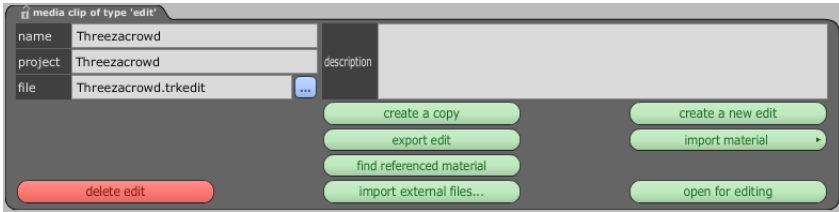


Figure 2-2

Note: This illustrates the most important rule of working with Tracktion: select an item and all of its adjustable parameters are available to you in the properties panel at the bottom of the screen. When learning Tracktion, you can discover a lot of what Tracktion has to offer by selecting an item and exploring its properties panel.

In short, to open an edit:

- Switch to the projects page.
- Select a project in the projects list.
- Double-click on an edit in the items list (or open it from its properties panel).

Depending on the size of the edit, it may take a few moments to open, but once it is fully loaded, Tracktion will switch you to the edit page, and you will see the edit laid out as a series of horizontal tracks. You can think of a track as being a single part or instrument within a song. We will look more closely at this page later, but for now we'll just skip straight to playing the demo song we've just opened.

If you look to the bottom right of the edit page, you will see the transport section (Fig. 2-3). Click the *play* button to start playback of the demo song.

If all has gone well, you will be hearing the demo song. Click the *play* button again when you wish to stop the demo.

Note: The reference manual has a troubleshooting section. If for some reason things are not working as expected, you may find a solution there.

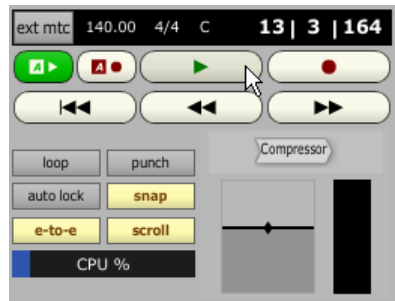


Figure 2-3

Section 3: A few last set-up steps

Now everything is installed and working, you're probably eager to dive right in and start making music. However, before you do, there are a few last things you may want to do. These final steps will make sure you're all set to get the best out of Tracktion.

Firstly, if you've ever used an audio editor, or another sequencer on your computer, you may have some VST plug-ins installed. If so, Tracktion can take advantage of them. All you need to do is let Tracktion know where they can be found. Tracktion looks in a few normal places by default. To search for plug-ins in another location, or to create a new directory where future plug-ins can be installed, simply:

- Click the *settings* tab (Fig. 3-1).
- Click on the *plugins* option group (Fig. 3-1).
- Click on the *add path...* button (Fig. 3-2). A *browse for folder* dialogue box appears.
- Navigate to the directory where your plug-ins are installed. If your plug-ins are organised into sub-directories, you need only select the parent directory; Tracktion will search through the sub-directories of the specified directory to find your plug-ins.
- You can repeat the previous steps if you have more than one directory to add.
- When your new directory(s) have been added, and are visible in the *directories to search for VST plugins* list (Fig. 3-2), click the *rescan plugin directories* button, and select the option *just look for plugins that are new or have changed* (Fig. 3-3).

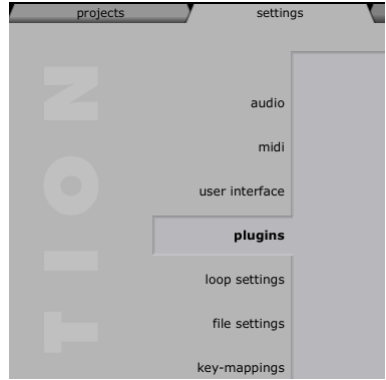


Figure 3-1

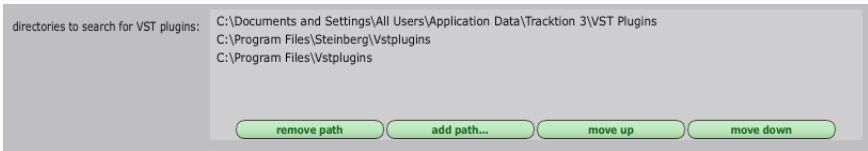


Figure 3-2

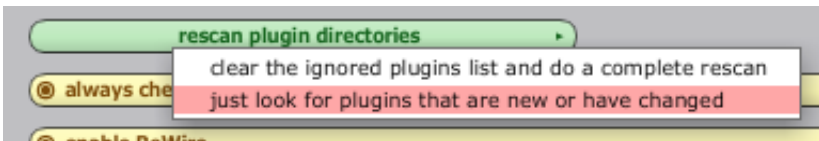


Figure 3-3

After the search, any plug-ins you have installed are now available to you when making music with Tracktion. You'll learn how to use them in Section 6.

The next step is to populate Tracktion's loop library with any loops you may have. Tracktion 3 supports Acid, Apple, and Rex format loops. Tracktion will add the loops installed with the bundle, but if you have a collection of loops already installed on your computer that you would like to use within Tracktion, simply:

- Click the *settings* tab (Fig. 3-1).
- Click on the *loop settings* option group (Fig. 3-4).
- Click on the *add path...* button (Fig. 3-5). A *browse for folder* dialogue box appears.
- Navigate to the directory where your loops are located. If your loops are organised into sub-directories, you need only select the parent directory; Tracktion will search through the sub-directories of the specified directory to find your loops.
- You can repeat the previous step if you have more than one directory to add.
- When your new directory(s) have been added, and are visible in the *loop directories* list (Fig. 3-5), click the *scan for loops* button, and select the option *scan for new or changed loops* (Fig. 3-6).

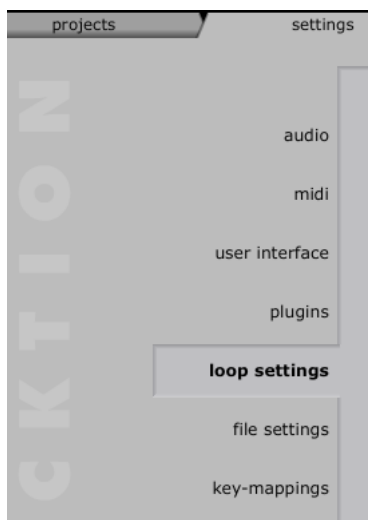


Figure 3-4

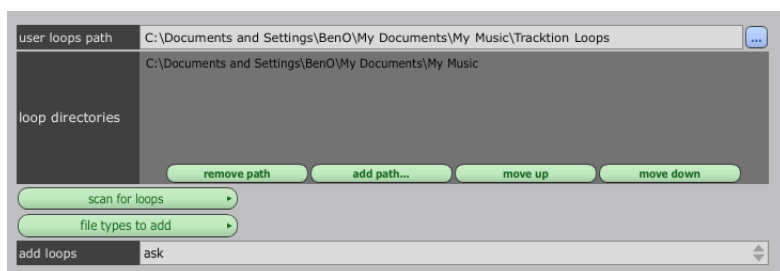


Figure 3-5

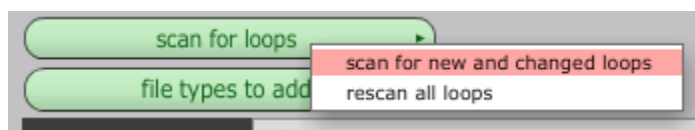


Figure 3-6

Your loops are now available in Tracktion's loop library, making them a snap to locate and use in your music. (If you have lots of loops, this may take awhile—be patient.) You'll learn how to use these loops in Section 5.

Section 4: Creating a new project

In this section we are going to look at creating new projects. At the end of this section you will have a new project and edit ready for the next stage of this tutorial.

Creating projects is extremely easy. Just switch to the projects page, click the *new project...* button (Fig. 4-1) and enter a name for your project (in this case, enter “tutorial”) when prompted (Fig 4-2). Click the chooser button to the right of the location field and choose a location on your hard drive to create your new project. Click the OK button when finished.



Figure 4-1

When you create a project, Tracktion will create a folder with the same name, and write the new project into it. The project will contain a blank (default) edit ready for you to start working. In addition the project will be added to the projects list.

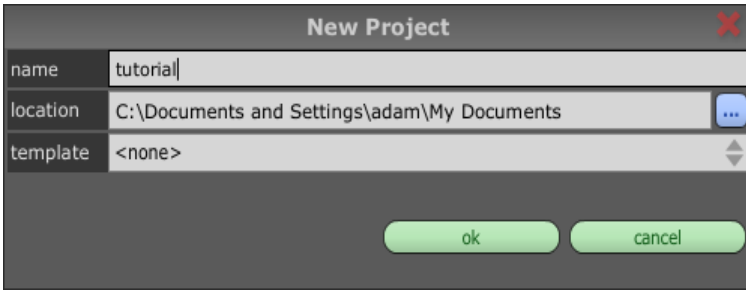


Figure 4-2

Note: You may have noticed that in addition to the project name and location, you were also prompted for a template. For the purposes of this tutorial we can ignore this option, but if you would like to know more, it is covered in the reference manual.

Now your project has been created, all that remains to do is to open the default edit. The process here is exactly the same as for the demo song in Section Two. Look for the edit in the items list, and double-click on it. As with the demo song, a few moments will pass while the edit is being opened. When this process is complete, Tracktion will switch you to the edit page. You are now ready to start making some music.

Section 5: Adding a simple rhythm section

Now we have an empty edit, it's time to learn how to add content to it. In this section you will be introduced to three new concepts: *tracks*, *clips*, and *loops*.

In the last section you created a new project, and opened the default edit for editing. At this point Tracktion will look something like the image shown in Figure 5-1.



Figure 5-1

The first thing to note is how the display consists of a number of horizontal strips. These strips are called *tracks*. If you have ever used a multitrack analog recorder or digital audio workstation (DAW), you are already familiar with the concept of tracks. If not, for the time being, just imagine each track as being a place-holder for a single instrument.

You may have also noticed that tracks have three distinct sections:

On the left you will see the track name, and an arrow shaped region (Fig. 5-2). This area is called the input section. We will look at this section more closely in the next section, when we come to look at making recordings with Tracktion.

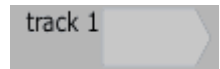


Figure 5-2

The area on the right (Fig. 5-3) is called the filter area, and you can think of this as your mixing console within Tracktion. We will look at this area in detail in Section 6.



Figure 5-3

Between the two track sections described above, there is a large, empty area. This is the arrangement area, and this is where your song will be constructed. To illustrate how this all works, and to lay down a rhythm part ready for the next section, we are going to import one of the audio loops that is included with your bundle of Tracktion.

To access the loops, first enable the *quick find panel* by clicking the show/hide control located at the upper left corner of the edit page (Fig. 5-4). When the quick find panel is visible, an extra drop-down menu control will appear to the right of the toggle button. Select the option called “loops” from this menu.

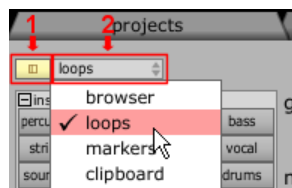


Figure 5-4

These two steps activate the *loop browser* (Fig. 5-5), which is a powerful and convenient tool for managing large loop libraries. Loops are special audio files that have been edited to facilitate rapid expression of musical ideas. The loop browser uses tempo, type, and genre tags embedded in loop files to help you quickly find a loop suitable for your song.

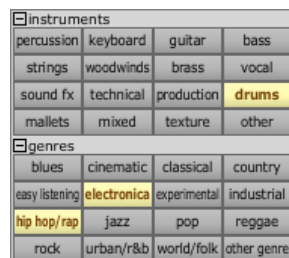


Figure 5-5

Click the *percussion* and *drums* toggle buttons in the *instruments* group. This will find all of the percussive loops in your library. You can narrow the list down by choosing one or more options from the *genres* and *descriptors* groups. The available loops will be listed below the selection criteria (Fig. 5-6), and you can click on any name in this list to preview the loop.

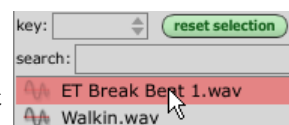


Figure 5-6

To add the loop to your edit, simply drag it from the list, onto a track. As you drag it, you will see an outline clip (Fig. 5-7) that shows where the loop will be placed when you drop it. Find a loop you like, and drag it to the beginning of Track 1. Take care to ensure that the clip is lined up with the bar lines along the top of the edit page.

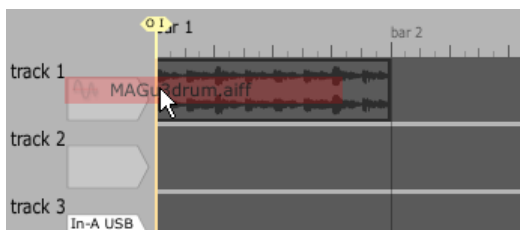


Figure 5-7

A cool thing that may not be immediately apparent at this time is that the loop is automatically in time with your edit. Tracktion automatically time-stretches loops that contain suitable tempo matching values. You have lots of control over how Tracktion does this from an audio clip’s Loop Properties Panel. For more information on time-stretching refer to Sections 4.6 and 4.7 in the Reference Manual.

At this point your loop probably spans only a few bars at most. To use it as an effective back beat for recording, we need to stretch it to cover more bars.

Click on the clip. Notice how its appearance changes; this change shows that the clip is selected. If you look at the clip, you will see that it has a title-bar with a number of small icons. First make sure that the “L” icon located roughly at the centre of the clip is selected (Fig. 5-8). When selected, the “L” icon will appear to be a different colour than the other icons on the clip’s title-bar. This enables loop mode for the clip.

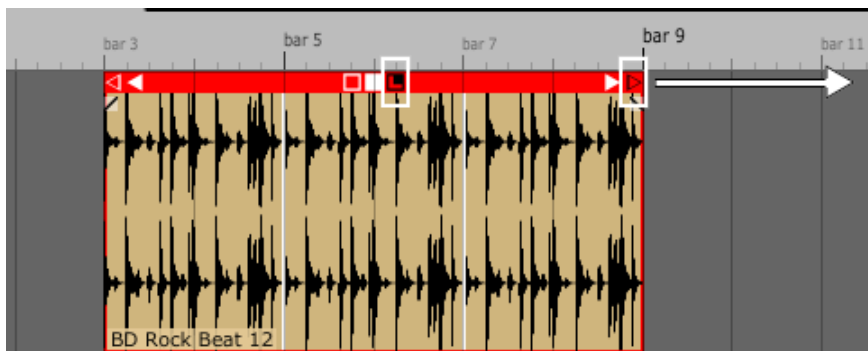


Figure 5-8

Now, click and drag the open arrow icon on the right-hand side of the clip (Fig. 5-8) until the clip spans at least 16 bars or so. There is insufficient space here to discuss the clip title-bar tools in detail, but they are covered in Chapter Four of the Tracktion Reference Manual.

If you play your edit now, you will hear the percussive loop repeat over a number of bars. We now have an effective backing against which to do some recording. First though, we shall take a quick look at adjusting the level and panning of the percussive track, and adding a little delay (echo) to it.

Section 6: Mixing, and adding some effects

A fundamental part of bringing a song to life is the process of setting the levels of instruments, vocals, and percussive sounds, such that the listener's attention is drawn to the sounds you wish to emphasise, while keeping other sounds clearly audible. Effects such as reverb may be used to give sounds a sense of position and space. Treatments such as compression may be used to give sounds punch or weight, without making them too loud. EQ can be used to boost the bass of a kick drum, or maybe roll a little treble off an overly bright piano. In this section, we will look at how levels and panning can be set for tracks, and how to add effects to them.



Figure 6-1

You may recall from Section Five that the right hand side of the track area is known as the *filter area*, or *filter section*. This area serves as the mixing console for your edit, and each track has its own mixer channel. By default this channel contains only a volume/pan control, a level meter, and the mute/solo buttons (Fig. 6-1).

Note: A filter is just Tracktion's term for VST plug-ins. A filter can therefore be anything from a reverb plug-in to a virtual synthesizer.

The volume/pan filter allows you to make changes to the level and stereo position of a track. Clicking on this filter will display the volume and pan settings in the properties panel (Fig. 6-2). The volume and pan sliders can be used to adjust these settings.



Figure 6-2

Notice how the volume/pan filter icon changes to reflect your pan and volume adjustments. The dark horizontal line shows the level, and the diamond shows the left-right pan position. Even more handily, the pan and level settings can be adjusted directly from the surface of the filter icon. If you move your mouse over a volume/pan filter, you will notice that the pointer will change appearance. Depending on the pointer type, you will be in either pan or volume edit mode.

To adjust the pan, hold the pointer over the horizontal line with the small diamond icon; the pointer will switch to a left/right arrow. Clicking and dragging the mouse left or right when the left/right arrow is shown will adjust the pan position.

To adjust the level, position the pointer anywhere in the boxed region other than over the horizontal line; the pointer will switch to an up/down arrow. Clicking and dragging the mouse up or down when the up/down arrow is shown will adjust the level.

Now you've seen how to make pan and level changes to a track, let's add a new filter to the mix. If you look at the area just above the filter section, you will see an icon labelled "new filter.." (Fig. 6-3). To add a new filter to a track, drag this icon to the location where you want the new filter to be placed. Figure 6-4 shows a filter being added to a track. Notice that the area in front of the volume/pan filter is glowing red; this is how you can tell where the filter will be placed. If there is no illumination then you are not currently over a valid target area.

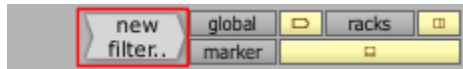


Figure 6-3

When the *new filter* icon is dropped, a pop-up menu appears. From this menu you can select the filter you wish to add to your track. The *Tracktion Filters* sub-folder contains a delay filter. Try adding this filter to the track on which you placed the percussive loop. When you have added it, play your edit back to hear the effect.



Figure 6-4

Note: You can remove unwanted filters by selecting them and pressing the delete key on your keyboard. You can also move them by dragging them in the same way that you added the delay above.

If you want to make changes to the delay levels, select the filter and adjust the controls that are shown in the properties panel.

Section 7: Recording MIDI and Audio parts

Now that you are somewhat familiar with tracks and clips, it is time to dive into recording. Tracktion allows you to record both audio and MIDI performances, and as you will see in this section, doing so couldn't be easier.

Recording is in essence a three-step process. The first step is to select a track for the recording, and assign an input device to it. The second step is to select the song position at which you wish to start recording; you may also set an end position at this time. The third and final step is simply to start the recording.

We already have our percussion loop on track 1, so for this tutorial we'll start a recording on track 2. To assign an input device to this track, click the arrow shaped region just to the right of the track name (Fig. 7-1). If the arrow is not visible, click the *show inputs* toggle button located at the top right of the edit page (Fig. 7-2). Once the input arrow is visible, click it and you will see a pop-up menu (Fig. 7-1) listing your active input devices. From this pop-up menu, select the input through which you wish to record.

Most likely you will have both MIDI and audio input devices available. Both are shown in the input devices list. Later in this section we will look at both of these input types individually, but the next few paragraphs are applicable to both audio recording and MIDI recording.

Before recording, it is always a good idea to check signal levels, and verify that the correct input has been chosen. A few seconds here can save you from losing a perfect vocal performance, for example, because you were recording from the wrong microphone, or the level was set too low!

Once you have assigned an input device to a track, the input will be visible to the right of the track name (Fig. 7-3). At this point, it should be clear that the arrow shaped region you clicked on earlier is simply an empty place-holder for an input device.

The input device surface has a record arm/unarm control, represented by a toggle button with the label "R", and a level meter.

The meter will respond to any signal that is received by the input device. For audio devices the meter shows a dB scale, and for MIDI devices it shows note velocity. This allows you to quickly check whether signal is reaching the input, and in the case of audio, whether the levels are too high, or too low.

The record arm/unarm control allows you to quickly toggle whether the input device is armed. When an input is unarmed, it will receive input, but will block it from passing on. This allows you to effectively mute an input, while still being able to monitor the signal with the meter. When an input is armed, the signal arriving at the input will be available to

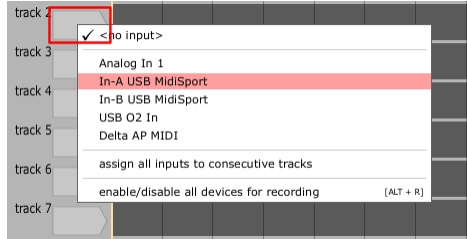


Figure 7-1

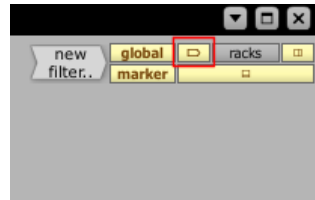


Figure 7-2

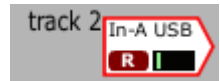


Figure 7-3

Tracktion, and as such, will be recorded when record mode is active. If record mode is inactive, the signal arriving at an armed input will simply pass through Tracktion. This is useful in that it allows you to use Tracktion as a real-time effects processor, or to try out ideas without committing them to a recording.

For our purposes here, ensure that your input is armed, and check the meter to verify that the input is receiving a signal. If it is not, verify that you have selected the correct input, and that your cables are connected to your audio/MIDI interface.

Recording from an audio input

When you are recording an audio input, you will typically want to spend a few moments adjusting the recording levels to obtain a low noise floor, while not introducing digital clipping into your recordings.

Select the input device by clicking on its surface. The device will become highlighted to signify that it is selected, and the *properties panel* will update to show related information and settings (Fig. 7-4).

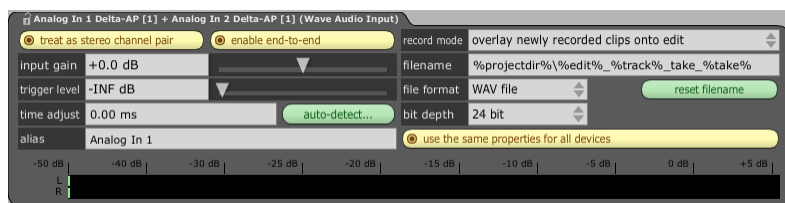


Figure 7-4

The first thing you will most likely see is the large input meter. You can use this to set your recording levels. In addition to the meter, you will see a number of other options that can be adjusted. The default settings for these options are normally fine, so we'll only look at two of them here. The others are described in the Reference Manual.

The *treat as stereo channel pair* button controls whether the input should be treated as a stereo input, or as an individual mono input. If you want to record in stereo, toggle this option on, otherwise toggle it off.

The *input gain* control sets how much the audio is amplified before being written to your hard-drive. Ideally this value should be set to zero, so that the input meter shows the actual incoming signal level. Gain make-up/reduction should be applied at the source (e.g., the external mixer's mic preamp gain control or external audio interface) wherever possible. This helps to avoid both raising the noise level, and clipping the inputs.

Tip: With modern 24 bit input devices, setting the input levels such that peaks in the signal register around -5 dB on the input meter gives a good trade off between audio quality, and headroom. Remember, don't let your input signal reach 0 dB or it may ruin a perfect take.

Recording from a MIDI input

The MIDI input device has a few settings that are worth checking before making recordings. To access these settings in the properties panel, select the MIDI input device by clicking on its surface (Fig. 7-5).

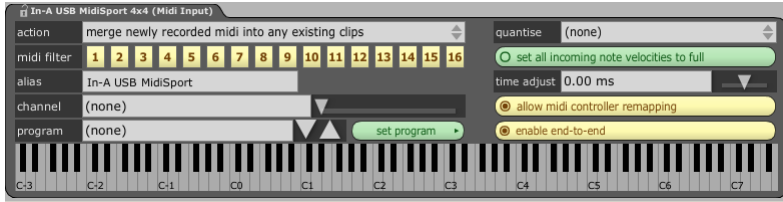


Figure 7-5

The MIDI input properties are described in detail in the Reference Manual. For now, just ensure that all 16 of the numbered *midi filter* toggle buttons are active. Once you've assigned a MIDI input, you need to send it to an instrument. This can either be a real instrument like a keyboard sound module, or it can be a virtual instrument inside Tracktion. The Tracktion bundles ship with numerous virtual instruments to get you started.

To use one, drag the new filter icon to the track with the assigned midi input just as you did with the delay filter a little while earlier. Be sure to place it before any other filters on the track. Choose a virtual instrument filter such as the Alpha synth (Fig. 7-6). Notice virtual instruments are indicated by the word “(synth)” after the name. With Alpha loaded on the track, playing your keyboard should produce sound from the virtual instrument.



Figure 7-6

Making the Recording

Now we have selected our input and all that remains to do is to make a recording. With Tracktion you have access to a number of recording modes, including looped and punch in. For now, we will just look at the most simple record mode.

Note: If you would like a count-in period before the recording starts, click on the *click track* menu button at the bottom left of the edit page, and select a count-in length from the *pre-record count-in length* sub-menu.

If you recall from the beginning of this section, the second step when making recordings is to select a suitable start point. For our purposes, we will start our recording at the beginning of our edit. To quickly return the play-head cursor to the start of the edit, click the *Return To Zero* (RTZ) button (Fig. 7-7).

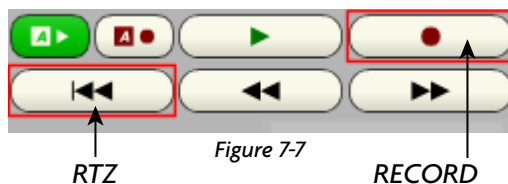


Figure 7-7

The final step is simply to activate the record mode, and play a live part. To do this just click the *record* button (Fig. 7-7). The record button automatically activates the playback mode, and begins recording. You will hear the drum loop on track 1 play back while your new recording is made on track 2. A recording strip will show the recording progress (Fig. 7-8). When you are ready to stop recording, click either the *stop* button or the *play* button.

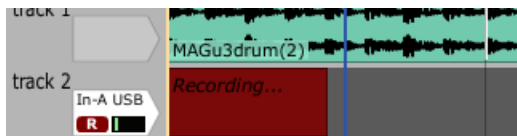


Figure 7-8

Now that you have made a recording, you can begin building up a complete song by adding loops, and recording other tracks. Additionally, although we haven't had time to look at editing MIDI clips by hand in this Quick-Start Guide, you can use MIDI editing to make tweaks and corrections to your recorded MIDI clips, or even create MIDI performances entirely from scratch. Chapter 4.3 and 4.4 of your Tracktion Reference Manual discuss how to edit MIDI.

You have already seen how to adjust the level and panning of your tracks, and how to add effects such as delay by using Tracktion's filter section. You may also have noticed that Tracktion comes with a large number of other built in effects and treatments. If you add a filter to one of your tracks, and look at the list of available options, you will find filters such as EQ, compression, chorus, and reverb. You will even find virtual instruments such as Tracktion's built in sampler! If you want to learn more about the built-in filters, they are detailed in the Reference Manual in Chapter 3.4.

Since you know how to add effects, and adjust the levels and panning of your tracks, once you are done recording, you can begin mixing down your first song.

Feel free to spend some time working with your song before moving on to the final section of this guide, as it is there that we will look at how to render your song to a standard audio file ready for burning to CD. After all, maybe this is the song that will make you famous!

Section 8: Exporting an audio file

You've written your song, you've mixed it, and you're ready to unleash it on an unsuspecting world. The next step then is to export your mix as a standard audio file.

To render your mix, click the *export* button, and select *create an audio file* (Fig. 8-1). Selecting this option will display the dialogue box shown in Figure 8-2.

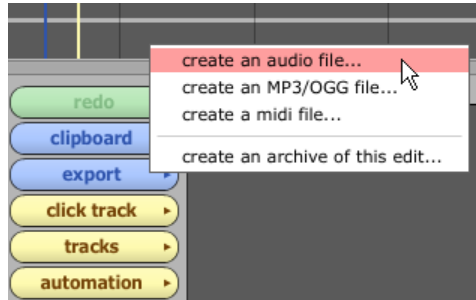


Figure 8-1

Notice that the export button also has the option of creating an MP3 or OGG file. You might want to use this option if you are going to post your audio file on a website.

The default settings on this dialogue box are suitable for creating audio files destined to be burnt to CD. You may also wish to enable the *normalise* option though, as this will give the best signal-to-noise ratio.

The *file* field defines where the rendered audio file will be placed on your hard drive. You can use the *chooser* button to the right of this field to select a name and destination for your audio file.



Figure 8-2

When you are ready, simply click render. This will start the rendering process. Typically this will take a few moments, but a progress meter will indicate how near Tracktion is to completion. Once the process is complete, your audio file is all ready and waiting to be burnt to a CD.

At this point, you've completed your first song in Tracktion; you have seen how to create a song from first ideas, to final mixdown and export. In truth, we've barely scratched the surface of Tracktion's power and flexibility here, but hopefully this guide has shown you enough to whet your appetite. If you are hungry to learn more, there is a full Reference Manual in PDF form included with your Tracktion install.

All that is left to say at this point is that we, at Mackie and Raw Material Software, hope you enjoy using Tracktion as much as we enjoyed creating it.

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