

FIRST HALF WRAP-UP, AND A BRIEF TANGENT

Congratulations! You have now mastered the basic operations of UltraMix. The techniques described above encompass 70% to 90% of what you'll usually do with mixing automation. (The 20% spread takes into account variations in the way folks approach the whole idea of automated mixing.) In the sections following, we will plunge into the more arcane aspects of UltraMix. Some functions, like grouping, are quick to set up and easy to use – if you find them useful. If you don't, that's fine.

Other functions, like tweaking complex moves in the Event Editor, can be challenging for fader jockeys who are not accustomed to dealing with row after row of tiny numbers as part of a standard mixing routine. But that's okay. The great thing about UltraMix is that it's so flexible you can do the same thing in a number of different ways.

A TALE OF TWO MONKEYS

Before we get into the advanced editing stuff, it helps to understand that UltraMix Pro functions as an *event recording system*, not a time-sampling recording system. It records each event with an associated time stamp. The current status of a fader (level value of 0 to 127) and mute or Automute status (on or off) will not reflect any changes until a new event occurs during playback. You might think of a smooth fade-in as one event, but it is actually a series of many events occurring one after the other, each with a later time stamp.

If a fader has a value of 32 for twenty minutes, there is only one event associated with that fader for those twenty minutes. This saves a lot of file space because UltraMix isn't setting this level forty-one-thousand times per second (like a digital recorder does). If this fader event is erased, the fader value for that twenty-minute span would drop to zero, or if some value preceded the twenty minutes, the fader would inherit that value.

Got that?

Okay, let's take another tack. We'll compare the way a digital audio recorder works to the way UltraMix works. To illustrate, we'll hire two clever monkeys named Greg and Mack. Though both are equally clever, they work in different ways. So we put Greg in the digital audio recorder. In here, he has a very precise meter to show the instantaneous audio level, and he writes down the level forty-one-thousand times each second, whether or not the level changes. Even if the level stays exactly the same for a minute, he still writes it down 2,880,000 times. He never takes a nap, and he uses a whole lotta note paper.

Mack, who works in UltraMix, is really into the ecology thing. He doesn't want to waste paper, so he only takes notes when the level changes. In other words, if the fader level starts at unity (MIDI 98) and stays there for a couple minutes, he just kicks back and watches carefully for any changes. When he sees the level go down to MIDI 92 at 00:02:12:12, he perks up and dutifully notes the change.

Now, if you play back a mix recorded by either monkey, you hear exactly the same thing. Obviously, the first monkey has written down what appears to be a lot of redundant information. His wasted paper is the equivalent of wasted computer power and wasted data storage space. That's why, overall, the event-based way of recording is much more efficient and effective for things like automation and sequencing.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DELETED TIME

But here's the caveat. (Isn't that some kind of spiffy tie?) You have to be careful when you get into advanced editing with UltraMix. This is particularly true whenever you use the Event Editor or the Delete Time commands to shorten or delete time segments. Because, if you delete a time that contains a change event, that change (along with the corresponding fader level or mute commands) suddenly disappears.

Let's do an extremely simple mix to illustrate. First, put UltraMix in External Sync Bypass, since we don't need audio for this. We'll just watch the faders on-screen.

Open a new mix file, not your template. Now, select faders 1 and 2. Choose Modify Levels from the Edit menu, and add 98, or Unity gain. There. Now both faders are set to unity gain until we make a change. (If you want, roll the “mix” for thirty seconds or so just to confirm that they stay put.)

Now, using UltraPilot or your mouse, move the glass fader controller for fader 1 to about 10dB below Unity. Put UltraMix in Replace recording mode, arm Master Record, and hit Play. Now, at 10 seconds, press the Record/Ready button on fader 1 to punch in that 10dB level change. At 15 seconds, press it again to punch out.

Go back to zero, roll your mix again for about 20 seconds, and you’ll see the move on fader 1 while fader 2 just hangs in at Unity.

Locate back to 00:00:00:00 (zero). Now choose Delete Time from the Edit menu. Leave the From window at all zeros. In the To window, click on the second frame from the right and type 05 on your keyboard (i.e., five seconds). Then click on the Delete button. There – you just deleted five seconds from the beginning of your mix. All events after five seconds now move up; what once was five seconds and one frame is now zero seconds and one frame.

Roll the mix again from zero. Oops! Now we have no levels at all on both faders at the start. That’s because we just deleted the event that set them to Unity to start with. But at five seconds (formerly 10), fader 1 jumps to the –10dB position. That makes sense, because that event took place after our five-second deletion. Now, at 10 seconds (formerly 15), fader 1 jumps—not to zero—but back up to Unity. Fader 2 stays at zero.

Why? Because, when we punched out of our –10dB level change, we established a new event: a new start time at Unity gain at the 15-second point. (You can see all this happening in the Event Editor, but since we haven’t formally introduced that section yet, we won’t get into it here. But feel free to take a peek if you like.)

The bottom line is this: As you refine your mix, you are constantly creating new events, with new start and end times. But you must make certain that when using the Delete Time

command or deleting events in the Event Editor, you do not inadvertently remove start times that determine levels you want to retain later on.

NOT A SIMPLE TAPE-SPLICE

Another analogy might be helpful. Slicing time out of your UltraMix session is similar to, but not exactly like, editing out a chunk of analog tape. For example, if you edit out a piece of tape where a track gradually fades in, the music on that track still comes in full-force after the edit point. But UltraMix is a “preceding-event” application—meaning each event is based on the *prior* event. If you delete a prior event such as a fade-in, the current event has nothing to base itself on and will likely not show up at all.

For most of what you’re likely to do in UltraMix, all this really doesn’t matter. But for that one time where you have to do delicate time surgery, understanding this concept could save you some head-shaking and hair-pulling. (This is also a place where understanding the difference between Deleting and Inserting Blank Time, and the basics of Cut/Copy/Paste/Clear come in handy.)

End of tangent. Music fades, lights fade, the curtain pulls back, and flickering to life on the screen we see...