

PART ONE: THE INTRODUCTORY STUFF

WHAT ALL THIS STUFF WILL DO FOR YOU

Perhaps you are already familiar with the many advantages of mixing automation. (A good chance, since we doubt this was an impulse purchase. “Honey, stop by the Food-O-Rama and pick up some pork rinds, then swing by the music store and grab an UltraMix, will ya?”)

But there may be potential benefits you hadn’t considered. So, just in case, here’s a capsule summary of how UltraMix is about to change your life for the better. Okay, maybe only that part of your life is devoted to audio mixing. The rest of your existence may slide into the slough, but you’ll love it when you retreat into mixing. That’s because automation...

Takes The Drudgery Out Of Mixing

Sometimes mixing turns into an exacting chore. This is particularly true when you have to “fix it in the mix,” and the “it” you have to fix involves little teeny-tiny, short sounds on several tracks, either simultaneous or worse—in rapid succession.

Automation gets you out of the bind. You tackle the problems one by one, redoing the first as many times as you like, storing your perfect moves, and proceeding to the next unappealing task. With a system like UltraMix, you can even use your computer to enter the precise time in a mix that you want something to happen, and then define exactly what you want to happen. For example, say you have a string overdub with a short but extremely annoying whistling inhalation right between two staccato notes. (At union scale, you’d think violinists could afford a decongestant.) With UltraMix, you can note the exact beginning and end of the offending sound, enter a mute and an unmute at those points, and you’re done. Next problem?

Improves Interpersonal Relationships

When it comes time to mix, everyone has an opinion. And if it’s a complex mix without automation, often you need to have everybody involved in a hands-on capacity. Most mortals find it difficult to perform more than two moves at once and more than three or four in rapid sequence, particularly when it requires moving fingers to different faders or buttons.

**Gives You
100%
Reproducibility**

That means you often need two or three (or more) people involved in the mix, which translates into four or six (or more) hands, and two or three separate heads with separate brains harboring diverse opinions.

Alas, science has yet to achieve flawless memory in one brain, much less perfect communication and synchronicity among multiple brains. Consequently, at some point during the mix, somebody will screw up, either absolutely or relatively.

Once again, automation solves the problem! Did Howie the drummer miss the quick boost on the background “oohs” again on that otherwise perfect mix? No problem. It’s all saved, so all you have to do is give Howie one more chance, without worrying that YOU will drop the ball on the next pass.

With automation, you have the ability to precisely reproduce every move in a complex mix over and over again, as often as you like, five minutes from now or five years from now.

This is important on several levels. For example, let’s say you’ve just completed a near-perfect mix on a complex radio commercial, only to find that the reverb tail on your final trumpet fanfare stepped on the opening line of the local retailer tag. Oops.

No need to go back and do it all over again. You saved the whole mix, so you simply roll back to that segment and pull down the effects return channel a little faster. Instead of dealing with a 59-second mix with 13 moves, you have a four-second mix with one move. Vive la différence!

Now, let’s say you finished the commercial, it was a big hit with the client, and she comes back three months later with a modest request. “You know, I really love that spot you did for me, and I want to start running it on the country stations as well as the pop stations. So could you take out the fuzzy electric guitar part and put in a nice, clean pedal steel sound? But everything else was exactly right, so don’t change anything else.”

With automation, it’s as simple as pressing the play button and letting the original mix run, merely adjusting the new overdub to get the desired balance and effects.

Other examples abound. You accidentally erased the DAT master of a great mix and your bass player borrowed the backup DAT and left it on the dashboard of his pickup on a sunny July afternoon. With automation, re-creating the lost mix is quick and painless.

In most cases, though, it's a matter of doing variations on the same theme. Perhaps you need some slightly different moves in a song to emphasize visuals in a video. Or you're doing a dance remix. Or you just updated your MIDI sound modules and want to replace a keyboard part on an old mix with a new sound. Whatever you want to do, your old mix is waiting for you, every move reproduced precisely as before.

Gives You More Control

Think of all the times when precise control of just levels and mutes could have solved sticky problems or expanded your creative horizons. For example, let's say you wanted to make rapid-fire changes to the effects parameters and EQ settings of a percussion track, all in the exact tempo of the music. With automation, you could simply split the track into two or three different channels, set the EQ and effects just the way you want for each, and then selectively mute channels to get the sound you require.

Allows Better Recorded Performances

We mortal souls naturally feel intimidated whenever we are called upon to perform with absolute perfection. When placed in front of a microphone connected to a recording device, the intensity of intimidation increases enormously.

Yet we listen to recordings and marvel at how some performers—often relative neophytes—deliver flawless lead vocals and instrumental solos. How do they do it?

Well, it's cheating. Sort of. Many of the best recorded performances you hear on contemporary releases were stitched together from a number of "comp" tracks. For an explanation of how to do that, see page 192.

Provides Cleaner Sound

Before you even start mixing, you can use automation to improve the quality of the final master recording. You do it by selectively muting every track that's not being used in the mix at that particular moment.

This can make an enormous difference, even if you record digitally—and particularly if the recording has quiet passages. Remember, every device with active electronics produces some noise: output circuits from MIDI synth modules, guitar amps and effects boxes, even condenser microphones! Of course, if you're recording on an analog multitrack, you have tape hiss to deal with as well.

Doing a mute pass before you mix cleans up the noise, so what prints on your master tape is only what you want to be there. With UltraMix, most if not all of this is done automatically in the Automute pass.

Stimulates More Creativity

Even if you see audio recording primarily as business, you're probably not in it just to make money. Most of us stay up late recording music (or soundtracks or commercials) because we thrive on the creative stimulation. Automation helps here as well. That's because automation gives you the confidence to take chances. Knowing that you don't have to start all over again if you blow it, you can dare to be different, to try some things (real time or via data entry) that you simply would not have risked before.

So, that's what's waiting for you in UltraMix. Pumped up? Ready to mix? Hang in there, because there are a few more essential details you need to cover before you get rolling in your first UltraMix session. Like, for example, getting all of that stuff out of the boxes and hooked up nice and proper. Gotta plug before you play!

HOW TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

We realize that you're anxious to get UltraMix up and running as quickly as possible. This section will help you do just that, but without falling flat on your face along the way.

In fact, we suspect you may have already used the Quick Start Guide before arriving on this page. But even if the Quick Start Guide has got you going already, plan to take some time in the near future to read this manual. Why? Because some UltraMix operating features are not obvious, and if you don't know about them, you may miss some handy techniques or spend too much time doing things the hard way.

I Live In The Mac World And...

...I am a MIDI whiz, I know my computer operating system inside and out, and I'm a veteran user of other OMS- and/or FMS-based applications, at least one of which is installed already.

Congratulations. Two gold stars and you may sit in the front row. Most likely you will find everything you need to know to get started in the Quick Start Guide, though you might want to riffle through this manual just to see what is where when you're ready for the advanced techniques. You may want to flip through Appendix A on page 198, which contains information on interfaces and peripheral equipment that may apply to your particular situation.

If you run into any problems, refer to the complete set up descriptions in the manual, as well as the Troubleshooting appendix on page 217.

or...

...I know MIDI and my computer, but I'm not too clear about all this OMS and FMS stuff.

If you have neither OMS nor FMS already installed on your Mac, then we suggest you follow the OMS installation instructions in this manual and in the Quick Start Guide. If, down the road, you find a need for FMS (because you purchase a new program that is only FMS compatible), you can install FMS at that point. UltraMix lets you switch back and forth between the two systems at any time. Remember, you should complete all your hardware connections before installing your software. You can probably get by using the Quick Start Guide, but take a few moments to get familiar with the manual in case you get stuck.

I Live In The Windows® 95 World...

Windows 95 installation is relatively easy to do, so follow the instructions in either the Quick Start Guide or in this manual. Be sure to check out the Windows 95 section in Appendix A on page 201 for information on interfaces or other peripherals that may apply to you.

Uh, What's A MIDI?

If you've yet to dive into the Sea of MIDI, you will want to familiarize yourself with all parts of this manual before installing the software. Also, you might want to have a good MIDI reference book handy. You should be able to find one at any store that stocks music books.

UltraMix Is Running...

...and everything seems to be working okay. But I'm getting dazed and confused.

Don't worry. It can take a few hours to get the hang of UltraMix. You may want to go through the tutorial in *The UltraMix Studio Companion* that came with your UltraMix system. Otherwise, just be patient. Go through Part Three: The How-To Section in this manual, and try everything one step at a time. Work with a simple practice mix until you get accustomed to all the basic procedures. Breathe deep, focus, and you'll be a master UltraMixer in no time!

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UltraMix Owner's Manual 2.0 <PDF Version • Rev. 11/96>

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