

**PRO TOOLS 8
WORKSHOP**

BOOM DRUM MACHINE

Pro Tools 8's new drum machine and pattern sequencer offers an exciting way of creating unique-sounding beats. Mike Hillier guides you through the possibilities.



Boom is the new drum machine instrument for Pro Tools 8. It features ten drum kits so it can generate a range of electronic percussion sounds, plus it has a simple pattern sequencer.

The instrument has deliberately been kept simple, enabling anyone with even only rudimentary knowledge of drum machines to start producing beats. However, beneath the simplistic design are a number of features aimed at power users wanting to make more than straightforward four-to-the-floor dance beats.

Copy the Boom Workshop folder from the DVD onto your hard disk and open the session. We've kept things pretty simple: just one instance of Boom placed on an instrument track. **1**

In the Boom plug-in window, hit play to confirm that everything is routed correctly. You should hear the Boom default pattern, which has a basic R'n'B vibe to it. Notice that the Pro Tools timeline isn't moving; this enables you to edit your beats offline, however, if you start Pro Tools, Boom will sync with your track. If you stop Pro Tools playback, Boom stops. Hitting play again in Pro Tools will not start Boom, so to get Boom to play back with the session you must first draw in some MIDI notes on the instrument channel. Draw a long C3 note in the first bar and loop that bar with the Pro Tools transport. **2**

Now that Boom is following the Pro Tools timeline, we can make it start and stop whenever we want, as well as switch from one pattern to another.

Sonic Boom

Each of the ten kits has ten instruments that you can edit and tune to suit your track. With the default pattern running, listen to each of the ten kits by clicking on the

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kit's Name field and selecting each of the kits in turn. This should give you an idea of the different kits available to you, but you don't have to stick to one kit. **3**

If you like the kick from the 'Nine-O' kit, for example, but you prefer the snare from the 'Fat-9' kit, that's not a problem. You can mix and match as many of the instruments as you wish to create your own custom kits. On the Kick channel, click on the current kit piece name to select a new kit piece. **4**



Power Tip

Boom automatically syncs to the Pro Tools grid, but this behaviour can be altered (in the Setup menu) to one of two alternatives. In 1/16 mode Boom plays back from one of the first five steps in the pattern, depending on the incoming MIDI note's position in the current quarter-note. In Off mode Boom plays back without synchronising to the Pro Tools transport.

Power Tip

If you find yourself building the same drum kits again and again it is worth saving your kit as a preset. The preset will also save patterns, but you can overwrite them.

We built our own kit using various pieces from the Nine-O, Fat-9, Retro, Dance 2 and Electro kits, which we think still gives a cohesive sound. **5**

Once you've found a kit that works with your track, you can tweak it to get the sounds absolutely spot-on. Each of the kit piece channels has three knobs and a pan slider to help you fit it within your mix. The three knobs provide control over the level, pitch and decay of the sound. Go through the sounds you've picked and reset the Level, Tune and Decay controls. We opted to reduce the decay of the kick, snare, hi tom and crash to tighten up the loop, giving a punchier sound. We then re-pitched the rim sample and altered the levels of almost all of the kit pieces as necessary. We also decided to adjust the panning of the hi tom and crash to give the loop some width.

An additional tool (and one that you may not have spotted) for altering the sounds of kit pieces is the 'adjuster screw' hiding under the Mute and Solo switches. It looks like a background graphic, but it is, in fact, an extra interface device. The screw works in a variety of ways depending on the kit piece that you're working with, but it can be very useful for transforming a generic drum machine loop into one that exactly suits your needs.

Don't forget to also consider the instrument pieces that are not in the current loop, as you may decide you want to bring them in later. To hear these sounds, simply click on the kit piece name at the bottom of the channel.

All clear

Now that you've got a kit that exactly suits your requirements, you can start to look at replacing the pattern with one of your own. Hit the Clear button above



Create your own kits and tweak the sounds to your exact requirements using Boom's extensive and powerful sound-shaping features.

the pattern matrix to clear the current pattern. Notice how all of the LEDs on the matrix go out once you've cleared the pattern. **6**

The matrix displays all ten kit pieces vertically and 16 time divisions horizontally. The length of these time divisions depends on the current tempo and state of the Speed selector. It should currently be set to 120BPM, with Speed set to X1. **7**

At speed X1 the 16-LED pattern lasts for one bar, enabling you to play four hits per beat (or 16 hits in a bar). You can also use Speed X2, which doubles the playback speed of Boom, playing back all 16 hits in half a bar. At speed X1/2 Boom plays back at half speed, playing only eight hits in a bar and forcing the sequencer to run over two bars. Finally, you can force Boom to play triplets, which greys out the last four steps of your pattern and plays back the first 12 steps, with three hits to a beat.

You can edit the pattern matrix directly by clicking on any of the LEDs and sequencing a note in that position. Try adding kick drum hits to your empty pattern by clicking on the first row of the pattern matrix. **8**

If you click twice on an LED you will notice that it remains illuminated, only not as brightly as before. This is to signify a lower velocity setting. Boom has three velocity settings for each note, signified by three degrees of illumination. If you want to clear a note without clicking

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through all three velocity layers simply right-click on the LED to toggle its on/off state without changing the stored velocity at the same time.

As well as interacting directly with the pattern matrix you can use the Event Bar along the bottom to enter notes for one kit piece at a time. **9**

The Event Bar must be in Pattern Edit mode to do this, but will switch to Pattern Edit mode when you click on a kit piece's name, with the relevant pattern for that kit **▶**