

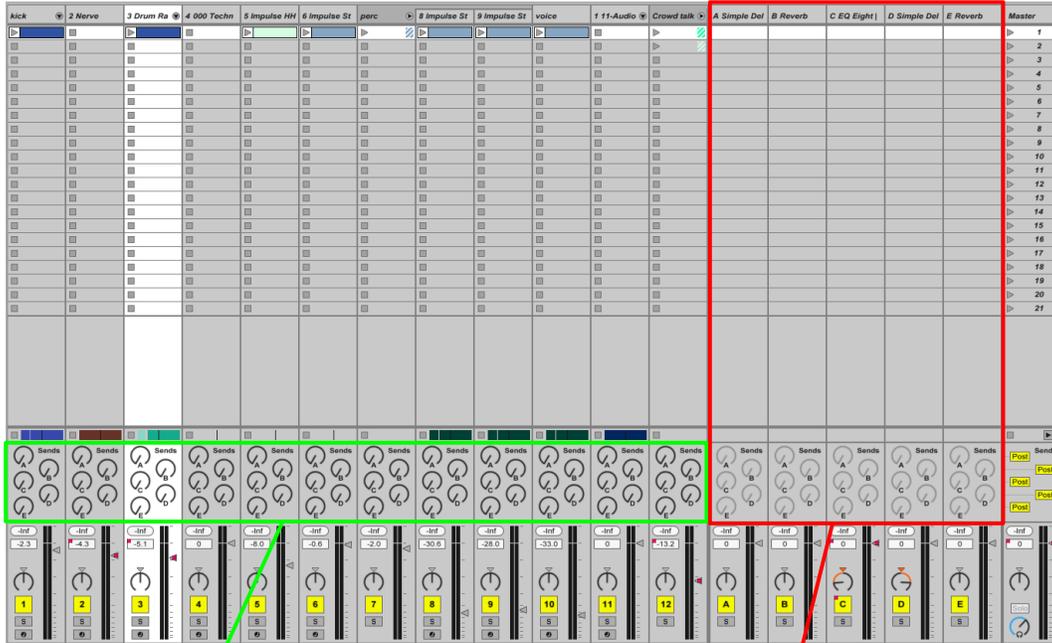
Make an EP in 30 Days

Ableton Course

Day 15

The power of send/returns

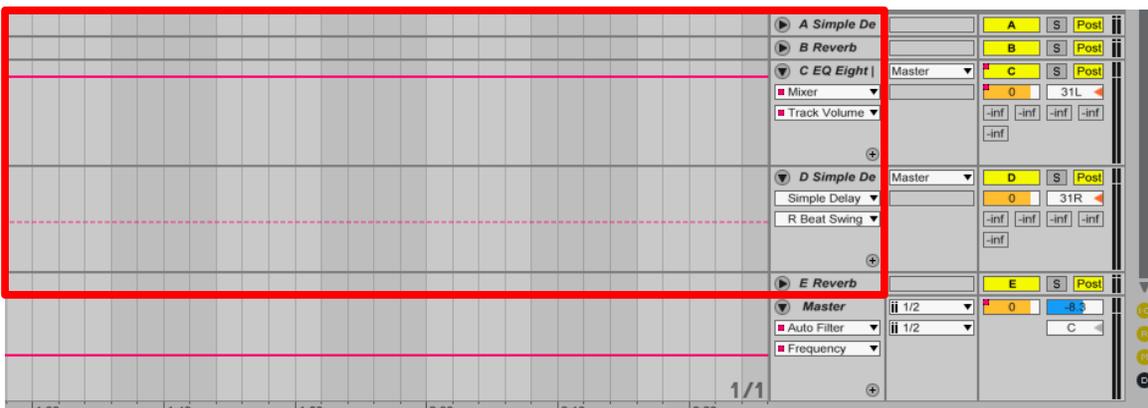
Send/Returns



Sends

Returns

Session Window



Arrangement window

Sends>Returns

Sends & returns are a powerful tool in music production. It allows you to send several instruments to the same effect.

Some standard uses for sends and returns are for several reverbs (short, medium, long) & delays & but you can get some other very interesting results as well.

Why use send/returns

So what is the point of using a send/return for an effect instead of just dropping an effect directly on your instrument?

1. To save cpu for effects that multiple instruments use.
2. To make multiple instruments sound like they are in the same space.
3. The ability to easily set the amount of an effect you want on each track separately.
4. To easily effect only a small part of your instrument while leaving the rest unaffected. For example, running 1 word from your vocal through delay or enhancing a few chosen snare drums with a bit of delay.
5. You can make an effect continue even after you dropped the volume of your instrument. This can't be done from within the instrument track itself. With a send/return track, the effect volume is independent of your instrument volume.
6. Maybe you want the effect just on the left or right side, while the original sound keeps its current position.

Send/return effects

Here are some suggestions for effects that are great for send/returns.

1. Delays
2. Reverbs
3. Saturation
4. Harmonic enhancers
5. Compressors

Since all or these effects are generally added *to* the original sound, they work very effectively as send/returns.

The compressor, although normally use directly on the instrument track, can be used as a send/return to create parallel compression (aka New York compression). This gives you the benefit of a ballsy compressed sound layered *with* the snappy transients of the original sound.

Convolution Reverb



Convolution reverb is a sample of a sound running through a real world space, whether it be in a cathedral or inside a small pipe. It also can trigger *any* sample as a reverb to a sound. It could be a lions roar, rain or sand hitting a metal bowl. Your imagination is the limit.

As a send/return they can create some incredibly exciting soundscapes. Add several convolution reverbs each as a separate return & you'll be inspired as you run different instruments through them.

Effects not to use

While there are a number of effects that work well as send/returns, others aren't very effective. While send/returns “add to” your original instrument sound, the effects you put directly on your instrument track changes the original sound.

Think of a distortion pedal on a guitar. The original tone is no longer there after it's run through distortion. If you put distortion on a send/return track, the distorted sound would be added on top of the original sound, allowing you to hear both.

Effects not to use

Here are some effects you'll want to consider before using as a send/return track.

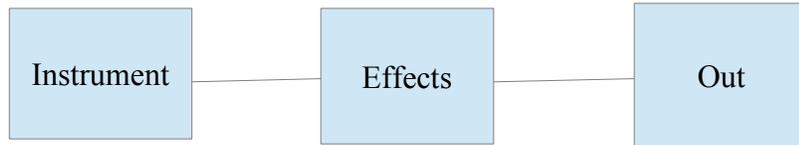
1. Filter
2. Distortion
3. Flange/Chorus
4. Autopan
5. Vocoder

All of these effects need to manipulate the original sound itself to be effective (in most cases). In this case a send/return just adds a layer on top of the original sound. For example an autopan send would still have the original sound sitting front & center, defeating the purpose.

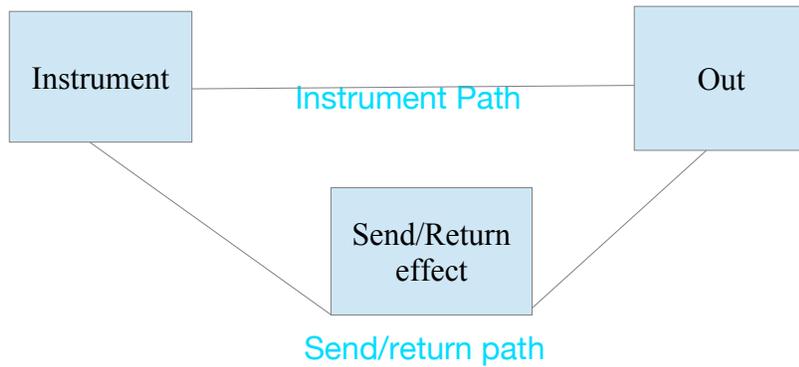
Only when you want an effect “added” to the original sound, should you use a send/return.

Signal Paths

Instrument channel signal path



Send/return signal path



Send/returns that break the rules

In some cases, you can create complex effect chains that break the rules. In this way the original sound is still intact, but it can trigger an interesting effect that sounds very little like the original sound.

In this case, it is treated like a separate sound that can run through filters, delays & panning even though they aren't recommended in most normal situations.

Homework

1. Homework: Set up a few return tracks & use automation to add a little variety to sounds.