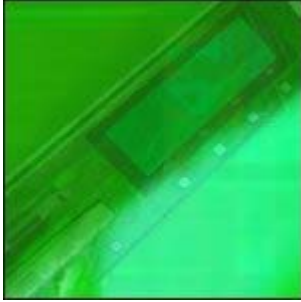


15 Reverb tips



Our team of experts, producers and engineers give their best reverb tips

Diversify

Rather than trying to make everything in the mix in the same acoustic environment, why not use a couple of really diverse reverbs to add some strange depth to your tunes? A really dry, upfront vocal works nicely alongside a really 'drowned' string section or a small bright room setting on the drums.

Automate

Try automating return levels if you have a digital mixer so that the reverb comes and goes in different sections of the song. By tweaking the aux send levels, manually, during the mix you can add splashes of reverb on the fly to add interest to snares or vocal parts.

Take your time

Spend some time choosing or trying out different 'verbs. Different songs lend themselves towards different types and sounds. Don't just settle with what sounds good in solo...

Send that EQ

Remember you can always EQ the send. Most large consoles offer you a choice of high and low EQ on the aux sends. On small desks, route the instrument/voice to another channel via a group or aux send, float this from the mix and send this to the reverb effect. Now you can add EQ to the send and even automate it as it's now on a fader. This is commonly used for those delays and reverbs that you want to move easily during the mix, such as wetter vocal in the chorus.

Old tricks

Reverse reverb is an old trick, where you can hear a vocal before a singer comes in, or a snare before it plays, easily using tape as you simply turn the tape over and record it backwards. You can do it using a computer, but you will have to move the audio to the right place after recording it.

Use combinations

A combination of reverbs on things can be good. A short setting for the snap sound with a longer bright plate can turn a biscuit-sounding snare into a more live sound.

Old school plate

In the old days it used to be called delay to plate. You sent the signal to a loop of tape then sent that to the reverb. The speed of the tape would adjust the delay as the time it took to get from the record head to the playback head. This gives, say, a voice a dry sound before the reverb comes in, giving a more upfront sound while keeping the wetness, which would usually take it to the back of a hall somewhere! Some people still use the tape method today for that old school sound.

Simple drum one

Early reflections on drums can also give more of a tail or decay.

Experiment

A nice gated verb on guitars to old spring verbs on snares or even the mighty space echo can sound unique when balanced in the mix. That will give you more distance and room for placing things in a mix, while adding that extra sparkle to the sound.

More reverse

Reverse your sample, add reverb, then reverse your sample complete with reverb back around the right way again. This way, the reverb trail leads up into the sample, instead of trailing away from it.

And again!

For a different angle on the same reversed reverb theme, have the reverb trail panned left on a separate track, then the original sample centre-stage (ie. mono), followed by a regular reverb trail on another track panned right. The result is a reverb that leads up into the sample and trails away afterwards, while panning across the stage, left to right.

Reverb over your mix

Pick out key instruments or sounds and highlight them with reverb while using reverb sparingly, if not at all, on the remaining mix. You may have to adjust reverb send levels as the track progresses so you're not left with the track sounding dry where the reverbed sounds are no longer playing.

Reverb and bass

Usually, bass and reverb don't mix too well, unless you're specifically after a warehouse sound. Unfortunately, this effect results in a loss of definition among the bass regions. Run your reverb returns into a couple of spare channels in your mixer and back off the bass EQ, or add a high-pass plug-in EQ.

Go mono!

Don't forget using mono reverbs at times as well. These won't conflict with your rich stereo reverbs.

Pre delay

This determines time taken for

the initial reflections to return back from room walls. Use a calculator from www.hitsquad.com/smm to get a pre delay value matched to your tempo.

A common technique is to set the predelay to eighth-notes and add the reverb to a straight quarter note kick drum pattern to create an off-beat bouncy feel.

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