

Drums On Demand Loops and Steinberg Cubase SL/SX 3.x Windows XP – Getting Started

By Adam Andrews, DOD Contributing Editor

This tutorial assumes you have a basic understanding of your PC and the Windows XP operating system.

If you're comfortable using Windows XP, you should skip to Step 4, as steps 1 through 3 involve copying loops to a hard drive. While this tutorial doesn't include tips for Mac users, the procedures covered will be similar, as Cubase for the Mac OS is very similar to the Windows XP version.

I am using Cubase SL3 for the purposes of this tutorial. The SL/SX3 versions are able to fully utilize both "Acidized" Wav files and Rex/Rx2 files.

A note regarding Rex/Rx2 files: If you purchased the Rex/Rx2 DOD volumes please make sure that you have the latest software updates from Steinberg and/or Propellerhead. Use the links at the end of this document to get to the download areas. SL/SX3 users: The newest software update will automatically include a revised library file that will allow you to use Rex/Rx2 files.

If you don't wish to upgrade your SL/SX3 or have SL/SX2 you may need to download the Propellerhead Rex Shared Library and replace your existing copies of this library on your computer. See "Replacing the Rex Shared Library" at the end of this document. Cubase LE and SE users, please note that Rex/Rx2 files will not work properly in these two versions. The tempo adjustments in the "Acidized" Wavs are also not supported in these versions. The Wavs will work but at the original recorded tempo only. Make sure that if you are using LE and SE you use the Wav editions.

Copying DOD Drum Loops to your computer

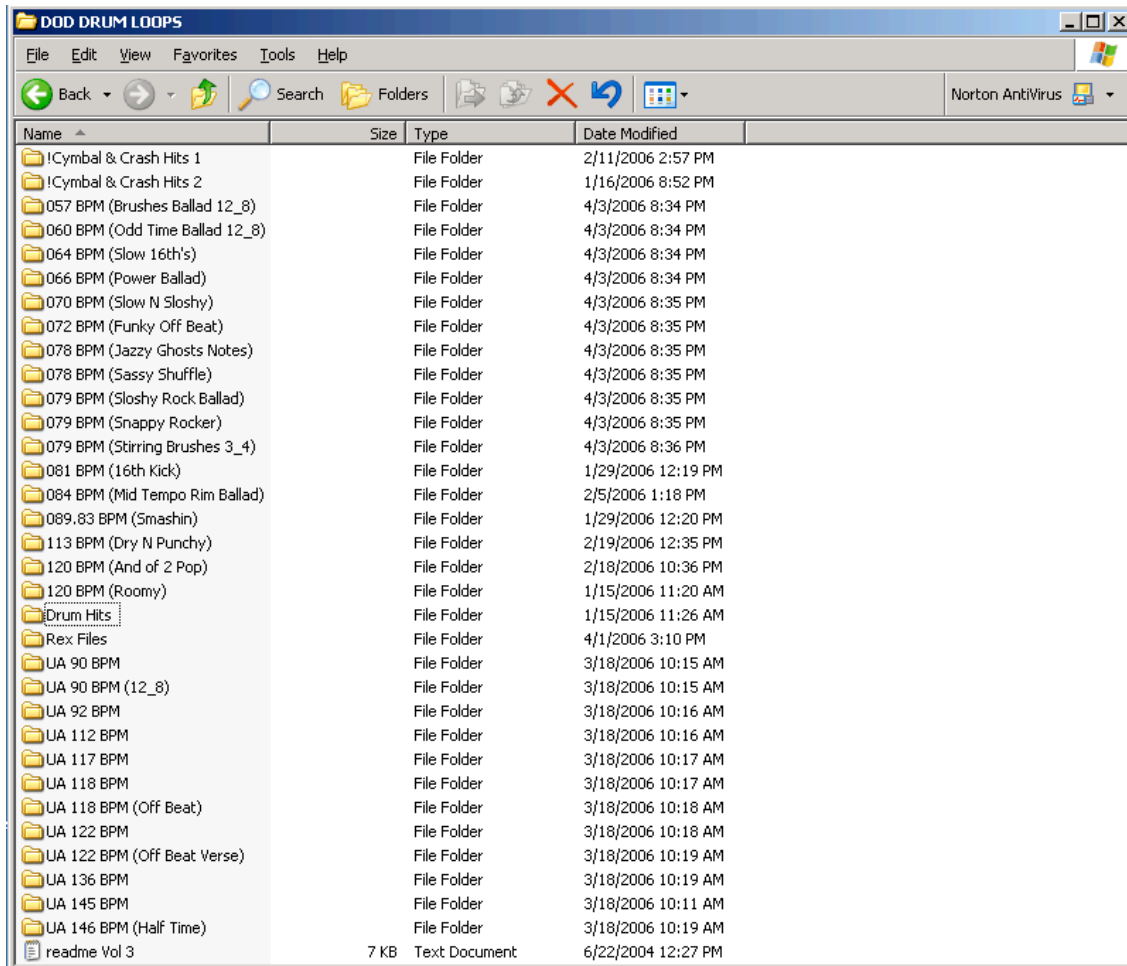
Step 1:

Create a folder on a hard drive on your computer (preferably a drive not used by your operating system) named DOD DRUM LOOPS (or something easy to remember). Right click the start button (lower left side of the screen in the tool bar), left click "Explore", navigate to a drive letter (again, you want to use a storage drive and not the drive that has your operating system on it, if possible - this helps your system run smoother and reduces the chance of audible anomalies creeping into your recordings).

Left click in the left window pane to highlight the drive letter you want your DOD loops stored in, then in the right pane, right click anywhere (but not on an existing folder if there are any) in the pane and when the menu appears, click "New" and then "Folder"

when the next menu appears. Once again, name your folder something easy to remember.

We'll use "DOD DRUM LOOPS" in this tutorial. Click your new DOD DRUM LOOPS folder to open it. Leave this window open and move it (click and hold at the top of the window) off to the left side of your monitor.



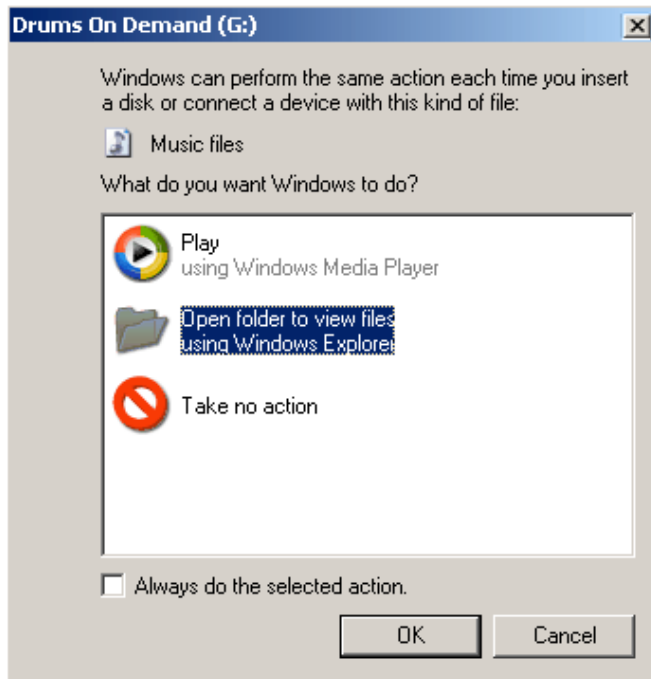
In the folder, you can store your drums collections to use for various songs.

Step 2:

Insert your DOD CD into the computer's CD drive. Most of the time a prompt will pop up asking you what you want Windows to do with the CD you just put in.

Click on "Open Folder to view files using Windows Explorer" if not already highlighted and click "OK".

A side note: If you've inserted a DOD Wav edition CD, the CD may play as a normal audio CD would, due to certain preferences set in Windows. In this event, simply stop the audio player and see Step 2a below.



Some computer systems may try to play the WAV CD sets as an audio CD.

Step 2a:

If your system does not display a prompt or the audio player begins playing your CD as a standard audio CD (make sure to stop the audio player), you can easily navigate to your CD drive by right-clicking the “Start” button (as described above) and clicking “Explore” to navigate to the CD drive.

Find the CD drive letter and click on it to open it. You should see folders in the right Window pane with names like “**072 BPM (Slow Groove)**” for example.

The DOD folder naming convention gives you enough information to determine what types of loops are inside. In this case: **072 BPM**, which indicates beats per minute (tempo) and **(Slow Groove)** a general notation that gives you an indication of the style of the loops within.

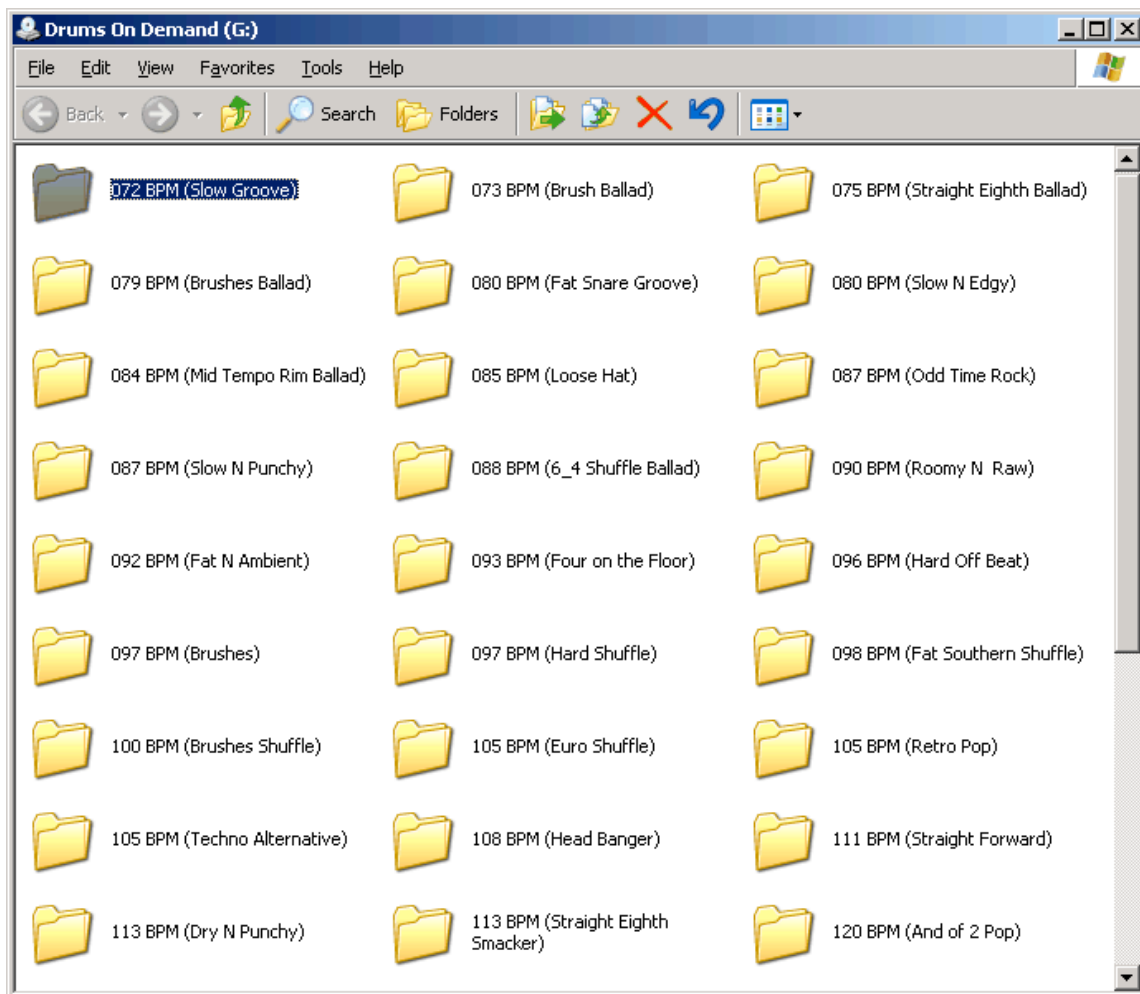
Step 3:

There are several ways to move files from the CD to your new DOD DRUM LOOPS folder. The simplest is to “Drag and Drop” the folders from the CD that you want to use in to the new DOD DRUM LOOPS folder on your hard drive. They will copy to the new location when “dropped”. This may take up to several minutes depending on the transfer speed of your PC from the CD drive to the hard drive location. To drag and drop a folder, simply highlight the folder by clicking (hold down the control button on your keyboard and mouse click other folders to select multiple folders) you wish to copy to your new DOD DRUM LOOPS folder. You may decide to copy all of the drum folders off of your CD at this time, or just select a few to try.

In this example we're going to copy "**072 BPM (Slow Groove)**" from DOD CD Volume 1 to the DOD DRUM LOOPS folder you created in Step 1.

Now, while holding down the left mouse button drag the folder ("**072 BPM (Slow Groove)**") in this example) to the other window you left open and moved over to the left of your screen, when you created the DOD DRUM LOOPS folder and release the mouse button (anywhere in the window's right-side pane).

This will copy the entire drum loop folder to its new location. Again wait for the files to be transferred (it may take a few seconds to a minute depending on the transfer speed between your CD drive and hard drive).



072 BPM (Slow Groove) is highlighted and ready to be copied to the DOD DRUM LOOPS folder.

Tracking in Cubase

Now that you have copied the drum loops folder that you wish to use in your project, you can begin “tracking” the drums in Cubase SL/SX3.

Cubase SL3 and SX3 support both “Acidized” Wavs and Rex / Rx2 file types. DOD Drum Loops can be purchased in either format. Which format you choose depends largely on the way you like to work and the complexity of your project. I’m using Wav files for this tutorial as Cubase SL/SX3 now supports “Acid” files.

Rex files are easier to manipulate within the Cubase Sample Editor, if for example, you need to replace a drum hit with a cymbal in order to create a more unique pattern within a measure. Make sure that if you’re using or planning to use Rex files that you update your Cubase software to the latest edition (see the Steinberg link at the end of this document). Steinberg used an early version of the Rex Shared Library on the first versions of SL/SX 3. Note: SL/SX2 users, Steinberg has an update available which will reportedly fix some issues with Rex files.

Acidized Wav files (as well as the Rx2 files on the DOD Vol. 2 and later) offer a “larger” bit depth (24 bit) which I find helpful in creating a more “well defined”, drum kit in the recording. This works well if the rest of the tracks will be recorded at 24-bit or 32-bit float.

On a personal note: as a songwriter, I like to have both file formats available depending on the project (don’t worry, DOD makes it very affordable to purchase a second set of identical loops in another file format if you wish to experiment with both types).

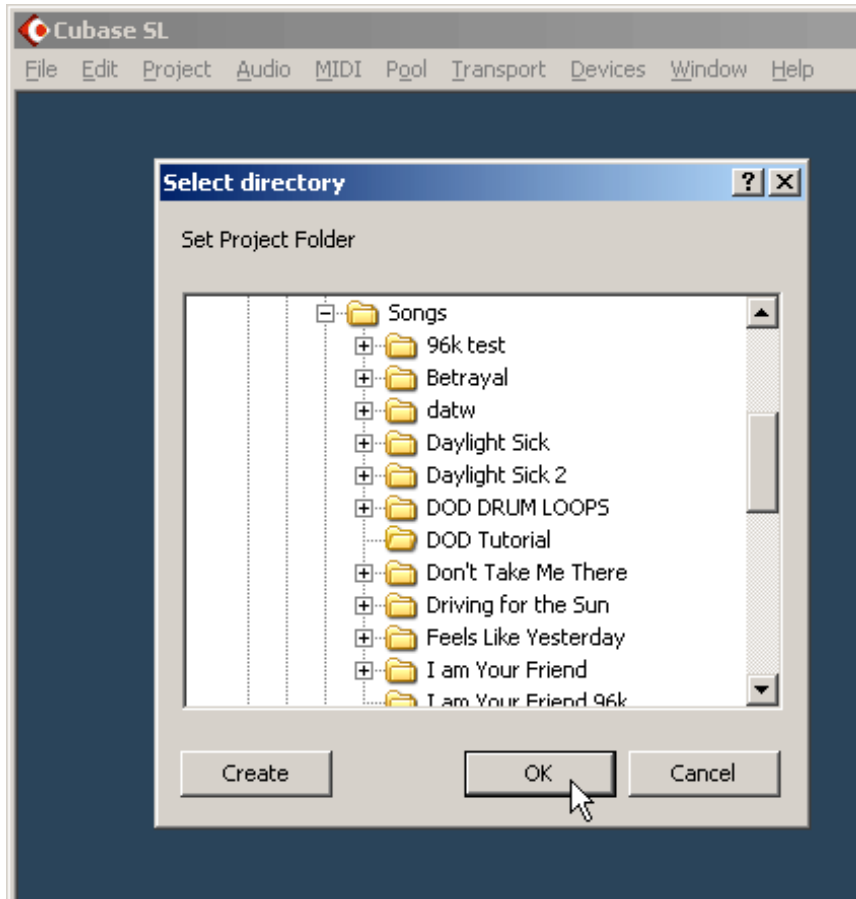
Step 4:

Navigate to your Cubase SL3 or SX3 software. Generally during the software installation a “desktop icon” is created. Simply click the icon to start Cubase.

For this tutorial we are using Cubase SL3, what works in SL3 will also work in SX3, as both versions are identical for our purpose.

Let’s start by creating a new Cubase Project. Click on “File” at the top in the toolbar and then “New Project” when the File menu opens. A pop up window will ask you to choose between several different Project types. For this example, I’ve chosen the “Empty” Project. If you have a template that you are familiar with that you use to start projects with, a 24-track setup for example, you can use that as well.

After choosing your Project type, a pop up dialog box will prompt you to create a location for you to store your new Project, in this example I created a folder called DOD Tutorial within my “Songs” folder on a local drive. Choose something simple and easy to remember, you will most likely want to navigate to this folder after you’ve worked through this tutorial and delete your practice Project.



I always save everything within these song folders, Cubase project data as well as lyrics, chords and any special notes regarding the recordings.

Step 5:

Let's create a stereo drum track. While your blank Project or template is open, scroll up to the toolbar and click on "Project" and then "Add Track" and then "Audio".

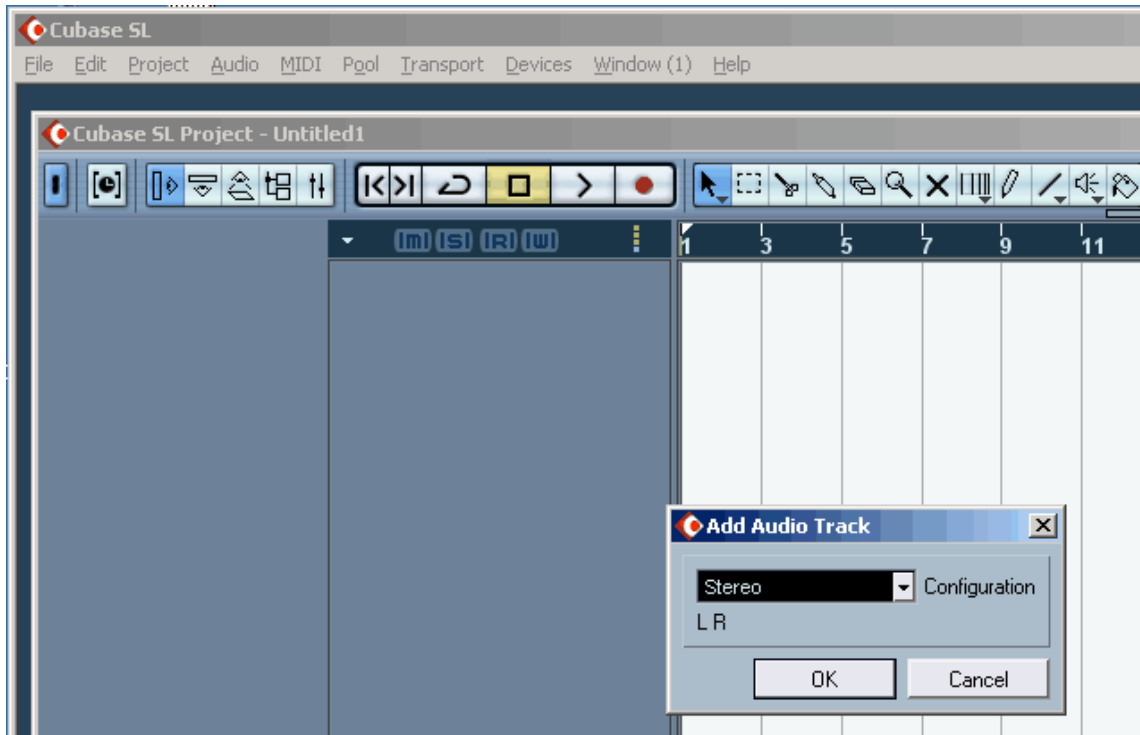
The "Add Audio Track" dialog will appear, asking you to choose between stereo and mono. As your DOD Drum Loops are stereo recordings, we want to choose "Stereo" and click "Ok". Now you should see a new stereo track, "Audio 1" in the Project window.

Two things to note here: You can change the label of the track "Audio 1" by double clicking in the black box that contains the name (to the right of the "M" or mute and the "S" or solo button) anywhere in the name, once it's highlighted you may retype the name to "Drums" or whatever is appropriate - this visual aid will help you if you're creating a song with many different tracks. You may also change the track's color, which also helps when doing larger multi-tracks. See the Cubase "Getting Started" documentation on how this is performed.

The second thing you may notice is that I'm placing the stereo drums on the first track in this tutorial. Many times, especially when working with midi applications, stereo drums are placed on track 10. This old midi rule worked its way into audio recording as well

and you may notice many people build stereo drums on track 10 still to this day. I generally will place stereo drums (single track) to 10 just out of habit, but for this tutorial and really in general, it isn't necessary, as you're now able to label your tracks.

Ok, we've created a stereo track for our drums, let's lay down a groove.



Make sure to select "Stereo" when you create the drum track.

Step 6:

We can bring loops in to Cubase SL/SX3 in two different ways, if you're unfamiliar with the particular set of loops you want to use, then previewing those loops ahead of time might be wise.

If you know exactly what you want to use then you can "drag and drop" the files directly from the folder on your hard drive to your new drum track. Note here: Don't "drag and drop" from your CD volumes to a Cubase track, most CD drives are not fast enough to keep up with your hard disk recordings. Cubase needs to have access to these files when you re-start your application during the next recording session as well.

Let's assume you have a song in mind that would be good at a tempo of 72 or thereabouts. Let's use the "**072 BPM (Slow Groove)**" set that we copied from your CD earlier. Let's first preview them before we put them into the song.

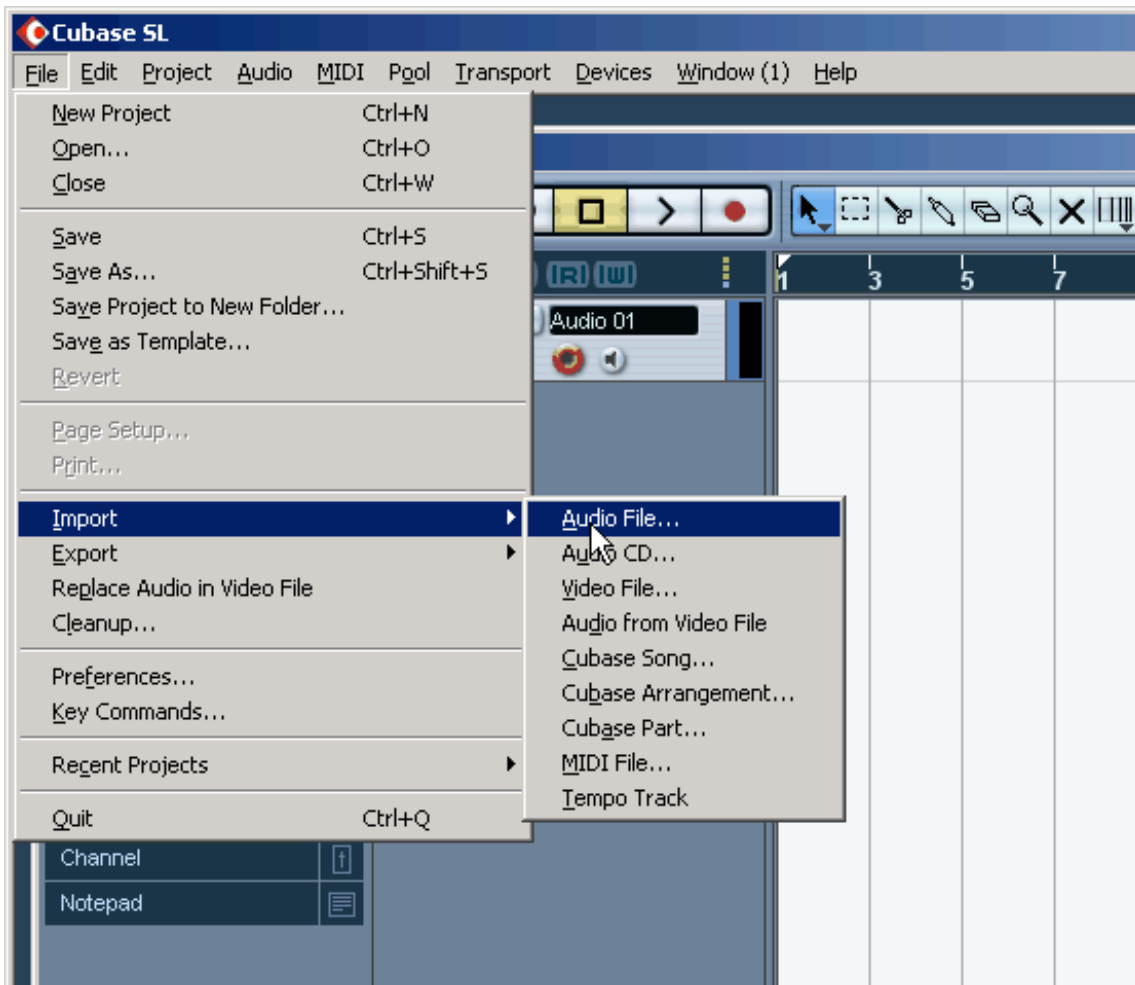
First scroll up and click "File" in the tool bar, then "Import" and then "Audio". When the dialog window opens you will want to navigate to your hard drive and folder containing

the loops you wish to use (in this case the “072 BPM (Slow Groove)”).

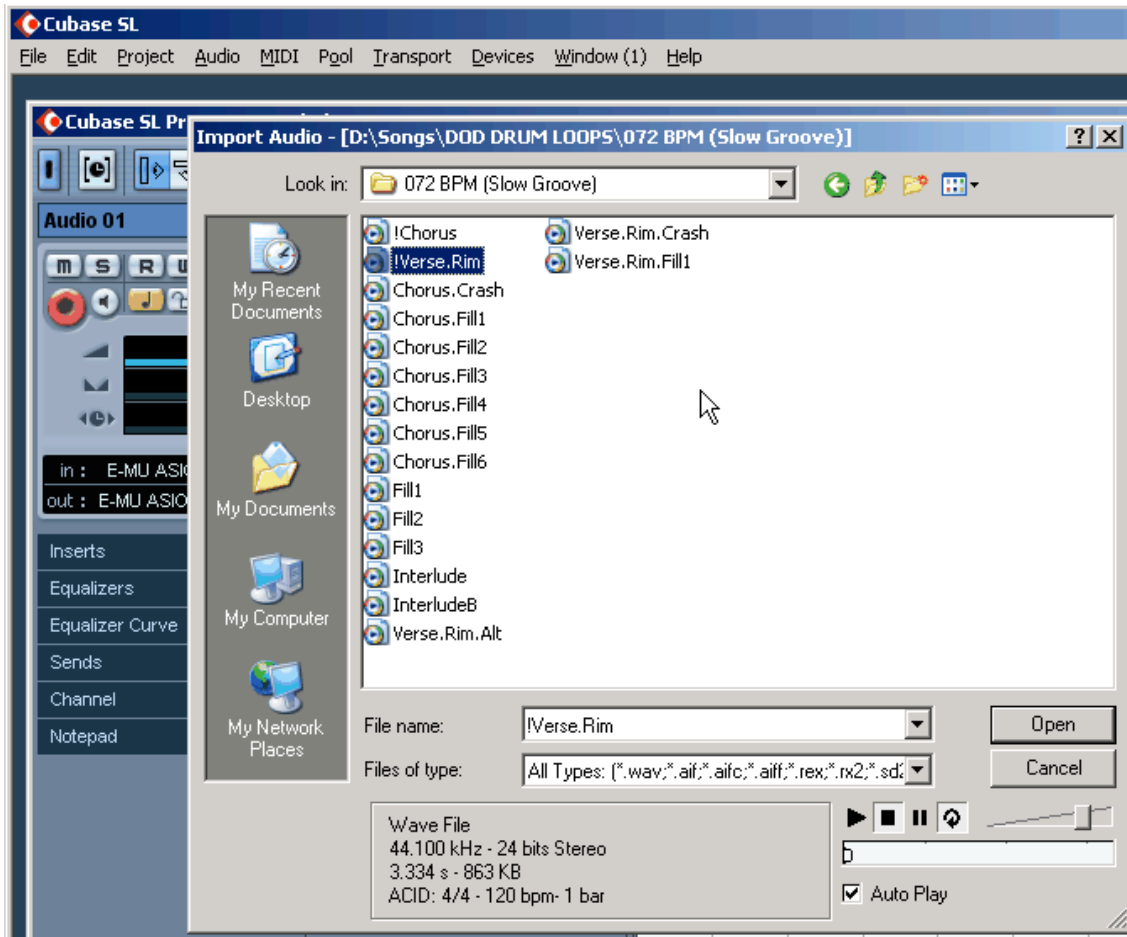
To preview a sound, simply highlight the file by clicking or rolling over the file with your mouse (this depends on how your windows mouse preferences are set) and click the play button (down towards the bottom on the right of the pop up window - you’ll see play, stop, pause and loop - there is also a volume slider which is nice so you don’t get blown out of your chair when you preview).

Other helpful things in this dialog window that you will notice is the file type, in this case a “Wave”, the recorded sampling rate of 44.1k, in 4/4 time, bit depth of 24 and the fact that it’s a stereo “Acid” file. This is helpful in the event, like me you have both DOD Acid Wave files and Rex/Rex2 files at your disposal — you can easily verify type by looking at the file type.

Let’s start our song with “Fill1”. Simply click “Fill1” and “Open”.



Notice in the “Import” menu all the different file types that can be imported, including “Songs” and “Arrangements” from previous versions of Cubase, Wav and Rex/Rx2 files.



Previewing a loop is simple – highlight the loop and click the play button.

Step 7:

“Fill1” appears at the beginning position in measure (or bar) 1. You’ll notice in the picture below that my drum track is blue; again this is easily customizable – it’s meant to help you to differentiate between your tracks.

Next, let’s bring in our first verse loop. Import the loop in the same manner as above, “File”, “Import”, “Audio”. You will notice that the dialog box opens to the same place you last visited — your “**072 BPM (Slow Groove)**” folder, which is helpful.

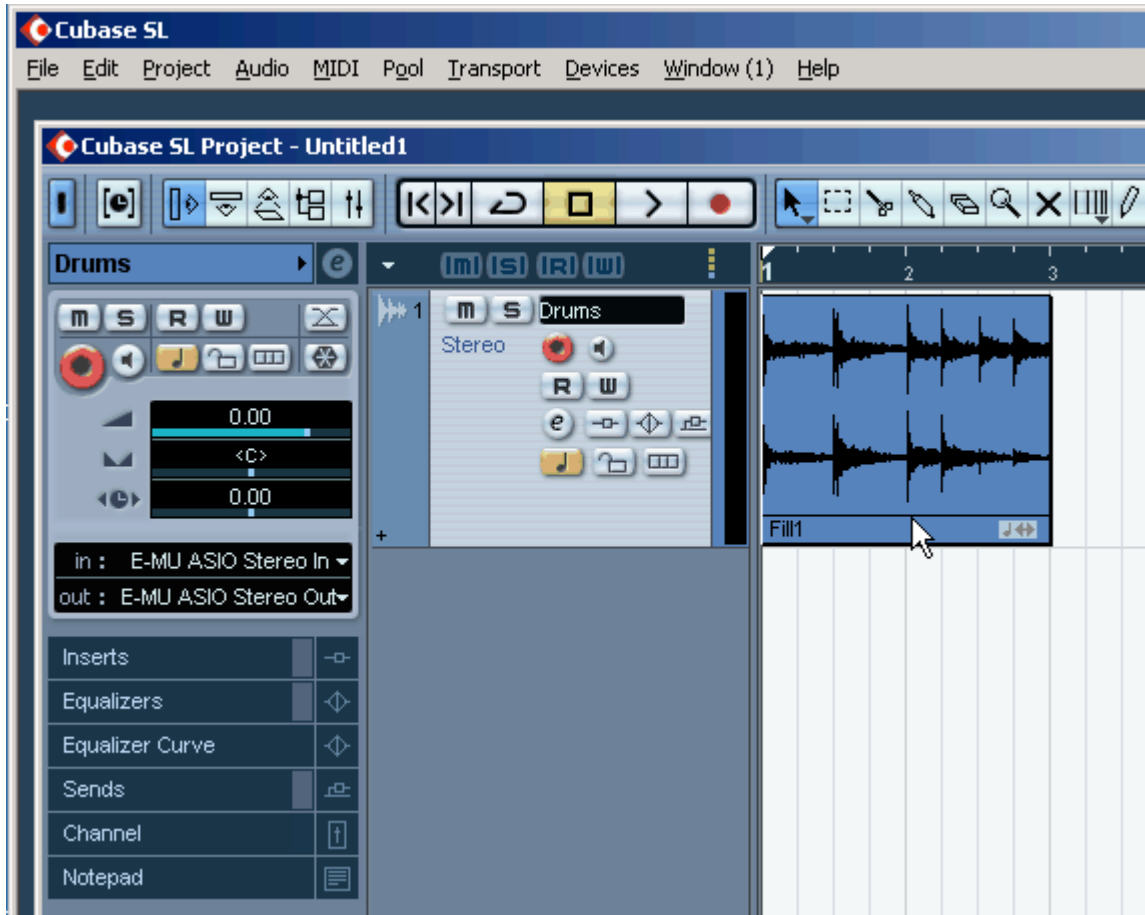
Let’s import “Verse.Rim.Crash” as you will want your crash symbol to finish off “Fill1” and begin your verse progression. The file will import directly behind the marker, which in this case hasn’t moved because we haven’t played the loop. You will notice that the new clip is placed directly on top of “Fill1” so we will need to move it.

Click on and hold “Verse.Rim.Crash” and move your mouse to the right, if your grid snaps are on and set to “Bar”: you will notice the file moves too far — all the way to the second measure. To move the file to the correct position directly behind “Fill1” scroll up to the top right of the project window and open the flyout menu that is showing “Bar”

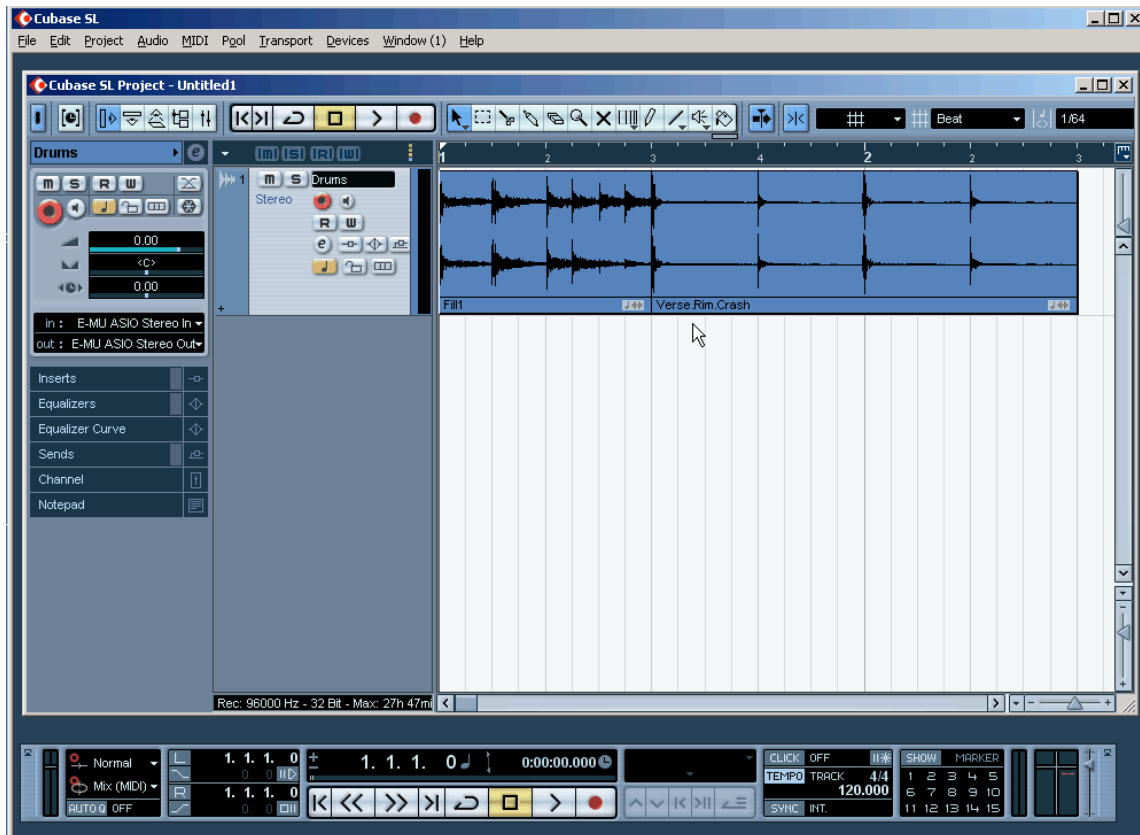
and click on “Beat”. This will allow you to snap the files to a beat as opposed to a measure (bar).

Ok, now you should have the “Verse.Rim.Crash” file following the “Fill1” file, if not, go ahead and drag that file over until it snaps at the third beat (1.5 measures/bars). Once those two files are put together you will notice the reason why we chose the verse piece with a crash symbol at the beginning.

At this point, go ahead and play your 2.5-measure clip, see what it sounds like.



Fill1 imports to the spot just behind the scrolling marker, which in this case hasn't moved and is still at measure one.



Place “Verse.Rim.Crash” directly to the right of “Fill1”so the two ends join together.

Step 8:

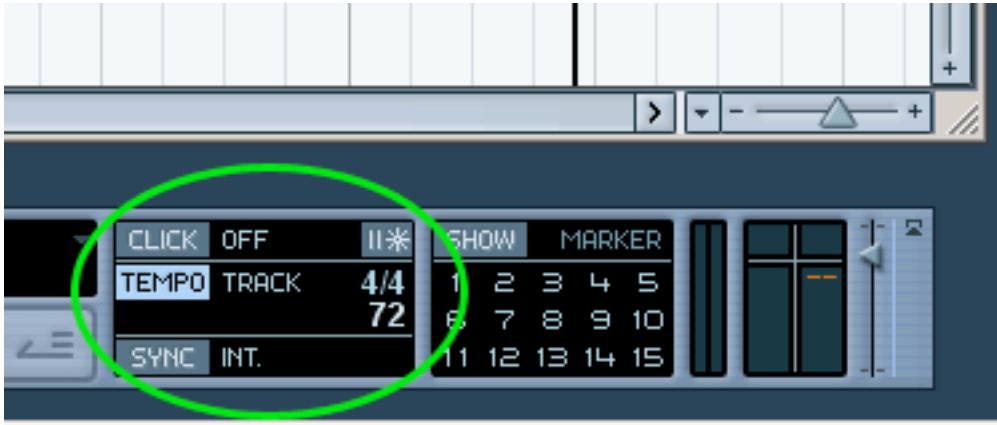
If you used a blank Project like I did for this tutorial, you will notice that the song plays too fast. Cubase defaults to a tempo of 120 bpm when you create a blank Project.

Before we change the tempo to match the loops, notice that this demonstrates the “time stretching” ability of Cubase SL/SX3 and how this works perfectly with DOD Drum Loops.

This is something that is not available in Cubase LE or SE; it’s a feature available only in SL/SX3. Note: If you’re reading this tutorial and still using Cubase VST 5.1, you should be able to change the tempo as well.

To change the tempo of your new Project, simply go to the “Transport Bar” and locate the “Tempo” box. Double click in the box and type a number between say 70 and 76, make sure that “Fixed” is not highlighted when you change the tempo, otherwise it will revert to 120 bpm. In general you can time stretch DOD Loops 5-10% one way or other and maintain good audio quality. Rex/Rx2 files are a bit more forgiving with this operation so you may be able to adjust the tempo a bit more - your ears are your guide. Another quick note here: The transport bar in SL3 that I’m using here is somewhat different than that of SX3, but you will be able to adjust the tempo in the same manner.

Ok, now rewind your song in the transport bar and play it again to hear the tempo change. If for some reason you can't hear what you've just created make sure that your VST connections are plugged in. When you create a new Project these connections may need to be established or re-established. See your Cubase "Getting Started" manual for VST connections details.



Double click on the tempo number in the transfer bar (72 in this picture) to adjust the tempo.

A few FYI Points

You may have occasion to work on a project where you want to pull drum pieces in from two or more different sets. This is an interesting thing to do creatively. For example: You could use loops from both a 60 bpm and 120 bpm set together, or sets with close tempos. There are all kinds of possibilities here.

The thing to be aware of here is that DOD loops have the same naming convention across all the different sets, a verse named “!Verse” in one set may be the name of a verse in another set. Cubase imports audio file information to the “Audio Pool” and re-uses audio pieces as it can in the Project. So, for example if you are using a “!Verse” loop for three measures and then a drum fill for the fourth measure of your verse, it will re-use “!Verse” three times in that measure. It’s economical but will cause problems if you wish to combine loops from different sets. The Audio Pool can’t tell the difference between 60 bpm “!Verse” files and 120 bpm “!Verse” files for example.

One possible solution to this is to create a new “hybrid” folder where you will store your combined drum pieces for your project. When you’ve decided which loops you will want to use from the different sets, bring in the first pieces (if they have identical names as the other sets) and rename them, “!Verse_A” or “!Chorus_A” for example. Then you can copy your other files in with them without overwriting the others.

The End is Just the Beginning

I hope this tutorial has been helpful. With these steps you've learned the basics of tracking drums with DOD Drum Loops and Cubase SL/SX3. Following a standard song form such as ABAB or AABA you will easily lay down drums for verses and choruses with your choice of dynamic fill at the ends (or anywhere else - experiment). Some song sets have several verse, chorus and fill variations, don't be afraid to import different variations in your second and third verses and choruses! Or, think about adding a bridge to your project – some song sets include distinctive bridge pieces. There are a lot of possible combinations here that will help you to create everything from scratch tracks and demos to your own unique finished pieces.

Don't forget to share your songs with the rest of the DOD community on the forum website (<http://drumsondemand.zeroforum.com/zeromain>). Now it's time to write and play or just experiment! The sky is the limit - best of luck in creating your next masterpiece.

Additional resources

Links

Download the latest Steinberg Cubase software updates at:

http://www.steinberg.net/21_1.html

If needed download the latest Rex Shared Library file from Propellerhead at:

http://www.propellerheads.se/remote.cfm?sID=dynamo&menu=/download/index.cfm?fuseaction=display_menu&page=/download/index.cfm?fuseaction=rexsharedlibrary

Replacing the Rex Shared Library

For Cubase SL/SX versions pre 3.1, including SL/SX2, 5.1 VST: Locate the Rex Shared Library by searching your file explorer for "REX Shared Library.dll". Open the file explorer and click on "Search" in the tool bar. The .dll files will appear in the right hand window pane when the search has concluded. Make note of the file locations, as you will need to put the new replacement Library file in exactly the same place. Most likely you will have this file in two places, one will be in the System32 folder and the other will be in the Steinberg Cubase folder. From the search results window, select both and delete them.

Download the REX Shared Library File from the link above. You will want to save this somewhere that's easy to get to like your desktop. This is a compressed "zipped" folder. Unzip the folder, accept the licensing agreement and let the file install. The file will automatically install your new version (Version 1.5.4.0) to the System32 folder (the file path is: C:\Windows\System32\REX Shared Library.dll). You will need to open your file explorer and follow the path above. When you see the REX Shared Library.dll file in the

Window pane on the right side, you will need to copy this file by right clicking the mouse on it and left clicking “Copy” in the pop-up menu. Now navigate to your Cubase folder (the file path is: C:\Program Files\Steinberg\Cubase). When that folder is open, right click in an empty area in the right Window pane (not on another file or folder) and click “Paste” from the pop-up menu. You will now have the updated REX Shared Library.dll file in the appropriate areas.