

Cubase SX/SL
The Reference



Cubase SX/SL The Reference



Windows Version

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Table of Contents

Introduction	15
1 Preface	17
1.1 Foreword	17
1.2 About this Book	19
1.3 How to Get in Touch with Steinberg	20
2 Cubase SX/SL Tutorial	21
2.1 A Better Way to Start the Day	22
2.2 Creating a New Project	24
2.3 Adding Tracks	26
2.4 Importing an Audio File	30
2.5 Getting the Tempo Right	32
2.6 Moving Events and Parts	35
2.7 Copying Events and Parts	35
2.8 Diving into Your Audio	37
2.9 Getting the Tempo Right (Again)	39
2.10 Making Twelve Bars Blue (or Orange)	41
2.11 Mix and Match	44
2.12 Adding an Insert Effect	52
2.13 Working with VST Instruments and MIDI Tracks	56
2.14 Adding Reverb as a Send Effect	62
2.15 Having Fun with MIDI Effects	64
Cubase SX/SL in Detail	69
3 Playback and the Transport Panel	71
3.1 Background	71
3.2 Operations	73
3.3 Options and Settings	76
4 Recording	79
4.1 Background	79
4.2 Basic Recording Methods	79
4.3 Audio Recording Specifics	82
4.4 MIDI Recording Specifics	93
4.5 Options and Settings	102

5	The Project Window	107
5.1	Background	107
5.2	Window Overview	109
5.3	Operations	117
5.4	Options	149
6	Folder Tracks	153
6.1	About Folder Tracks	153
6.2	Using Folders	153
7	Using Markers	159
7.1	About Markers	159
7.2	The Marker Window	160
7.3	Using the Marker Track	163
8	Fades and Crossfades	169
8.1	Creating Fades	169
8.2	The Fade Dialogs	172
8.3	Creating Crossfades	174
8.4	The Crossfade Dialog	177
8.5	Auto Fades and Crossfades	179
9	The Mixer	183
9.1	About this Chapter	183
9.2	Overview	184
9.3	The Audio Channel Strips	189
9.4	The MIDI Channel Strips	190
9.5	The Common Panel	191
9.6	The Master Section	192
9.7	The VST Outputs Window	193
9.8	Basic Mixing Procedures	194
9.9	Audio Specific Procedures	198
9.10	MIDI Specific Procedures	210
9.11	Utilities	212
10	Audio Effects	219
10.1	Background	219
10.2	Using Effects	221
10.3	The Included Effects	234
10.4	Installing and Managing Effect Plug-ins	236

11	VST Instruments	241
11.1	Introduction	241
11.2	Activating and Using Instruments in Cubase SX/SL	242
11.3	A1 Synthesizer	245
11.4	VB-1 Bass Synth	256
11.5	LM-7 Drum Machine	257
11.6	JX16 Synthesizer	260
11.7	CS40 Synthesizer	269
11.8	The Neon Synthesizer	271
11.9	LM-9 Drum Machine	273
12	Surround Sound (Cubase SX only)	277
12.1	Background	277
12.2	Window Overview	279
12.3	Operations	281
13	Automation	291
13.1	Background	291
13.2	Automation Subtrack Operations	294
13.3	Using Write/Read Automation	299
13.4	Working with Automation Curves	302
13.5	Tips and Common Methods	309
13.6	Options and Settings	309
14	Remote Controlling the Mixer	311
14.1	Background	311
14.2	Operations	311
14.3	Remote Control Device Specifics	314
15	Audio Processing and Functions	329
15.1	Background	329
15.2	Audio Processing	330
15.3	Applying Plug-ins (Cubase SX only)	347
15.4	The Offline Process History Dialog	349
15.5	Detect Silence	352
15.6	The Spectrum Analyzer (Cubase SX only)	355
15.7	Statistics (Cubase SX only)	357
16	The Sample Editor	359
16.1	Background	359
16.2	Opening the Sample Editor	359
16.3	Window Overview	359
16.4	Operations	363

16.5	Options and Settings	374
17	The Audio Part Editor	377
17.1	Background	377
17.2	Opening the Audio Part Editor	377
17.3	Window Overview	378
17.4	Operations	381
17.5	Common Methods	382
17.6	Options and Settings	384
18	Working with Hitpoints and Slices	385
18.1	Background	385
18.2	Using Hitpoints	385
18.3	Editing Hitpoints	388
18.4	Creating Slices	394
18.5	Creating Groove Quantize Maps	395
18.6	Divide Audio Events	395
18.7	Using the Close Gaps Function	396
19	The Pool	397
19.1	Background	397
19.2	Window Overview	399
19.3	Operations	402
19.4	Options and Settings	418
20	MIDI Devices and Patches	419
20.1	About Program Change and Bank Select	419
20.2	Opening the MIDI Device Manager	420
20.3	Installing a MIDI Device	421
20.4	Selecting a Patch for an Installed Device	423
20.5	Renaming Patches in a Device	424
20.6	Defining a New Device	424
20.7	Exporting and Importing Device Setups	428
21	MIDI Realtime Parameters and Effects	429
21.1	Introduction	429
21.2	The Inspector—General Handling	429
21.3	Basic Track Settings	430
21.4	Track Parameters	432
21.5	MIDI Effects	436
21.6	The Available Effects	439
21.7	Managing Plug-ins	462
21.8	The Channel Section	463
21.9	Merge MIDI in Loop	464

22	MIDI Processing and Quantizing	467
22.1	Introduction	467
22.2	Quantizing	468
22.3	Other MIDI Menu Functions	476
22.4	Dissolve Part	481
23	The MIDI Editors	485
23.1	About Editing MIDI	485
23.2	Opening a MIDI Editor	486
23.3	The Key Editor—Overview	487
23.4	Key Editor Operations	491
23.5	The Drum Editor—Overview	509
23.6	Drum Editor Operations	512
23.7	Working with Drum Maps	514
23.8	Using Drum Name Lists	522
23.9	The List Editor—Overview	522
23.10	List Editor Operations	524
23.11	The Score Editor—Overview (Cubase SL only)	529
23.12	Score Editor Operations (Cubase SL only)	531
23.13	Common MIDI Editor Options and Settings	546
24	The Logical Editor, Transformer and Input Transformer	549
24.1	Introduction	549
24.2	Opening the Logical Editor	550
24.3	Window Overview	551
24.4	Selecting a Preset	551
24.5	Setting Up Filter Conditions	552
24.6	Selecting a Function	561
24.7	Specifying Actions	563
24.8	Performing the Logical Editing	567
24.9	Working with Presets	567
24.10	The Input Transformer	568
25	The Tempo Track Editor	571
25.1	Background	571
25.2	Opening the Tempo Track Editor	571
25.3	Window Overview	572
25.4	Operations	574
25.5	Options and Settings	579
25.6	The Beat Calculator	580

26	The Project Browser	583
26.1	Background	583
26.2	Opening the Project Browser	583
26.3	Window Overview	583
26.4	Navigating in the Browser	584
26.5	Customizing the View	585
26.6	About the Sync Selection Option	586
26.7	Editing Audio Tracks	586
26.8	Editing MIDI Tracks	588
26.9	Editing Automation Tracks	591
26.10	Editing the Video Track	592
26.11	Editing the Marker Track	592
26.12	Editing the Tempo Track	593
26.13	Editing Time Signatures	594
27	Working with System Exclusive Messages	595
27.1	Introduction	595
27.2	Bulk Dumps	595
27.3	Recording System Exclusive Parameter Changes	598
27.4	Editing System Exclusive Messages	598
28	Export Audio Mixdown	601
28.1	Background	601
28.2	Mixing Down to an Audio File	601
28.3	File Format Specifics	603
29	Synchronization	613
29.1	Background	613
29.2	Window Overview	619
29.3	Operations	619
29.4	Options	625
30	VST System Link	629
30.1	Introduction	629
30.2	Preparations	629
30.3	Activating VST System Link	635
30.4	Application Examples	641
31	Video	645
31.1	Background	645
31.2	Operations	645
31.3	Options	648

32	ReWire	649
32.1	Introduction	649
32.2	Launching and Quitting	650
32.3	Activating ReWire Channels	651
32.4	Using the Transport and Tempo Controls	652
32.5	How the ReWire Channels Are Handled in Cubase SX/SL	652
32.6	Routing MIDI via ReWire2	653
32.7	Considerations and Limitations	654
33	File Handling	655
33.1	File Operations	655
33.2	Options and Settings	668
34	Key Commands	671
34.1	Background	671
34.2	The Key Commands Dialog	672
34.3	Setting Up Tool Modifier Keys	678
	Appendix	679
A	Menu Reference	681
A.1	About this Chapter	681
A.2	File Menu	681
A.3	Edit Menu	685
A.4	Project Menu	691
A.5	Audio Menu	693
A.6	MIDI Menu	698
A.7	Scores Menu (Cubase SX only)	703
A.8	Pool Menu	703
A.9	Transport Menu	707
A.10	Devices Menu	709
A.11	Window Menu	711
A.12	Help Menu	712
B	Parameters of the Included Effect Plug-ins	713
B.1	DoubleDelay	713
B.2	ModDelay	714
B.3	DaTube	716
B.4	Overdrive	717
B.5	QuadraFuzz	718
B.6	SPL DeEsser (Cubase SX only)	722
B.7	Dynamics	724

B.8	VST Dynamics	729
B.9	MIDI Gate	731
B.10	StepFilter	734
B.11	Chorus	737
B.12	Flanger	738
B.13	Metalizer	739
B.14	Phaser	741
B.15	Ringmodulator	742
B.16	Rotary	744
B.17	Symphonic	746
B.18	Tranceformer	748
B.19	Bitcrusher	750
B.20	Chopper	751
B.21	Grungelizer	752
B.22	Vocoder	753
B.23	SMPTE Generator (Cubase SX only)	758
B.24	Reverb A	760
B.25	Reverb B	761
B.26	Mix6To2 (Cubase SX only)	762
C	Parameters of Cubase 5 Effect Plug-ins	763
C.1	Introduction	763
C.2	Autopole	763
C.3	MIDI Comb	767
C.4	Mysterizer	770
C.5	Phatsync	773
C.6	Ring Modulator	776
C.7	subBASS	778
C.8	Distortion	779
C.9	Chopper2	780
C.10	Reverb	782
C.11	Reverb 32	783
C.12	Metalizer2	784
C.13	Tranceformer2	785
C.14	Karlette	787
D	Parameters of Earlier VST Effect Plug-ins	789
D.1	Introduction	789
D.2	Auto Panner	789
D.3	Chorus and Chorus 2	790
D.4	ESpacial!	790
D.5	Electro Fuzz	791
D.6	Scopion	792
D.7	Stereo Echo	792

D.8	StereoWizard	793
D.9	WunderVerb 3	794
E	Frequently Asked Questions	795
	Index	797

Introduction

1 Preface

1.1 Foreword

Allow me to start off this foreword with a quote that I discovered on the Cubase.net forum on May 27, 2002, just two weeks after the release of Cubase SX:

“The Mixer setup ... totally easy to set up ANY way you want. The Project window ... same ... Everything so logical and easy to find out! Now I’m not working under-cover for Steinberg or anything, but I’ve waited a long time for a sequencer like this. This is the sequencer of 2002. Thank you Steinberg!”

“I’ve waited a long time for a sequencer like this.” The gracious author of these lines wasn’t the only one to have awaited the arrival of Cubase SX. Here in Hamburg, the Steinberg crew was no less eager in its anticipation.

The story of Cubase began in 1989 on Atari ST. Though with MIDI only, b&w visuals, 8 MHz processor clock, and 4 RAM MB, Cubase’s appointments were few, it nonetheless ushered in a revolution in computer-assisted music making.

Cubase evolved at a hypersonic pace. We soon ported it to the Macintosh and, in 1992, to the personal computer. Then we endowed it with audio—at first just two tracks to be followed later by the sensational number of four tracks courtesy of ProTools.

VST Cubase first saw the light of day at the 1996 Frankfurt music fair. Then came VST effects plug-ins, followed by virtual instruments such as synthesizers, pianos and guitars. Offering a complete studio with a mixing console, instruments and effects, all in real time and in professional audio quality, VST was a dream come true for many musicians.

I like to compare software with urban development. A group of founding fathers spot an inviting meadow and put up a few houses here, a few bridges there. Soon the village confines become too cramped and narrow. Civil engineers add a thoroughfare, a tunnel, a railway station. The village grows, the town becomes a city. Thousands of cars motor down teeming streets originally designed for a few horse-drawn carriages. Seeing this urban sprawl makes one want to wipe the slate clean and start over again, factoring in all past experiences and foreseeable future problems.

That’s the point we had arrived at in 1998. VST Cubase’s excellent functionality had made it the tool of choice for a huge community of musicians. However, it carried with it the burdens of its past—a decade’s worth of too many concepts and compromises.

When we set out to develop Cubase SX/SL, we were certainly keen to apply our experiences. But we were equally eager to implement our customers' experiences, suggestions and wishes. The Internet affords us the opportunity to keep in touch with hundreds of users and learn their opinions on what's good and what's not.

And we pledge to take customers' wishes to heart in the further development of Cubase SX/SL, doing everything in our power to satisfy them. For this reason, I urge you to take part in Cubase.net forums at Steinberg.net. Tell us what you like about Cubase SX/SL and what we can do to make it even better.

This book is your ticket to the world of Cubase SX/SL. Explore it with an inquisitive mindset. Experiment freely, even if your attempts culminate in unusual or even bizarre sounds. After all, a new program is a new world and this book will help you chart your voyage of discovery.

Here's wishing you lots of fun and success in your musical endeavors; I hope that for you too, Cubase SX/SL will prove to be the sequencer that you've been waiting for.

Manfred Rürup

CEO Steinberg Media Technologies AG

1.2 About this Book

This book is based on the original documentation of Cubase SX/SL and consists of the following parts:

Introduction

The majority of this section comprises a hands-on tutorial by Wizoo author Mark Wherry; it grants you insight into many areas of Cubase SX/SL. As you follow along and create an example song, you will learn how to handle key features and functions with ease. The author also lets you in on an advanced trick or two.

Cubase SX/SL in Detail

This is the main section offering extensive explanations of Cubase SX/SL parameters, functions and techniques.

Appendix

In this section you'll find a chapter's worth of answers to frequently asked questions and detailed documentation on the following topics:

- Cubase SX/SL menus
- The parameters of effects plug-ins that ship with Cubase SX/SL
- The parameters of effects plug-ins that ship with Cubase VST 5.x
- The parameters of effects plug-ins that shipped with earlier versions of VST Cubase

1.3 How to Get in Touch with Steinberg

A list of key Steinberg Internet links pops up when you open the submenu “Steinberg on the Web” from the Help menu. When you select one of the options, your Web browser launches and the given Web site appears in its window.

You have the following options if you choose to use one of the direct links or select the commands “Steinberg Home Page” or “Users Forum”:

- You can access the “Knowledge Base” to get information on technical support, answers to frequently asked questions, and so forth.
- You can send emails to the Steinberg support team.
- You can view product news and the latest info on product updates.
- The menu option “Users Forum” takes you directly to the www.cubase.net Web site. This is where you can get touch with users of Steinberg products all over the whole world and swap info, insights and opinions.

2 Cubase SX/SL Tutorial

Cubase is one of the most advanced music production packages available, yet it's surprisingly intuitive and rarely gets in the way of actually making music. Having a reference manual is a great help, especially for all those 'what does that do again?' moments. But to make it even better, we've added a hands-on tutorial to help you get the most from Cubase.

If you want a tutorial to guide you through a few basics, the process of recording a song and some bouncing, be sure to check out Wizoo's Cubase SX Quick Start. However, in the tutorial you're about to read, we'll cover topics such as Key Commands, Hitpoints, MIDI plug-ins, and share some interesting tips and tricks along the way.

You don't need to be a Cubase guru in order to follow this introduction—it's written with both beginners and intermediate users in mind. The only thing assumed is that you have Cubase set up and working properly with your MIDI and audio hardware. Don't worry if you haven't got this far, though, since the Getting Started manual that came in your Cubase box, or the later chapters of this very book, will be able to help you out.

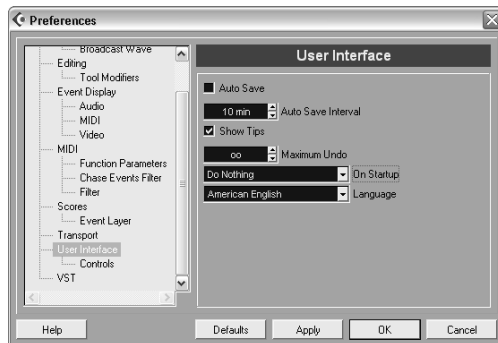
I hope you have as much fun with Cubase as I do, and also that this introduction helps you learn a few interesting things along the way.

Mark Wherry

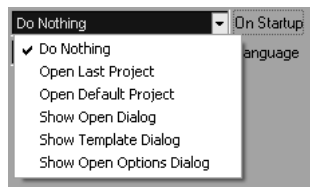
2.1 A Better Way to Start the Day

Before we get started, let's consider an aspect of Cubase you'll be confronted with all the time: What happens when the application first loads. By default, you're presented with a blank screen, and while there might not seem anything wrong with this, there are so many other options available.

1. **Run Cubase as normal.**
2. **Select "File > Preferences."**
3. **Display the User Interface panel by selecting User Interface in the left-hand list.**



4. **You can choose from a variety of start-up behaviours by clicking on the On Startup pop-up menu.**



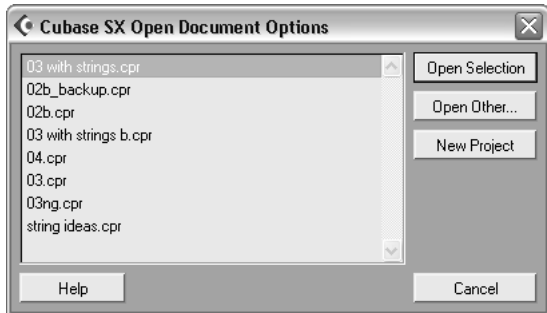
As you can see, the default option really is Do Nothing, but fortunately Cubase also provides five other possibilities, including Open Last Project, which automatically opens the last Project you were working on when you next run Cubase.

If you've ever used the older Cubase VST, the Open Default Project option will be very familiar to you: Every time Cubase SX/SL starts it will load a Project File named "default.cpr," which should be saved in the same folder as the Cubase application. (For most users, this will be "C:\Program Files\Steinberg\Cubase SX/SL.")

Show Open Dialog displays a file selector for you to load a Project from disk (just like selecting "File > Open") and Show Template Dialog starts the process for creating a new Project (as if you'd selected "File > New").

The four options described so far are all perfectly useful, but my personal favourite is the fifth option, Show Open Options Dialog. The Open Document Options window provides access to every function you'd need when you run Cubase at the start of a session. Creating a new Project, opening an existing file, or choosing a recent Project are presented right in front of you every time you run the application—what more could you ask for?

-
- It's worth noting that you can only see the Open Document Options window when you first run the program.
-



The Open Document Options window

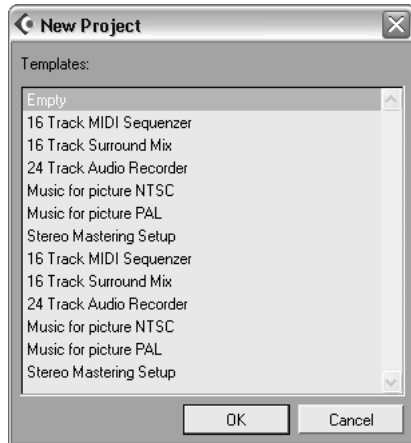
Once you've chosen a start-up behaviour:

1. **Click OK.**
2. **Close and restart Cubase so you can experience the new behaviour for yourself.**

-
- When you make changes in the Preferences window, the new settings apply globally to Cubase and are totally Project independent—note that we didn't even have a Project open when changing the start-up behaviour. This means that settings from the Preference window don't get saved with the Project, and apply automatically to any Project you open in Cubase.
-

2.2 Creating a New Project

Having configured Cubase to start up exactly the way we want, let's go ahead and create a new Project. Depending on which start-up behaviour you picked, the new Project procedure may start automatically (if you chose Open Template Dialog) or you might need to click New Project in the Open Document Options window. Otherwise, select "File > New" or press [Control]+[N] to create a new Project.



In the New Project window, Cubase offers a range of templates that can be used as starting points when creating a new Project.

I don't want to dismiss templates altogether because they can be extremely useful. For example, a common starting point for my own musical endeavours involves simply playing The Grand (a grand piano VST Instrument from Steinberg) via my MIDI keyboard and trying out ideas through improvisation. If I had to start from scratch every time, it would involve creating a MIDI Track, opening the VST Instruments window, loading The Grand and routing the MIDI Track to play through The Grand. None of this is particularly difficult, of course, but it means a good minute or two of time is wasted on technology rather than creativity.

Instead, I do this once, select "File > Save As Template" and call it something like "Mark's Grand Opening." Now, every time I want this for my starting point, I simply choose "Mark's Grand Opening" as my template from the New Project window and I'm ready to become the next Liberache. But I digress.

However, for this tutorial select Empty and click OK, which will provide a completely blank canvas to add Tracks and configure the set-up specifically for this particular Project.

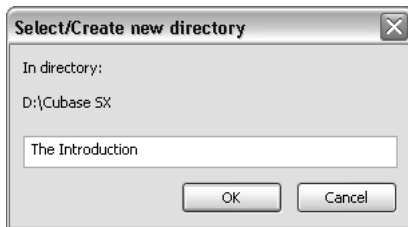
After this, the Select directory window will appear asking you to set the Project Folder for the new Project.



- 1. Highlight the directory or drive where you want a new Project Folder to be created.**

Although it's possible for Projects to share the same folder, this really isn't a good idea since it could easily cause confusion. As a general rule, always create a new Project folder for every Project.

- 2. Click the Create button.**
- 3. In the Select/Create New Directory window, type in a suitable name and click OK or press [Return].**



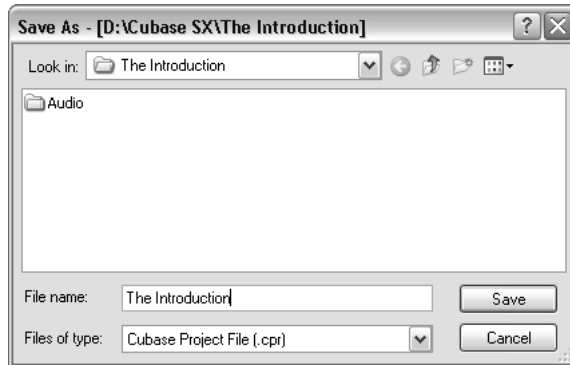
- 4. Make sure the folder you just created is highlighted and click OK.**

Cubase should now present you with an empty Project window to start making music in.

At this point, it's worth 'interrupting the broadcast' for a few words about Project Files and Folders. When you create a new Project, Cubase guides you through the process of creating and assigning a new folder for the Project. This folder is known as the Project Folder and contains a number of subfolders (which are created automatically) for storing any audio files we import or record, along with various other Project-specific information.

However, the one thing that doesn't get created automatically when you start a new Project is a Project file, which is the file that actually stores all the information about a Project we create in Cubase. For this reason, saving a Project file right after creating a new Project is a good habit to get into.

1. **Select "File > Save" or press [Control]+[S].**
2. **In the file selector, navigate to your new Project Folder.**



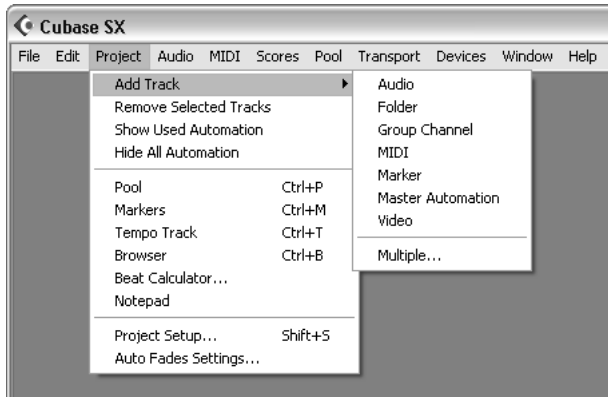
3. **Type in a suitable filename and click OK or press [Return].**

-
- It makes sense to keep all the files relating to a Project in the Project Folder. Not only does this keep the organisation of your Projects neat and tidy, but it makes backup much easier and reduces the chances of accidentally losing important files.
-

2.3 Adding Tracks

The first thing you need to do with an empty Project is to add some Tracks to the Project window for recording and importing music onto. It turns out that Cubase provides many methods of adding new Tracks, allowing us to choose the most convenient to suit our way of working. While we won't be looking at all the possible ways of accessing every feature we explore in this tutorial, I'm going to make an exception with adding Tracks to demonstrate some other, more interesting features along the way.

The first method of adding a Track to a Project is to select from the "Project > Add Track" submenu on the Cubase menu bar.



Notice that Cubase supports many different types of Tracks for handling various types of music and video data. For this tutorial we need to create a new Audio Track, so choose "Project > Add Track > Audio" to add a new Audio Track to the Project.



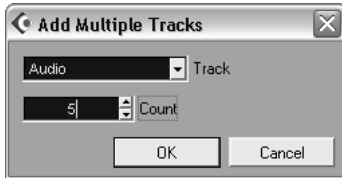
A new Audio Track is added to the Project window's Track List

The column to the left of the Track List is known as the Inspector and provides various controls and parameters specific to the currently selected Track.

Since we're going to be looking at other ways of adding Tracks to the Project window, delete the Track we just added by making sure it's selected (a selected Track will be highlighted in a very light blue) and chose "Project > Remove Selected Tracks".

2.3.1 Adding Multiple Tracks

Quite often you'll want to add more than one Track to the Project, and the Add Multiple Tracks command can be a real timesaver in these situations. To add multiple Tracks to the Project window select "Project > Add Track > Multiple."



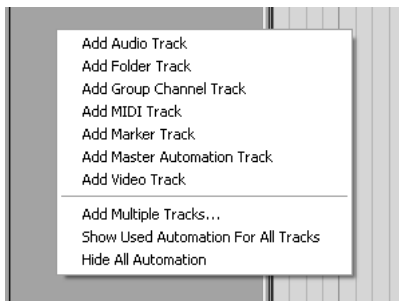
In the Add Multiple Tracks window, select the type of Track you want to add to the Project (in this case, Audio), enter the number of Tracks you want to add in the Count field (let's say five), and click OK.

With several Tracks on the Project window, it's worth noting that selecting multiple Tracks on the Track List works in exactly the same way as selecting multiple files on your computer's Desktop. For example, you can [Control]-click Tracks to select them one by one, or [Shift]-click a Track to select from the currently selected Track to the Track you [Shift]-clicked on.

Using whichever method of selecting Tracks suits you best, select all the Tracks on the Project window and delete them in the same way as before ("Project > Remove Selected Tracks").

2.3.2 Adding Tracks Using the Quick Menu

When you click the right mouse button in Cubase, the Quick Menu is displayed. The Quick Menu is a neat pop-up menu that offers a range of options relevant to the current position of the mouse. For example, try right-clicking in the Event Display (the large grey area of the Project window) and keep a mental picture of the menu you see. Click outside of the Quick Menu to close it and now right-click in the Track List instead—notice how you see a completely different menu.



Since Cubase recognises that you're right-clicking in the Track List, it senses you might want to create a Track and therefore provides all the commands from the "Project > Add Track" submenu, which behave in exactly the same way—which is to say that they create Tracks.

2.3.3 Adding Tracks Using the Double-Click Trick

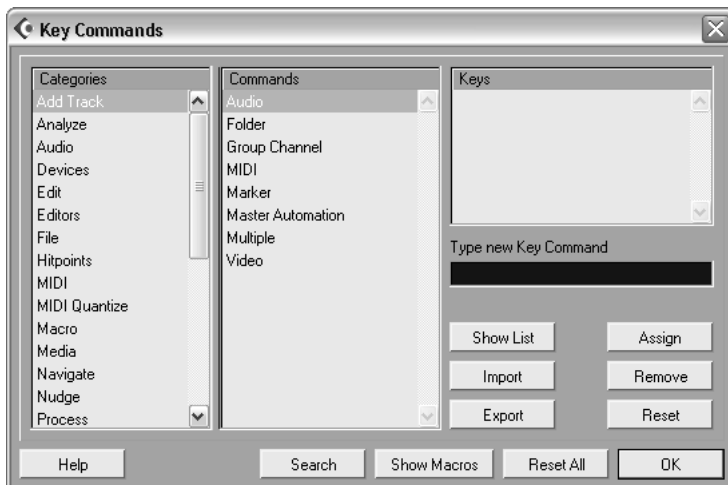
A quick way to create a single Track is to double-click in an empty space in the Track List—try it now. When there are no Tracks in the Track List, Cubase will always create a MIDI Track first, which is very useful, except in cases where you don't want a MIDI Track. Hit the [Backspace] key to delete the Track.

However, the double-click trick isn't a lost cause. When you have Tracks of different types in the Track List, double-clicking in an empty area of the Track List will create a Track of the same type as the one currently selected in the list. So if an Audio Track is currently selected, double-clicking in an empty space will add a new Audio Track to the bottom of the Track List—one to remember.

2.3.4 Adding Tracks Using Key Commands

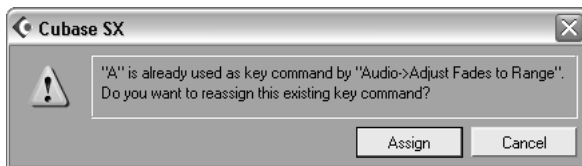
The final way of creating a New Track is by assigning Key Commands to the Add Track commands. Key Commands basically enable you to trigger features in Cubase with user-defined keyboard shortcuts.

1. Select "File > Key Commands" to open the Key Commands window.



2. The Add Track category should be selected by default. If it isn't, simply click Add Track in the Categories list to highlight it.

3. Select the command in the Commands column that you want to assign a keyboard shortcut to—in this case, Audio.
4. Click in the black box underneath the "Type new Key Command" label.
5. Press the keyboard shortcut you want to assign to the command—I use [Alt]+[A].
6. Click the Assign button.
7. If the keyboard shortcut you've entered is already assigned to a command, you'll see an alert asking if you want to reassign the Key Command. Click Cancel, try another keyboard shortcut and click Assign again until you don't see this alert.



8. Click OK when you've finished to close the Key Commands window.
9. Now, press [Alt]+[A] (or the keyboard shortcut you assigned) to add an Audio Track to the Project window.

Key commands can be a great way of making Cubase more convenient for the tasks you carry out regularly. If you explore the Key Commands window, you'll notice practically every action in Cubase can be assigned a keyboard shortcut; plus, you'll also find some 'hidden' commands that only exist as Key Commands.

2.4 Importing an Audio File

The starting point for a new musical production is often a drum loop; so with an Audio Track created on the Project window, let's import a drum loop into the Project.

1. Press [.] on the numeric keypad. This sets the Project Cursor (the horizontal line that moves across the screen while the music plays) to the start of the first bar, which is useful since imported audio files are always placed on the selected Audio Track at the current position of the Project Cursor.
2. Select "Import > Audio File."
3. Put the CD-ROM that came with this book into your computer.