Multitrack Recording Notes

Overview of my record:

Produced in FL Studio. I don’t play any instruments, so this is what I decided to do.

It is a 3 piece “combo” (Piano, DB, and Drums) that I recorded on my midi keyboard @70 bpm. I had the midrange melody in my mind before starting so I just started by recording that.

I used Arturia’s Piano V3 which sounds very realistic and gives options to control simulated mic placement. I used their American grand preset with the lid closed to reduce hammer noise. Mixed in their Ambient Mic “placement” for more of a room sound. Didn’t use any other plugin FX.

Recording the melody line took a few passes as I am not the best piano player, but I later nudged my errors to be closer to in time but keep the human feel. After recording that I settled on Cminor as my Key and took a second pass recording some basic 7th chords to support the melody. (Ab Maj7, G min 7, F min 7, Eb Maj 7,) pretty much repeating. Tried to roll the chords to sound natural but ended up having to nudge it in mixing a bit to get it to sit where I wanted it. Lastly for piano I just recorded a couple of higher notes to fill in the ending section.

The acoustic bass was FL studios stock plugin FLEX that has a couple of nice DB presets, but the reason for choosing the one I did is that it had a little bit of noise in the high end that slightly simulated miking the instrument. Recording this I just followed the roots of the chords and added a couple of non-harmonic tones (Passing tone at bar 12 beat 3, and Suspension at Bar 11 Beat 1) and counter rhythms. The way I recorded this was having my root notes in mind and loop recording a bunch of takes until I had enough interesting ideas to comp together.

Drums were difficult to get to sound natural. I used Kontakts Abbey Road 50s drummer preset and started with brushes playing every beat and recorded around that. I loop recorded the brushed snare playing the syncopated rhythm, then closed hi hat every off beat and a kick. I used this recording to introduce the song then built upon it for the second half of the track. For the second half I recorded a syncopated tom, a ride & crash cymbal. I then recorded a little fill between the first and second half and a cymbal roll at the end to flourish. I had to do a lot of editing of the midi at the end because of the latency of my midi keyboard.

Mixing:

Treated everything at this point as actual instruments so no velocity or midi changes.

Choosing to keep it natural as that’s just the genre but chose to have a reverb send that everything was going to to simulate a “venue” used Rverb from waves with the medium nighclub preset but increased the time to 2.2 seconds. Piano was sent to this reverb the most because the bass and drums just got too muddy if too much was sent to it. I then cleaned this track up with EQ.

Piano got a little bit of shaping EQ cutting most everything below 60 hz, and a 3 db shelf boost around 5k-20k just to have a little more sparkle. And a slight cut at 250hz by 1.5 db because it was a little muddy.

Double bass got very light EQ just to shape the sound. A small bump around 2k for the string sound, cut everything below 30 hz since it just isn’t very useful, and a small bump at 50 hz for more body.

The drums had a small bump (2db) at 150hz to get a little more kick sound.

Mix bus just had a bus compressor and fruity soft clipper to bump volume up to a reasonable level without being too high ended up being around -18 LUFS which is plenty loud for this style, I think. It felt too unnatural to try and boost any higher, due to losing some dynamics.

Problems:

Main issue was Midi latency, started out absolutely horrendous for some reason, I hadn’t had any issues before this but I think it was due to the types of instrument VSTs that I was using. They are pretty CPU intensive. I ended up just reducing buffer size and that brough latency down to a manageable level.

What I would do differently next time: for this specific project probably nothing, but I would love to record this live with people playing it to try and multitrack that way.