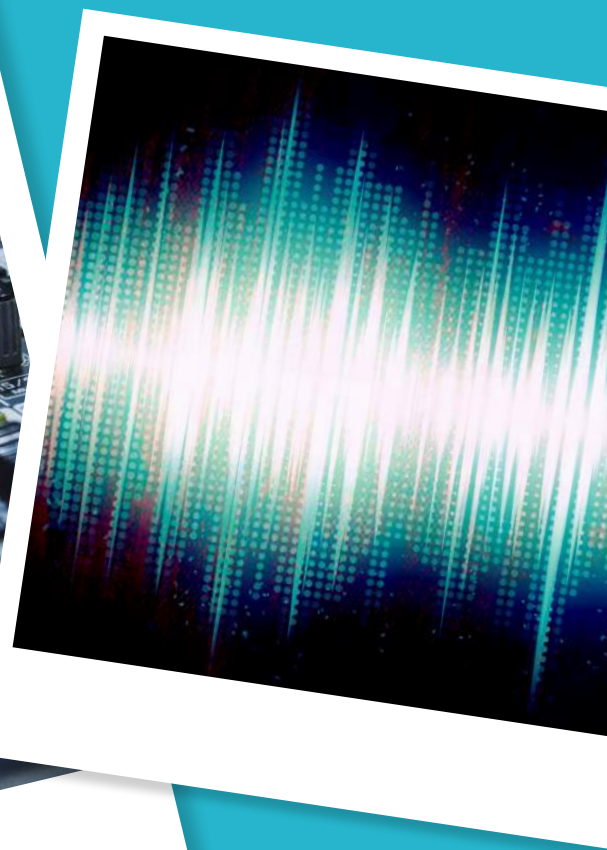
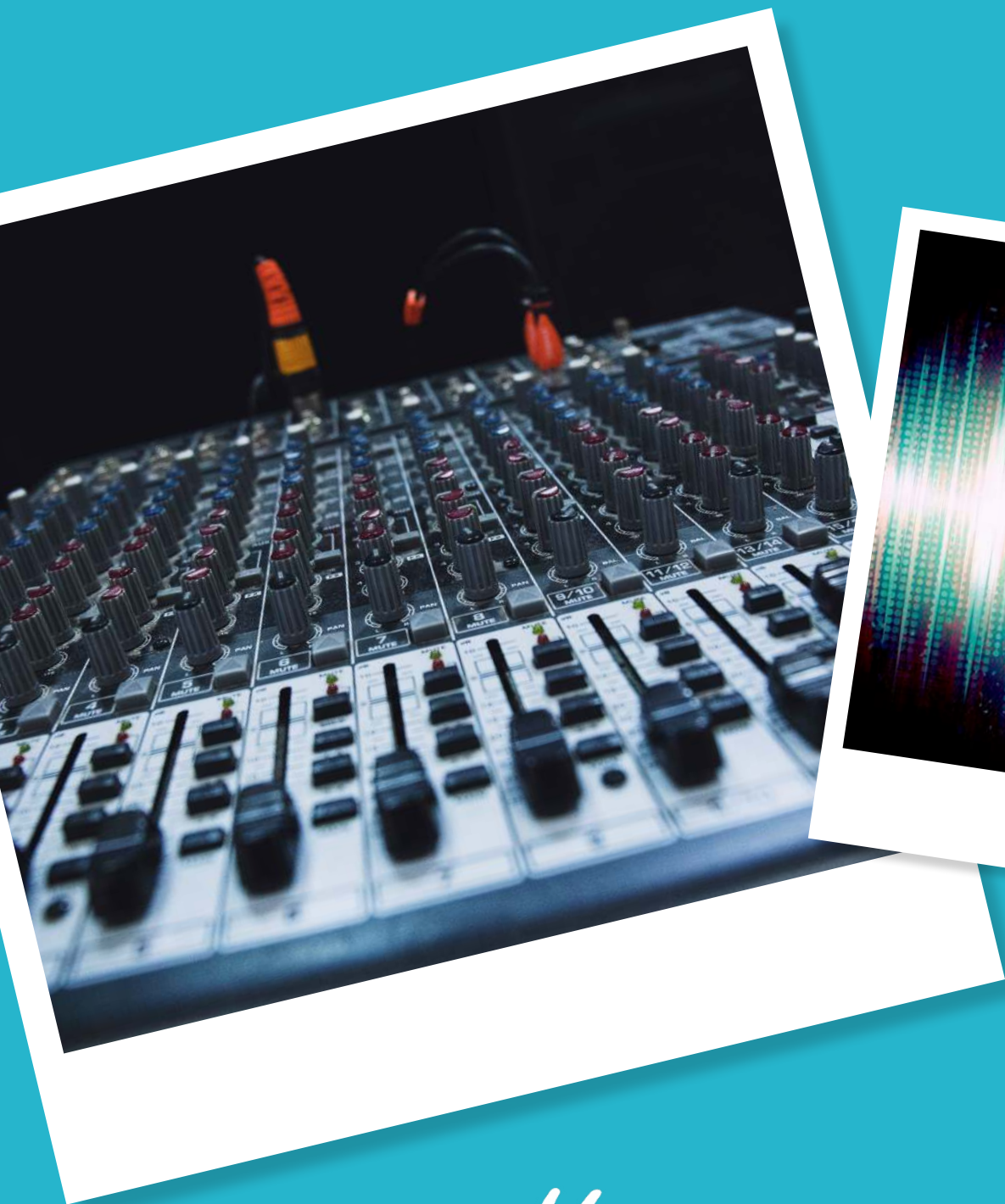


# VOLUME BALANCING CHEAT SHEET



*Musician*  
- ON A MISSION -

## STRONG FOUNDATIONS

- The act of adjusting the volume faders and making sure every instrument is at the appropriate volume.
  - Volume balancing is where the bulk of the mix comes from.
  - Spend plenty of time here, don't skip ahead too soon (30-60 minutes).
  - Old school engineers relied on volume balancing alone, and used little to no EQ or compression.
  - People have forgotten this today, and get distracted by plugins and toys.
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## HEIGHT ORDER

- So, how do you approach it? Bring all faders up?
- I recommend starting with the most important element, then bringing in elements one by one in order of importance
- Think of it as arranging the volume balance in 'height order'
- Usually, the key element is the vocal, or the drums
  - If starting with drums, go one level deeper and think of 'height order' of drums. Start with kick, or snare? Once done, move onto other parts.

## OCCAM'S MIXING

- Occam's Razor (used in philosophy and science) is the stated principle that, all things being equal, the simplest explanation is usually the correct one.
  - We can apply this to mixing (and the entire production process).
    - A slight adjustment of a volume fader can do a lot more than EQ, compression etc.
    - Often, people address problems that can be solved with the volume fader using EQ, compression etc, HUGE MISTAKE. Always go for the simplest solution, see if a slight volume adjustment will help
    - For example, if the low end is overpowering in a mix, try lowering the volume of the bass part instead of applying EQ.
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## VOLUME AUTOMATION

- Nearly impossible to get an even mix throughout the song. Verses and choruses differ.
- For example, guitar part is too loud in verse, but gets buried in chorus.
- Solution? Volume automation.
  - Not complicated, not advanced... you just draw it in.
  - Check how to do it in your DAW.
- Start by automating whole sections WHEN NEEDED (not just for the sake of it).
  - Later, if you need to bring smaller sections up or down, or even words, do it.

## VOLUME BALANCING IN 10 SIMPLE STEPS

- ① Organize the project.
- ② Check for any hot channels (i.e. gain staging).
- ③ Loop the loudest section of the song (usually the final chorus).
- ④ Bring all the faders down (to minus infinity dB).
- ⑤ Decide on the most important channel and set to 0dB.
- ⑥ Bring in the 2nd most important channel in and balance the volume to the first channel.
- ⑦ Continue in this manner, bring channels up in order of importance.
- ⑧ Once all the channels are up, spend at least 10 minutes adjusting the balance and fine tuning the channel faders (using references will help).
- ⑨ Now check other sections of the song, and listen through the whole song while making adjustments to the faders.
- ⑩ Only move on when you are 100% satisfied with the initial mix - it will probably help to take a short break and then come back and check your balance.

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