



Using Session Drummer 2

One of the new features of Sonar 6 Producer Edition is a new instrument called Session Drummer 2. It is a sampling synth, containing many drum and percussion kits, with sounds that are installed on the computer when the program is first installed. The quality of the samples is very high, and each drum sound is multi-sampled, meaning that dynamics are reproduced faithfully, not only in terms of the volume of the sound, but also in terms of the timbre, which changes when a drum is hit harder. Each drum can also be tuned, adjusted in volume and pan, and entire new kits saved as presets to suit different genres of music that you wish to produce.



The following tutorial shows how to insert, modify and set up the Session Drummer to use in your music production.

Like any soft synth in Sonar, the typical scenario is that a soft synth track is composed of a **midi track**, which holds the information about what is being played, and allows for a complete range of midi editing, plus an **audio track** (or preferably multiple audio tracks – more later) from which the audio is routed to the computer sound card via the Sonar Mixer.

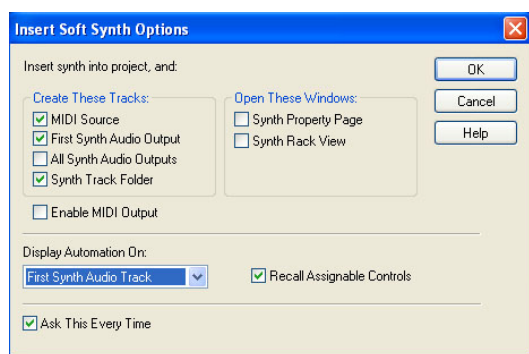
The midi track may be created before the insertion of the Session Drummer (as in the case of a midi file, or a midi track you have already recorded), or may be inserted prior to creating the midi drum track. These different scenarios dictate the settings you will use when inserting the Session Drummer into your Sonar project.



To Insert the Session Drummer into your project, go to the Insert menu, and follow the drop down menus as shown to choose the Session Drummer.

At this point, you will see a dialogue box asking what you wish to insert into your project. This step has several key options which you need to choose wisely to get the most out of the Session Drummer.

The dialogue box looks as follows:



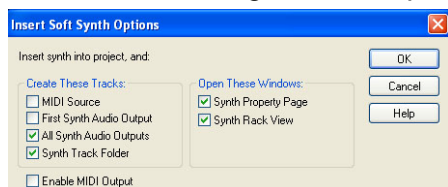
The **Midi Source track** refers to whether you have an existing midi drum track, or you need to create a new track which you will record into. Leave it checked if you need a new track, and uncheck it if you have an existing track.

Check **First Synth Output**, if you wish to have the Session Drummer audio come out from a single stereo audio track. In this case, all drum sounds would be controlled via a single track in both the Track Window, and the Console View. Also, there is no point having the **Synth Track Folder** option checked, as all sounds come from one track anyway, so uncheck it.

Whilst using the **First Synth Output** is a simple and easy option, the problem that is likely to arise is that when you wish to add effects such as reverb, or to add an EQ to the drums, these will affect all parts of the drum kit simultaneously. Adding a suitable amount of reverb to achieve a nice roomy snare drum sound for example, is likely to produce a “boom” in the bass drum, and will be difficult to manage.

The real power of the Session Drummer, together with the Track Folders feature of Sonar is unleashed when we choose to check both the **All Synth Audio Outputs**, and the **Synth Track Folder** options, as Sonar will then create a Session Drummer folder track in the Track View which has 8 separate audio tracks contained within it, to which you will then be able to assign each of the pads of the Session Drummer individually. The problem of EQ’s and reverbs etc. is now solved, as each element of the drum kit will appear on different tracks, allowing you to totally control each part individually. The Console View will, of course, have a separate channel for each of the tracks.

The desired settings for this option are shown below.



Checking the **Synth Property Page** and the **Synth Rack View** options in the Open These Views section will give easy access to setting up and modifying your Session Drummer.

Click OK, and Sonar will set up your Track and Console views ready to assign and name them according to how you wish to group your drums.

The Track view will appear as shown:



In this example, tracks 12 to 19 are the eight separate stereo drum audio tracks all contained within a folder track. It is currently shown expanded to view the individual tracks. This is great for naming each by double clicking on the name of each track, and entering your desired grouping of drums.

(Tip: To save screen real estate later, clicking on the “-” sign on LHS of the folder track header will collapse it to a single track.)

A typical drum track set up is shown below:



Double click the name of each track, and rename them. This step simply sets up your tracks so that when you choose your drum kits and/or individual drum and percussion sounds, they can be assigned to tracks which have logical names.

These will of course be reflected in the names of the channels in Console View, so that mixing later on becomes easy, and you can then add EQ, effects etc in the normal manner using a combination of the EFX bin and sends to Reverb Busses etc.

The Console View will appear as follows: (Shortcut Alt + 3)



Here, the Channels are already named for you. Get back to Track View by using the shortcut Alt + 0.

To choose your drum sounds, you will need to view the Session Drummer Synth Property Page, which should be open on your desktop, as you checked that option as you inserted the synth as described above.

It looks like the following:



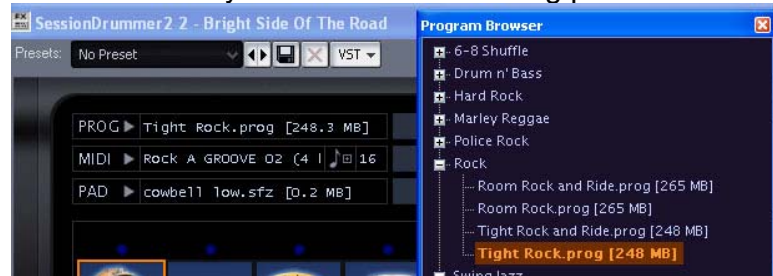
If you cannot see this on screen, simply go to View – Synth Rack, and double click on the name of the Session Drummer Synth in the rack, and it will bring up the Session Drummer Property Page.



The exciting bit is now here, as you get to choose your drum kit sounds. The easiest way to do this is to double click in the Program area in the upper LHS of the Session Drummer. This brings up a list of pre-programmed drum kits to choose from. The Program Browser should appear as follows:



Expand one of the Program Browser folders by clicking on the “+” sign in what you think might suit your project, and then double click on a kit of your choice as a starting point.



The kit is then loaded into the Session Drummer ready to go.

You can check out the sound of each drum in the kit by clicking on each of the pads on the Session Drummer with your mouse.

Alternatively, you can choose one of the 8 kit specific midi patterns which will have loaded with the kit by choosing one of the patterns A – H across the top of the Session Drummer, and hitting the Play button. Looping is also possible here by selecting the Infinity symbol, and then pressing play.



Of course if you have already got material in your midi drum track, you can now click on the output of that track and choose Session Drummer from the drop down, and then press Play to hear your track played by the Session Drummer.

You may have noticed that the whole kit is being played through the first of the Synth Output tracks within the Session Drummer folder track. This is simply due to the fact that all of the pads are assigned by default to the first synth output. This is represented by the row of 1's under each Session Drummer pad. Click and drag on these numbers (or use the scroll wheel) to assign them to the renamed tracks you made earlier. A typical assignment might be as follows:



Note that all the Toms pads are assigned to Synth output 4. This is OK though, as this corresponds to the 4th track in the Session Drummer Track Folder which we called Toms earlier, so that the individual toms are already panned for you on the stereo audio drum track.

The volumes and pans of each drum can be changed as you please using the dials below each pad. Even more powerful is the ability to tune each drum to your liking, providing the capability to set up the ideal kit for your project.



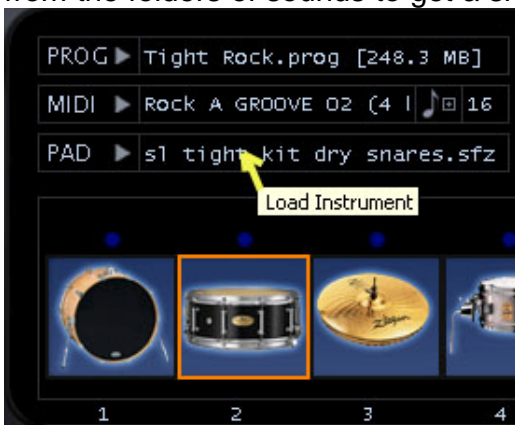
Shown left are the parameters for the Bass drum on pad 1.

The whole kit can be tweaked using the master settings under the output meters on the RHS of the Session Drummer.

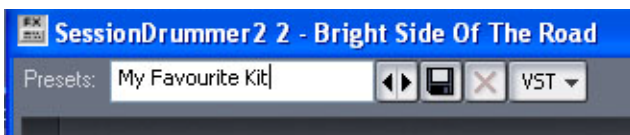


If you still dislike elements of your chosen kit, you can choose to load a different program from the program Browser, or if just the snare is not what you want, then simply click on the snare pad to highlight it, and then double click on the description of the Pad eg. SL tight kit snare drum, and choose

from the folders of sounds to get a snare more like the one you want, and then edit it as described.



When you are happy with the Kit, you can save it as a preset kit that you can call up instantly for other projects requiring the same or similar kits. To do this, double click in the Preset Name area on the top LHS of the Session Drummer, and then name your kit.



Now click the Disk icon to save your newly created kit. To use it in other projects, click in the preset area to bring up a list of available presets.