

Beat Making on the MPC1000

Take your beats to the **next level...**



For the Official Akai OS (version 2.13)

Fourth Edition

By Andy Avgousti (MPC-Tutor)

Beat Making on the MPC1000 (Sample Tutorials for the Official Akai OS)

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019 Chopping Samples

Learn how to chop and slice drum loops - by doing this you can re-arrange loops, change the groove and make your own drum kits.

In chapter 12 we looked at the simple process of looping a drum beat – with a looped break we can theoretically just repeat this break a hundred times in our sequencer and instantly have a foundation drum track for a new beat. This however would make for pretty boring music! Drums are probably the most fundamental element to any hip hop or dance track, so it is important that they are well structured. A good drum track adds variety to the beat with subtle and not-so-subtle changes, fills, drop outs and special effects.

To give us more control over how we use sampled breaks, we can utilise the power of *chopping*. Chopping down a breakbeat allows us to retain the original sound of the drums within the break while at the same time giving us the freedom to create something completely new, simply by re-arranging 'chunks' of the break into a new order. And once you get practiced in the art of chopping, you'll be able to extract individual drum hits and then use these samples to create your own drum kits, giving you the power to create your own completely original beats entirely from scratch.

And that's just the beginning - the possibilities are virtually endless, and throughout the next twelve tutorials in this book we'll be looking at the many practical uses of drum loop chopping including

- building kits
- laying down original beats from these kits
- Removing pops and clicks from an old break
- creating timbre variations of your sounds for more realism

- layering your extracted sounds to create completely new sounds and a variety of special effects

Plus as we move into the advanced sections of this book, we'll use chopping techniques on other types of sounds (e.g. bass loops).

Basically (if you haven't already realised), chopping is a very important and creative technique for a beat maker to master!

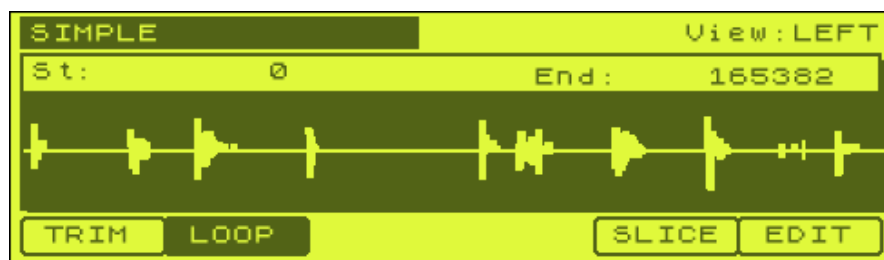
Methods for Chopping Breaks

So how do we go about chopping a break? Looking back at **011 'Editing samples Part 2'**, we came across the 'EXTRACT' function in the Sample Edit screen - this provides us with one method of chopping a break. This function allows us to select a section of a break and turn just this section into a completely new sample. So in theory you could keep selecting different sections within your break and creating new samples from it using EXTRACT. That's cool, and we shall use this later in the book to do some small chops, but our MPC has a quicker way of chopping an entire break into manageable chunks - the 'Slice' function.

Slice Function Overview

The MPC Slice function takes any sample (it doesn't have to be a drum loop) and automatically creates separate slices or 'zones' within that sample; each one of these slices will eventually be a completely new sample in its own right. Each slice is completely editable using the same trimming techniques discussed in previous tutorials. After creating your set of slices, they can be automatically assigned to a new program, allowing you to immediately start creating a new groove out of them simply by bashing your pads. The easiest way to see how the slice function works is to go through an example.

Transfer the '**019 020 Chopping Samples**' folder to your CF card and go to the LOAD page (MODE and pad 2). Load up the drum beat 'SIMPLE' and assign it to any pad or simply assign it to 'OFF' as this will still keep it stored in active memory. Go to the TRIM screen (MODE and pad 6) to view our sample.

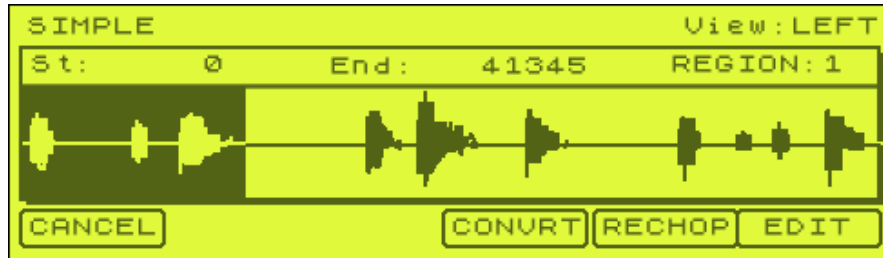


This beat has already been trimmed and looped for you using the editing and looping techniques covered in chapters 10-12. The loop is four beats long (one bar) and is 63.9 BPM. Press and hold PLAY ALL (pad 16) to listen to this beat play through once.

Now press and hold PLAY LOOP (pad 13) to hear the break loop through a couple of times.

Slicing Our Break

While still in the TRIM screen, press the SLICE button (F5). The first thing we are asked is to input the 'Number of regions' that we wish to slice our beat into. This is a one bar loop made up of four beats, so initially let's slice it into those four individual beats. Enter '4' into this field – but you can have up to 64 slices (regions or zones). Press DO IT and you'll be taken to the slicing screen:



Looking at this screen shot, you can see that the name of the sample is shown in the usual place at the top left corner. To hear our entire sample, press and hold pad 16 (PLAY ALL). To hear the currently selected 'slice' (highlighted by the dark background), press and hold any pad on the bottom three rows (i.e. pads A1-A12).

Navigate with the purple cursor keys so that 'REGION: 1' is selected. Now jog wheel to the right and you'll see the number '1' increase - at the same time, the highlighted 'region' (or 'slice') within the sample also changes. What you are doing here is simply running through all the existing zones that our MPC has set by default. You'll see that there are four regions, as this is what we originally set after pressing the 'SLICE' button. Go through each region and press/hold a pad to hear what each region initially sounds like. As you can hear, each region roughly represents a beat from our one bar loop, although currently the MPC1000 hasn't set the start and end points of each region quite correctly...

How does an MPC decide where to place the regions?

If you've ever used the computer software 'Propellerheads Recycle', you'll know that Recycle analyses the peaks of the drum beat waveform and automatically slices your beat into perfect zones. The MPC1000 on the other hand does not do this - in fact it is blissfully unaware of the exact position of your drum hits. The MPC simply takes the length of the sample and divides it into equally spaced zones. So if a sample was 1000 samples long and we sliced it into ten zones, each zone would be 100 samples wide.

As we will discover later by closely examining each region's waveform, the current region boundaries are not perfect – for example, Region 1 cuts into the snare sound at the start of region 2. Why is this? Well, take for example a one bar loop that lasts for exactly four seconds. If you tell the MPC to slice this into four regions, the MPC simply creates four equal slices each one second long. Now, the drum beats that you will sample from old records are played by real drummers - real drummers are not robots and don't play to a sequencer quantise template (we discussed quantise

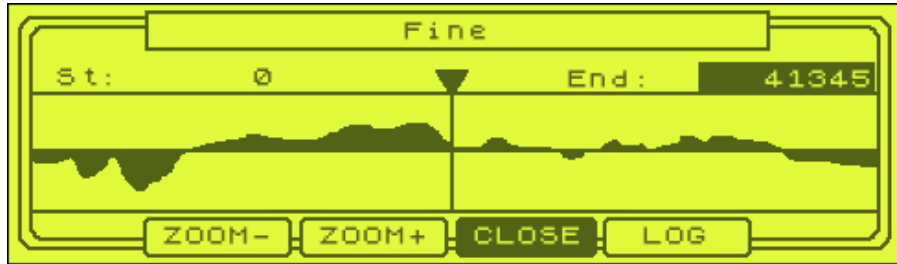
points in earlier chapters) - they sometimes hit a snare slightly 'behind' or 'ahead' of the beat, giving the music some swing and feeling - and even the tightest drummers simply make the odd 'mistake'. There's no 'step edit' or 'undo' for a human being!

So it is highly unlikely that a human is going to ensure that each beat falls exactly within the perfect quantise boundaries that your MPC1000 assumes by default, and as such when cutting up drum breaks recorded by real drummers it is quite common to find that certain hits don't 'line up' within the regions set automatically by the MPC - this is why you need to carefully adjust your regions.

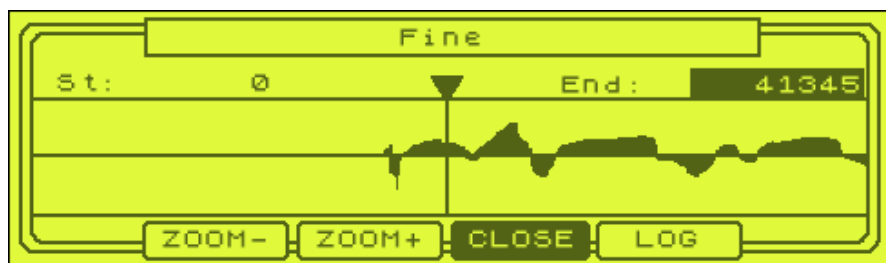
Adjusting Regions

Adjusting regions is pretty simple although can take some time when dealing with many slices. It's the same method as you would use in standard trimming (see chapter 10), except this time you need to adjust the start and end points for all your slices instead of just one - so basically it's like having four unique samples that need trimming correctly.

Highlight 'Region' and jog wheel to Region '1'. As our entire break had been already trimmed and looped perfectly before we loaded it, there will be no point in adjusting the start point of region 1 - this is already set perfectly. So for region 1, we just need to edit the end point. So, cursor back from 'Region:1' so that the end point is highlighted and hit WINDOW to display the 'Fine' screen. Make sure LOG is showing on the F5 button - if it says 'LINER', hit F5 to change it to LOG. You should see something similar to the following:



We can't really see what's going on here, so zoom all the way out by pressing ZOOM- (F2) several times (until it can zoom out no more) - you'll see the following:



It's clear that our region 1 end point is not set correctly - in fact the current end point (41345) is slightly cutting into the start of the next slice (which is the first main snare hit of this break, and this is supposed to be in region 2). Hence, we need to 'back up' and reduce this end point so that region 1 only contains audio that belongs in that region. With the end point still selected, move the jog wheel to the left until

you are at the start of the visible waveform - around 41166. Now zoom in as far as possible (keep pressing ZOOM+, the F3 button) until you are as close as possible to the beginning of the start of the waveform - I set mine to 41199. Press CLOSE.

Now region 1 is perfectly edited and in the process - of course by setting the *end* point of region 1 correctly, it follows that the *start* point of region 2 has also been set perfectly, so that's once less job to perform.

Now cursor and highlight 'Region:1' and jog wheel so it reads 'Region 2'. Again, select the end point, and repeat the adjustment for this slice as you did for region 1, making sure that the end point of zone 2 does not fall on the drum hit that is supposed to be at the start of zone 3 (zone 3 is the main kicks/hat combo that comes in on the third beat of this loop). Go through all four zones to make sure your regions are set as perfectly as possible, although as the end point of region 4 is also the end of our loop, there's no need to set anything for region 4.

Note: Editing start/end points with Q link sliders does not work in the SLICE screens, so to move edit points over large distances, use the 'shift and cursor' technique we described in chapter 010 - although you don't need to worry about that in this example as the required changes to the regions are pretty small.

Slicing

With your edit points set, you are ready to slice your regions. To do this, hit CONVRT (F4). You'll get this following screen



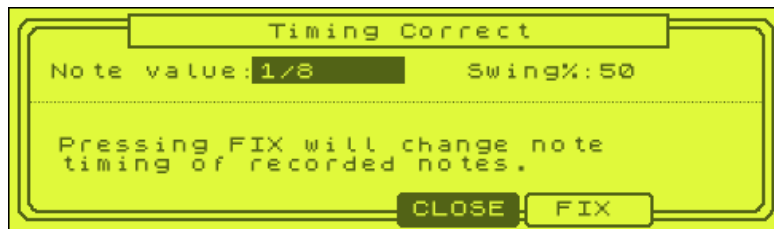
The CONVRT screen may say 'PATCHED PHRASE' - highlight this and jog wheel to the left so it says 'SLICE SAMPLES' (we'll look at PATCHED PHRASE in chapter 21).

The 'Release' parameter is a great little feature that is much improved over the version you find in the MPC2000XL. Basically when you slice a beat, the end of each slice will obviously end very abruptly - this causes a couple of problems. First off, if you are chopping out an individual snare sound from a loop (to use in a drum kit), it would be ideal to have the snare end more smoothly with a natural sounding decay. Secondly if you are chopping a break into segments like we are now, when you piece the pieces back together in a different order in your sequencer, you are likely to hear obvious gaps in the audio (sometimes referred to as 'choppy'). By adding a small amount of 'release' to all your chops, you will increase the length of your sample end slightly, by adding a kind of smooth 'timestretched' decay to the end of the chop.

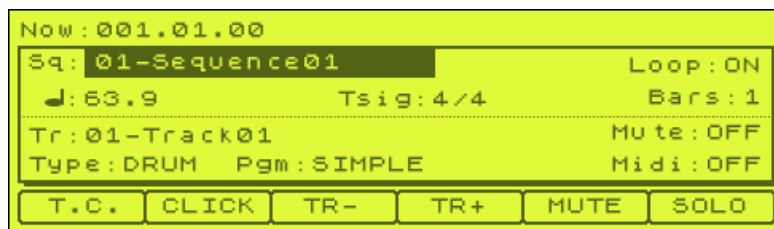
Set your Release to 35 (you don't want it too high as this can cause some strange artefacts), and change 'Create New Program' to read YES. This tells your MPC to create a new drum program out of your slices. Press DO IT, and the MPC slices your breakbeat, creating a new program with your four slices on PADS A1 to A4. Initially you will be taken back to the TRIM screen where you will see a sample called 'SIMPLE-1' - this is the 'region 1' chop (press and hold any pad on the bottom three rows to hear this sample). With the top left sample name highlighted, jog wheel to the right to preview the other three slices. To view your new program you'll have to manually go into PROGRAM (MODE & pad 7) - it's the program named 'SIMPLE'.

If you like, load up the SIMPLE program file from the tutorial files. This is my version of the chopped up beat (you can use your version if you wish). Play the pads A1 to A4 to hear your slices.

Now we have our beat in slices, let's look at how we can try to recreate the original breakbeat within our sequencer using this new program of chops. Go to MAIN and select a blank sequence. Highlight the tempo field and set the BPM to 63.9 (which if you remember was the BPM of our original SIMPLE drum beat). Now highlight 'Bars' and jog wheel this to '1' and hit DO IT. Now set a T.C. (quantise) of 1/8, this will allow us to insert our chops into the sequencer at single beat intervals - we discussed quantise and 'timing correct' in our Recording and Editing sequences chapters, so please refer back to those chapters if you need to refresh your memory on these concepts. So to set the TC - press TC (F1) and change 'Note Value' to 1/8:



Press CLOSE (not FIX). Now navigate with your purple cursor keys to track 1 and make sure that our new SIMPLE program is assigned to it - the second line should read 'Type: DRUM Pgm:SIMPLE'.



Now, remember that we chopped our break into four slices and our break was exactly four beats long - that means each slice is one 'beat'. So let's place each one of these slices exactly 'on the beat' in our sequencer. In your 'Now:' field (top right of your main sequence page), you have three sets of numbers - 001.01.00. In previous tutorials we saw that this represents the Bar (001), beat (01) and tick (00) position. So:

- Beat 1 is represented by 001.**01**.00

- Beat 2 is represented by 001.**02**.00
- Beat 3 is represented by 001.**03**.00
- Beat 4 is represented by 001.**04**.00.

So to place each of our slices 'on the beat' we simply go into STEP EDIT and add our slices at these four points.

Press the FULL LEVEL key to make sure we get full sample velocity when entering our sequenced notes. Now make sure you are at the start of your sequence (001.01.00) and press STEP EDIT (MODE & pad 14). To enter your first slice here, press the red OVERDUB key and then hit pad A1.

Now navigate to 001.02.00. The easiest way to do this is to use the STEP cursors above the REC button (remember that the STEP key is activated by pressing the BAR key & SHIFT):



As your timing is set to 1/8, this involves pressing the right STEP key two times. Enter your second slice here (pad A2). Following the same procedure, enter pad A3 at 001.03.00 and pad A4 at 001.04.00.

Press play - doesn't sound quite right, does it? Some of the beats seem to come in a little too late...

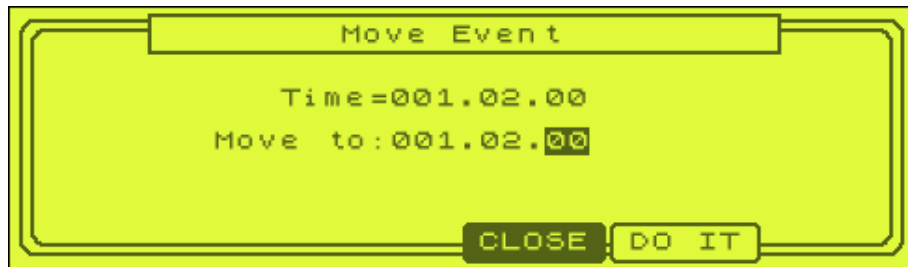
Why it sounds weird

Remember that we had to adjust the MPC's region positions earlier when originally slicing the beat? We did this because some of the drum hits in the un-chopped break were originally played a bit 'ahead' of the beat (i.e. they didn't fall exactly 'on the beat' and hence had a bit more funky swing and feel about them). So to recreate our original beat, we cannot simply place all chops exactly on mathematically perfect quantise points like 001.02.00, instead we would need to place some slightly *before*

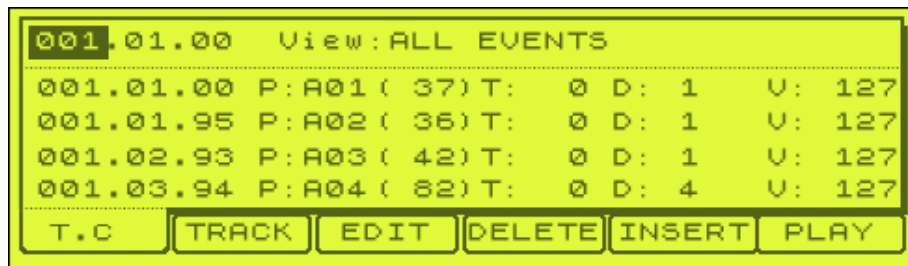
these quantise points (placing them before will mean the hits come in faster than expected; hence the term 'playing ahead of the beat').

So let's start messing around with the position of some of the chops. It's a good idea to keep the first beat at 001.01.00 as this is the fundamental anchor for the break, so there's no need to do any editing here. Now navigate to the A2 event at 001.02.00 using the SHIFT and BAR keys (STEP), or by highlighting the 'time' field in the top left of the screen and jog wheeling to the desired position.

Let's move this 001.02.00 event back one sequencer tick to 001.01.95 – press and hold EDIT (F3) and you'll see the EDIT screen options appear on the bottom row of your screen (MOVE, COPY, PASTE replacing the T.C, TRACK, DELETE, INSERT and PLAY buttons) – press MOVE (F2). You'll now be viewing the 'Move Event' screen:



Change the 'Move to' parameter to read 001.01.95 and press DO IT – this event has now moved from 001.02.00 to 01.01.95. Repeat this procedure for A3 (move it from 001.03.00 to 001.02.93) and A4 (move it from 001.04.00 to 001.03.94). Your screen should look something like the following:



So, now chops 2, 3 and 4 are slightly 'ahead' of the beat (e.g. one or two sequencer ticks back from being 'dead on'). Press PLAY START to preview our break recreation.

In the next chapter we will show you how we can use this new drum program to immediately start re-writing that original break beat, and then we'll chop down the break even further (to its individual drum sounds), allowing us to create a break with a completely different groove and tempo!

020 Chopping Samples Part 2

With our break now chopped, let's look at how we can rearrange these slices. We can then let's take matters even further as we chop the break right down to the individual hits and create something completely new!

Rearranging Your Break

Currently we have a one bar loop that simply runs through our chops in the original order:

SIMPLE-1, SIMPLE-2, SIMPLE-3, SIMPLE-4 (or pads A1, A2, A3, and A4).

But now these are chopped up, why not change the order that the samples play in? In MAIN, highlight the current sequence name, press WINDOW, hit COPY (F5) and DO IT to create an exact copy of this sequence. Now go into STEP EDIT (MODE and pad 14) to see our four sequencer notes from before. Using the cursor keys, move down to the fourth (last) sequencer event at 001.03.94:

```
001.03.94 P:A04( 82)T: 0 D: 4 V:127
```

As you can see, this is currently playing pad A4. Cursor one place to the right so that A04 is highlighted and jog wheel two places to the left so that it reads A02. Now press PLAY START on your sequencer to hear the amended sequence. The roll has gone and now we have a drum loop that will sound better when continually looped. Unfortunately there is a problem – as we reach the loop point of our sequence, there is a very obvious pause in the break – this is because our A2 chop doesn't really belong at this part of the break; it is obviously too short and hence sounds like it is being played a bit too fast. So what can we do about this?

To fix this we need to 'stretch' out this final sample to make it fill the gap, so we're going to use the MPC1000 timestretch feature. Go to TRIM (MODE & pad 6) and select the 'SIMPLE-2' sample. Press EDIT (F6) and jog wheel to the right until you reach TIMESTRETCH.



Cursor down to 'Preset' and select PERCUSSION (A) – this is a good preset for drum sounds. Now cursor up to 'Original Tempo' and change this to 63.9, which if you remember was the original tempo of our un-chopped drum break. Now in order to 'stretch' our sample and make it longer, we need to *lower* its BPM (i.e. make it take longer to play), so in the 'New' tempo field, set this around 8 BPM lower at 56.0 BPM. Press DO IT, then KEEP to create a completely new sample (no need to rename the new sample as the MPC1000 does it for us; mine is called SIMPLE-5).

Now go back to our SIMPLE program and hit pad A5 (which is empty) – cursor down to layer 1 and jog wheel to assign our SIMPLE-5 sample here. So now we have five

pads in our program. Go back into STEP EDIT and locate the event at 001.03.94 – change this from pad A02 to pad A05. Press PLAY START in our sequencer. This is better, but now it sounds like the beginning of the beat comes in just too quickly, which suggests our new stretched slice is *too slow* – i.e. we over-stretched it! So return to TRIM and select the original SIMPLE-2 (not our new time stretched sample) and re-stretch it, this time try 60.0BPM and call the new sample SIMPLE-6. Now replace the SIMPLE-5 sample on pad A5 with this new SIMPLE-6 sample and press PLAY START in the sequencer. This is much better. Feel free to load up the 'SLICES' project file from the tutorial folder. This contains the following sequences:

- ORIGINAL – the recreation of our original breakbeat
- ROLLFREE – our roll-free version, with the time stretched fix above
- EXTENDED – this is a four bar version of the loop which features some additional sequence changes to show you the kind of thing possible.

Hopefully this has given you a good grounding in the fundamental skills needed for chopping – so with that knowledge in mind, let's stop messing around with simple chops and instead chop this break right down so that we have absolutely no limit to what we can do with the drum sounds within it.

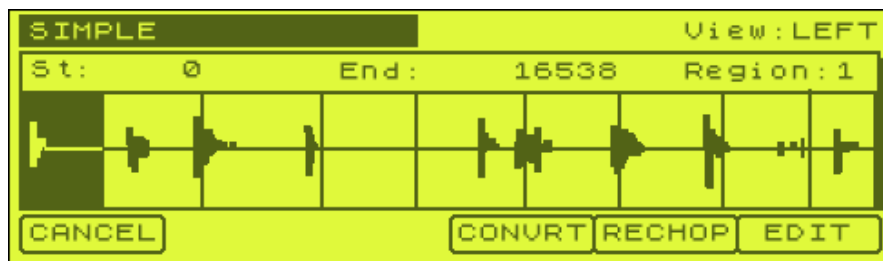
Chopping it further

Fancy a sneak peak at what's we're going to make now? Go to sequence 4 in our currently loaded SLICES project and you'll find a beat called 'NEW'. Press PLAY START. This beat clearly uses the sounds of our original breakbeat, but has a completely different groove and tempo. How do we do this?

Let's now start a fresh, so turn off your MPC1000, boot it back up, and load up our original sample 'SIMPLE' – this time, we're going to chop this break *right* down to its individual hits, giving us a collection of single hit drum sounds which we can arrange in any way we wish.

In the TRIM screen, select SIMPLE, and hit SLICE (F5). Now, we want to split this break down to its individual hits – this means that each slice needs to contain just a single hit. Now we could try to count exactly how many individual hits there are, but I'm just going to guess 10 at this point – we can guess this because once the loop is sliced, we'll have a further opportunity to 'divide' certain slices to create more slices if needed. So press SLICE, and choose 10 regions, DO IT.

Adding More Slices



Now things get a little more messy. Your region markers are all over the place, so you'll need to do a fair bit of work to get all your start/end points set for each

individual hit. We'll just use the exact same technique that we used in the previous chapter, so there's no need to explain it all again. Just remember that we don't just rely on the waveform for setting edit points – let your ears be the final judge on the most suitable point to set.

The first three hits are clearly defined and quite easy to chop

Region 1: End point = 20825

Region 2: End Point = 30276

Region 3: End point = 41196

Region 4's hit is tricky, because it's a snare that goes into a hat, but the hat doesn't show up on our waveform as it's really quiet. So, time for your ears to do the work – move to region 4 and set an end point around half way between our region 4 snare and the next obvious hit in the waveform. Preview our new region 4 – can you hear this hat? No? Then start moving the end point to the right and keep previewing the region until you hear the hat come into the region. At this point, back off a little and you have the end of your region 4 'solo snare' hit.

Region 4: End point = 61930

Region 5: end point = 71064

Region 6: end point = 81772

Region 7: end point = 102829

When you get to region 8, listen carefully, as this is actually a kick immediately followed by a hat, so we just want the kick from this:

Region 8: end point = 113103

Region 9: end point = 123466

Now, our last region (10) contains quite a bit of audio. There's a 'crashy' sounding snare that leads into a little roll, this roll ends in a snare crack, and then finally there's a kick drum. So really, there are four individual slices to pull from this (I'd count the little roll as a unique slice), so we need to create more regions. To do this, press EDIT (F6) and you'll see the following screen:



The first option is to 'EXTRACT', which is identical to the standard extract function you find in the 'Sample Edit' screen – this will extract the current region as a unique sample. We don't want to do this as we are going to be extracting all our slices later.

So highlight EXTRACT and jog wheel to DIVIDE REGION. This will split the current region into two equal parts, therefore giving us two new regions. Hit DO IT and you'll return to the main SLICE screen. Now if you highlight 'Region' you have 11 regions to play with.

So, let's make region 10 the 'crashy' snare sound at the start of the drum roll:

Region 10: End point = 134512

Now, we're still left with three possible slices, but only one region, so let's DIVIDE REGION as we did before (we now have 12 regions).

Region 11: End point = 144329

Finally, we have one more DIVIDE REGION to perform – this will let us create the final snare and kick regions, giving us a total of 13 unique slices.

Region 12: End point = 154812

Region 13: No setting required!

Phew! All done – so, before there's a power cut, press CONVERT (F4), select 'SLICED SAMPLES', release 35, and 'create new program: YES'. Press DO IT. Go to your newly created SIMPLE program (mode and pad 7) and listen to the various single hits. You now have the making of a new drum kit.

Making a New Break

With this program in memory, you are now free to open up a blank sequence and record your own original break beat. In the coming chapters we'll look more deeply into the various methods we can use to record such sequences, as well as the various ways we can construct our drum kits to help performance and realism – but at this point I feel we've covered enough in this tutorial – you could probably do with a break (no pun intended).

Feel free to reload the SLICES project file and examine exactly what I did in sequence 4 (NEW). You could also examine my version of the individual chop program, which I (imaginatively) called 'CHOPS'. You should notice I've renamed all the samples – we'll explain what these abbreviations mean in chapter 26 (**Building Drum Kits**), but for the moment I'm sure you can probably work out that 'K1' is most likely a kick, while 'KH1' refers to a 'kick with a hat laid over it'.

Using only your best samples

If you examine the sequence events in NEW (via STEP EDIT), you'll see that I only used one hi hat sample even though there was two that we salvaged from the original chopping session. This was because the second hi hat sample (CH2 on pad A7) sounds a bit duff - it has a bit of bass reverberation running through it and it also sounds quite 'clicky'. But that's the beauty of this method - you can pick and choose the best samples and ignore the bad ones. Of course, it's nice to have several variations of the same sample to make our beat a little more interesting, but we'll look at drum programming in more detail within the **Drum Manipulation** section of the book where we will also look at ways in which we can change these drum sounds, beef them up, recreate timbre changes and build our own drum kits.

A Word of Warning – Slicing Turns Stereo Into Mono

In this tutorial, we used a mono drum loop sample. But it's important to note that if we use a stereo sample and we slice it using the SLICE functionality, your MPC1000 creates *mono* slices. This means any panning information is lost – for example, let's say the hi hat in the original loop was panned slightly to the left, this would be gone and it would just sound centred.

There are several ways we can try to overcome this issue:

1. If you create a drum kit from your break, select only the 'pure' drum hits to be included in the kit. These are the samples that just contain a hat, a kick or a snare – not samples that have (for example) a kick with a hat playing over it (as you'd normally find on the first main kick on any beat). You can then use the MPC1000 mixer to add panning information and pan your hat to one side while leaving your kick and snare centre. This gives instant and real stereo to your resulting drum breaks. We'll talk about this in much more detail in chapters 25-27.
2. Add a stereo effect to the entire program – like a reverb or a delay. This isn't true stereo though, and it will not give you any panning for your hats, but at least it can give your entire beat a little more stereo spread. But this is always a last resort!
3. Add additional panned percussion – something like a tambourine, cabasa, shaker, bongos, ride cymbals etc. With these panned to one side, you can give the illusion that your beat is in stereo. For example, you could have cymbals panned quite hard left, and a shaker panned slightly to the right.
4. Don't use the SLICE function – instead use EXTRACT. The sample EDIT function EXTRACT (TRIM, EDIT), lets you slice a loop one bit at a time. The resulting 'chop' remains in stereo. The downside? Well, you don't get the nice time stretched decay added to the end of your samples like you do with SLICING, which in turn means that there's more chance of your resulting sequenced beat sounding 'choppy', especially if you decide to slow down the tempo – but if you speed up the tempo, this problem isn't so bad. We'll look at using the extract function to create chops in the next tutorial.

What's Next?

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