ELECTRO BASS LINES

by Francis Preve

Starting in the underground and now infecting hip-hop and mainstream pop, the genre called electro combines elements of greasy funk and grimy synths. This booty-shaking, floor-stomping sound is one reason that artists like Wolfgang Gartner and deadmau5 sell out massive clubs and work the main stage at Coachella. Here's how you can whip up electro's signature wobbly, raw bass lines using the synths in Propellerhead Reason, plus your DAW of choice. **k**

**Hear audio examples at keyboardmg.com/how-to.**

Step 1. Start by making the classic electro bass synth patch — generally a sawtooth with a bit of added subs and the filter wide open. Starting with the Init patch on Reason's Subtractor synth, turn on both oscillators and set the filter and amp envelope sustain to maximum. Set oscillator 1 to a sawtooth and oscillator 2 to a sine wave one octave lower. Then, adjust the oscillator mix to the right blend of sizzle and subs.
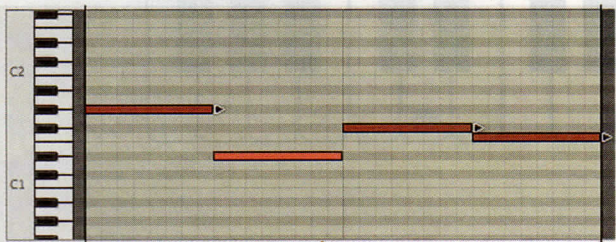
Step 2. Make a simple two- or three-note bass sequence. Use quarter- or half-notes, and don't worry at all about the rhythm — we'll deal with that in step 4. Just get the notes recorded, render the sequence as audio, and save it some place where you can easily locate it.

Step 3. Choose a single note from your original sequence and make a new sequence that's a sustained four-measure drone on that note. Set the LFO to a triangle wave controlling both oscillators, and create a big wobble. Experiment with different rates, like eighth- or quarter-note sweeps. Be sure to match Reason's tempo to that of your audio track — 128 is common for electro tracks. Again, render the audio and keep track of the resulting file.
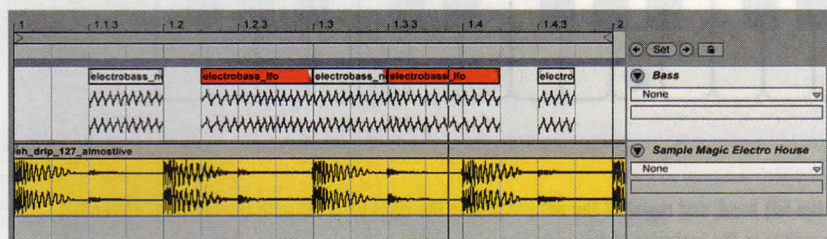
Step 4. Now we're ready to make the bass line. Import both files into your DAW and place them on the same track. Using your DAW's editing tools, snip small segments from each file and re-edit them to form a new one- or two-measure bass line. Use the notes from the first file as the musical content, and the swoops from the LFO-based second file for the pitch wiggles.

Step 5. Time to add effects! Filtering and distortion are a great place to start. Here, we rolled off a touch of the highs to make room for the distortion, then applied a fairly extreme amount of Ableton's Saturator device. The drum loop came from Sample Magic's excellent *Electro-House* library, available at bigfishaudio.com.