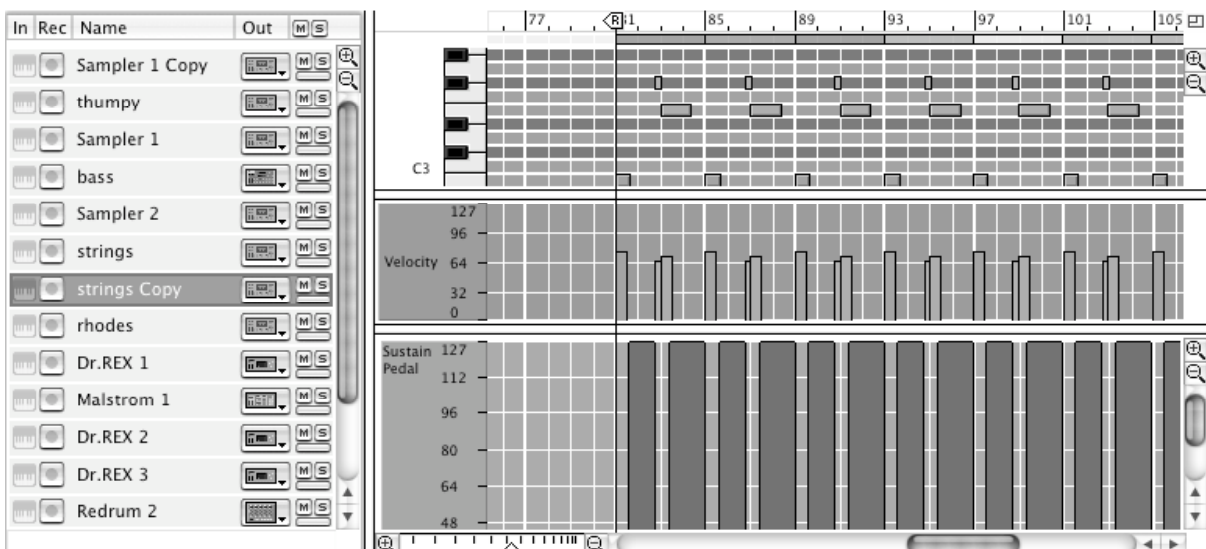


Recording



After a couple of hours spent playing with Reason you will probably have created your first tune. As is sometimes the case with software, there are often several ways of achieving the same things, and you can choose the one that suits you best. For example, it can be easier when making electronic or dance music to enter note information by hand using the pen tool, as you can create sequences and patterns that would be impossible to play by hand. By using a sustain pedal with your MIDI keyboard you can achieve more realistic piano and string sequences. In fact most traditionally keyboard-based patches benefit from the addition of a sustain pedal. For more experienced keyboard players it is fairly essential to have one. If you don't have one, the Edit mode lets you draw in sustain by hand, as well as a number of other parameters such as velocity, pitch and even breath control. This is covered in more detail in the preceding chapter.

Figure 6.1
Edit mode allows you to draw sustain data in by hand, or edit it if it has already been recorded



If your MIDI keyboard has realtime controllers on it, Reason will read and remember any changes you make with them as it records. Reason 3 has the Remote system which allows you to control several devices from multiple keyboards or controllers at the same time, and record automation for them.

MIDI data exists independently of any instruments. Because of this, you can

move or copy any notes in the sequencer to any track and have them played back by any instrument. This is useful for creating unusual passages – say, a piano part played back by a drum machine, and also for having several modules play exactly the same notes at the same time. At the other end of the scale, you can also import ready-made MIDI files created in other programs and simply reassign instruments to play them back.

Figure 6.2 (right)

Reason supports the import of MIDI files. You can re-assign instruments to play the tracks

MIDI information is basically a standard format, and so a MIDI file exported from one program should work in another. However, some programs will not support every parameter in the exported files. For instance, when exporting MIDI from Cubase SX to Reason, certain parts like VST instrument automation will not be translated, as there are no VST instruments in Reason.

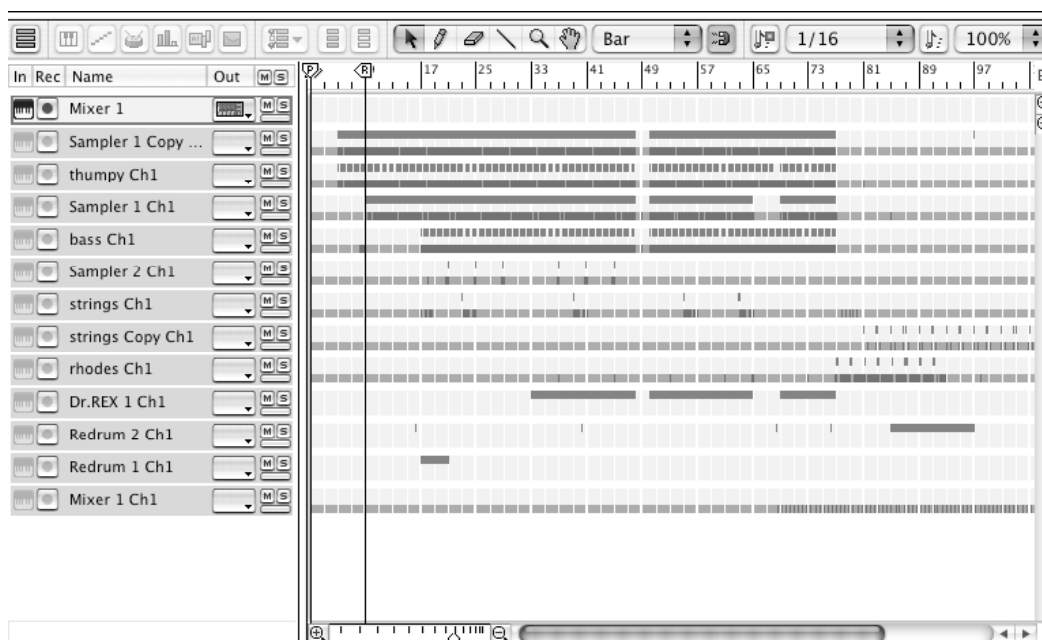
MIDI files tend to contain note data but not Reason specific instrument data. If you import a MIDI file into Reason it will bring note data into the sequencer, as well as controller data like pitch bend, volume and mod wheel, but will not automatically load up the relevant modules and patches.

If you are sharing files with other Reason users, use Reason song files rather than Standard MIDI files unless you specifically only need note or controller data to be sent.



Figure 6.3

Importing a standard MIDI file into an empty project will bring note data and sequencer tracks but will not load up any instruments



As you create instruments in the rack, they appear as a list in the sequencer. In Reason 2.5, by selecting an instrument and clicking the 'In' column next to it, a MIDI plug icon appears and that instrument receives MIDI. In Reason 3, the track which has the keyboard icon lit is the one that will receive MIDI from the master keyboard. Other keyboards can be assigned to other modules, as described below.

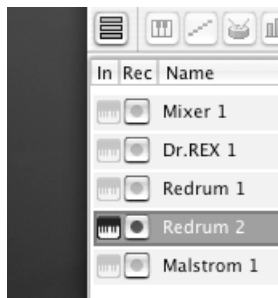


Figure 6.4

The lit keyboard icon means MIDI input is being directed to that track

If you are playing loop-based rather than freeform music, setting the left and right markers and activating the loop button will cause Reason to cycle continuously between the two points. There are two record modes – replace and overdub. In replace mode, Reason will get to the end of a cycle, start the loop again and delete the existing notes as it goes over them. Overdub adds to the loop as it goes round again, keeping and playing back the original notes as you go over them. This is handy for building complex loops, and is the mode most commonly used in practice.

Recording to a click track – at least until you have recorded a drum or rhythmic part for reference – will make your life much easier. Even if you are just improvising with a piano sound, if you capture a moment of genius it's much easier to then build the part into a song if it's been recorded in time with the tempo of the project. Use the click level knob under the click on/off button to alter the volume of the click. The click track plays a high note, then three lower ones. The high note signifies the first beat of the bar.

Info

If you are recording in a loop and you don't like what you just recorded, you don't have to stop playback and delete the notes. Leave play and record running and just hit backspace on the keyboard. All the notes on that track within the loop will be deleted so you can have another go without breaking your flow.

Quantizing

Even experienced musicians can find it difficult to play precisely in time with a mechanical click track for the duration of several bars. After you have recorded notes in, some of them may be slightly (or wildly) out of sync with the click. As MIDI information is just a set of instructions, it can be made to behave how you want. In this case, you want to pull the notes into alignment with the grid. This process is called quantizing. It's often easier to see the results of quantizing by switching to the Edit view, where the notes can be seen much more clearly. By selecting a quantize value (1/16 is often a safe bet) with your notes selected and pressing the quantize button, Reason will snap the notes to the nearest grid positions, bringing them into time. For more complex passages, more unusual quantize values are available.

Info

Tempo changes in imported MIDI files are ignored.

Info

When you export a MIDI file from Reason, it will be of type 1. This means it contains one MIDI track for each track in Reason's sequencer. Track names and sequencer tempo are also included.

Figure 6.5

Overdub and replace record modes



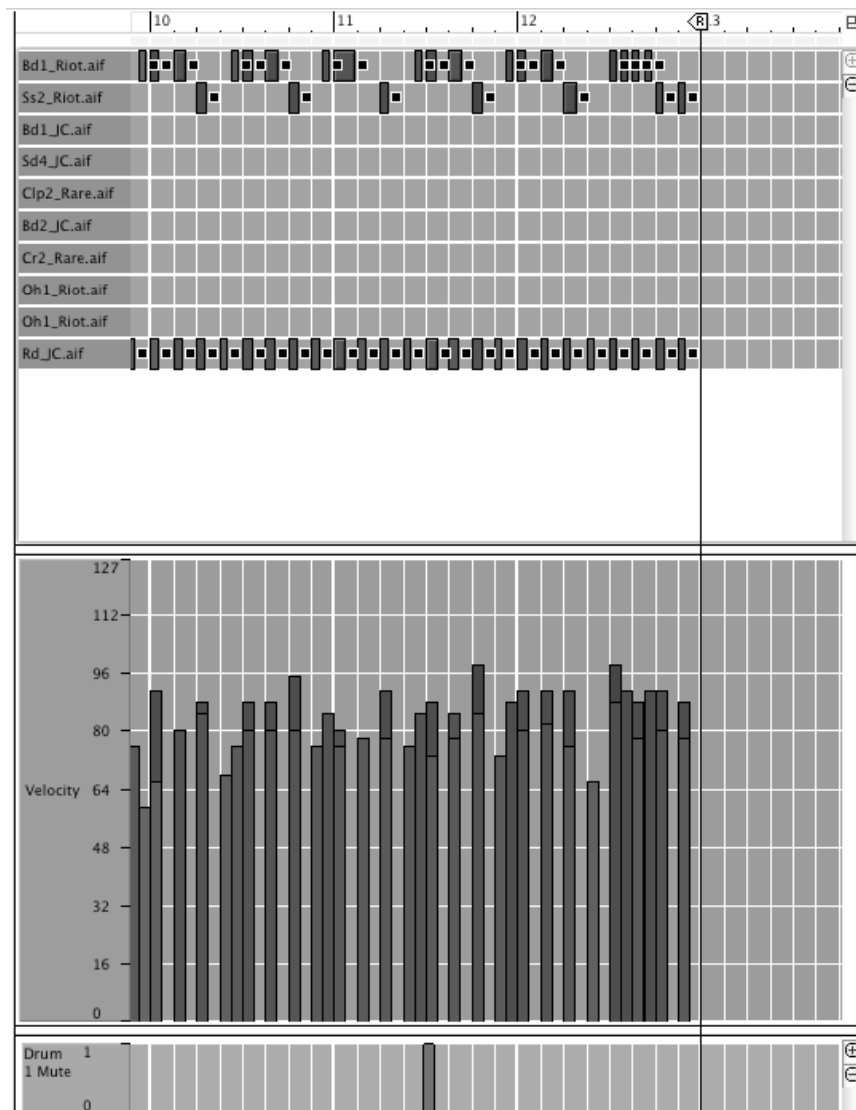
Figure 6.6

Recording to a click track is usually essential if you have no other rhythmic parts for reference

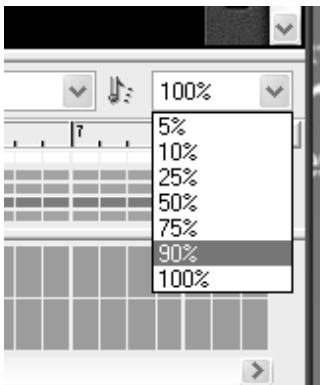


Figure 6.7

It's easier to see the effects of quantizing notes in Edit view

**Figure 6.8**

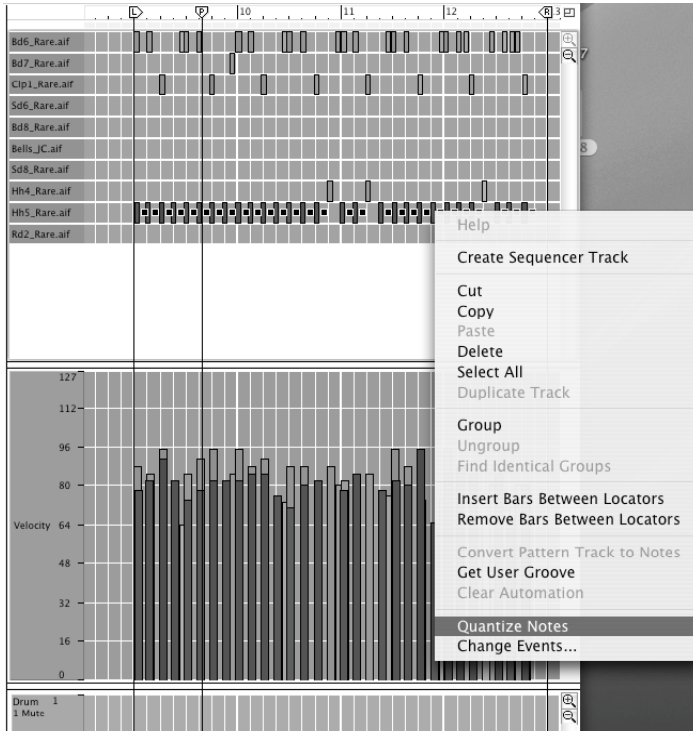
Use the Quantize Amount control to stay in time but retain a natural feel to the music



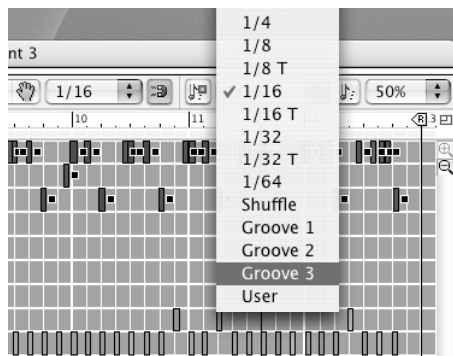
A problem with quantizing is that it can make music, especially instruments like pianos, sound mechanical and a little too perfect. Luckily Reason has a Quantize Amount control, which lets you set just how strictly the notes are made to conform. Using a value of around 50 per cent balances out accuracy with a natural feel. There is also a button called Quantize Notes During Recording which if activated will snap notes to the grid as they are recorded. This can be useful for deliberately rhythmic parts like drums or synths, but can sound too regimented for other types of instrument. Remember you can always quantize after recording.

You can quantize individual notes or types of notes within a track. For example, say you have a ReDrum part that you've just played in by hand. You may want to quantize the hi-hats to a strict 1/16 setting, but the bass and snare to something a bit more fluid to maintain a funky feel. To do this, enter Edit mode and view the

Drum Lane (which should be visible by default). You can see the drum part arranged in a grid. Draw around the hi-hats to select them and then set the quantize value to 1/16 and press the quantize button. The hi-hats are snapped, but the other parts of the beat are not. Then you can draw around the other parts by track or as a group, and quantize them as you want, or not at all. Snapping to lower values may actually reduce the number of notes you hear by regimenting them to stick to a certain subdivision of beats. For example, quantizing to 1/2 will snap notes to every other beat.



The Shuffle and Groove quantize settings apply snapping with a preset amount of swing in it. These can be useful for funky, shuffling beats which are still in time but less mechanical. Experimenting with them can produce interesting results.



Tip

If you quantize a group of notes it will change colour to show that it is different to the others around it. If a group has already been quantized and you try to quantize it again using the same settings, nothing will happen.

Figure 6.9

Quantize different notes using different values. In this example, just the hi-hats within a drum pattern

Tip

If you need to get really precise with notes, enter Edit mode and zoom in on the notes you want to edit. Switching to 1/64 quantize lets you snap notes marginally one way or the other. Turning off Snap to Grid gives you the freedom to move notes or groups of notes without Reason trying to pull them into time at all.

Tip

If you have a 'hit' in a song – say, a sample that needs to be triggered right at the beginning of a bar, quantize it using the Bar setting, and it will be snapped to the right place.

Figure 6.10

The more unusual quantize presets allow for more natural 'swing' when snapping