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Tony Morra's Tried-and-True Drum Recording Chain

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Morra's kit

Nashville drummer Tony Morra developed his signature recording techniques through experimentation, observation and brainstorming with Nashville engineer Steve Marcantonio. Morra records directly to Digital Performer 4 through a 24 IO interface. The signal chain, used in the accompanying recording example on this page, featured the following drums, mics and signal path to achieve stellar results.

Drums:

DW Drums set on a 6' x 8' area rug

Evans Drumheads: Toms and Snare, G1 top coated, bottom clear

Kick 16x24

Toms 8"x10", 9"x12", 14"x14" and 16"x16"

5 1/2 x14 Brass snare



View from inside the kick

Paiste Cymbals:

15" Dimensions power hats

17" 2002 crash medium
18" 2002 crash medium
10" splash Signature series
8" splash Signature series
20" Dimensions Full Ride
20" 2002 crash medium

Microphones and Signal Path

Kick inside: D112 placed to the right of center (audience perspective), 4" from the head and pointed towards the beater.

Kick outside: D112 outside positioned halfway between the center of the drum and the floor. For a more resonant sound, he places the outside mic very close to the front head, for a more boomy sound, he moves the mic back 6" to 8" and uses a blanket and a Djembe stand to build a tunnel around the front of the drum.

Kick Signal path (both): Avedis 1122 preamp, API 550A (boosting 100Hz, cutting 400Hz), Distressor (w/out British mods, minimal compression), MOTU 24 IO



For a boomy sound, Morra placed a AKG D112 6 to 8 inches away from the kick and put it inside a tunnel built out of a blanket and Djembe stand.

Snare Top: Shure SM57

Snare Bottom: Audio Technica AT4041 (polarity flipped)

Snare Signal path (top): Avedis 1122 preamp, API 550A (boosting 250Hz), Distressor (w/out British mods, minimal compression) , MOTU 24 IO; **(bottom)** Trident S100 mixer, MOTU 24 IO

Toms: Audio Technica ATM25

Tom Signal Path: Trident S100 mixer, MOTU 24 IO

Hi-Hat: Audio Technica AT4041

Hi-Hat Signal Path: Trident S100 mixer, MOTU 24 IO

Overheads: Neumann KM184

Overhead Signal Path: Avalon VT737sp (minimal compression, cut midrange EQ depending on kit and boost top end EQ), MOTU 24 IO

Room Mics: Studio Projects C3 (placed 8' back in the far corners of the room facing the drums near the floor)

Room Mic Signal Path: Trident S100 Mixer, (2) dbx 160 compressors

For an ambience track, Morra takes pre-fader room mic feeds and send them to a TC Electronic M300 using the Ambience program and records that 100% wet as an additional stereo feed.