# Using Effects

By Eddy Mentzel

For this session you will need a laptop, tablet or phone which is connected to the internet. Headphone's are advisable but not essential.

In this session we are going to be experimenting with **effects**; the ways we can control a sound to make it have more impact or manipulate it into something entirely different. We can use effects in really creative ways; to create something totally unique, to liven up a dull sound, to gradually introduce a musical part, to help an instrument feature more prominently or to make it feel more 'background'. Effects can be subtle or extreme. They can be 'automated' to change over time adding further complexity and musical interest to your productions. Oh, and one other thing…effects can be seriously fun to play around with!

To do: Open https://www.bandlab.com/ in your browser on your phone, tablet or laptop. If you have problems using the link search for **'Bandlab'** on Google. **Login** to your account and click on **'Create'** to begin a new project. *Please note: Details of how to do this can be found in the 'Song Structures' session.*
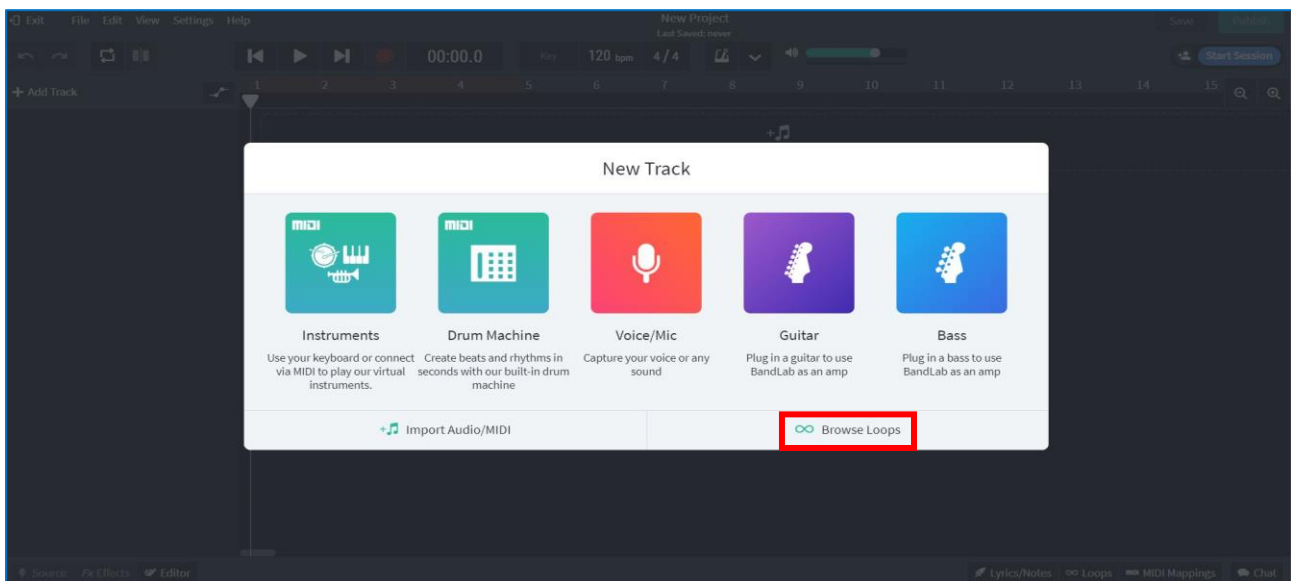

To do: Click on the **'Browse Loops'**, as highlighted in red on the image above, and open up the bank of loops.
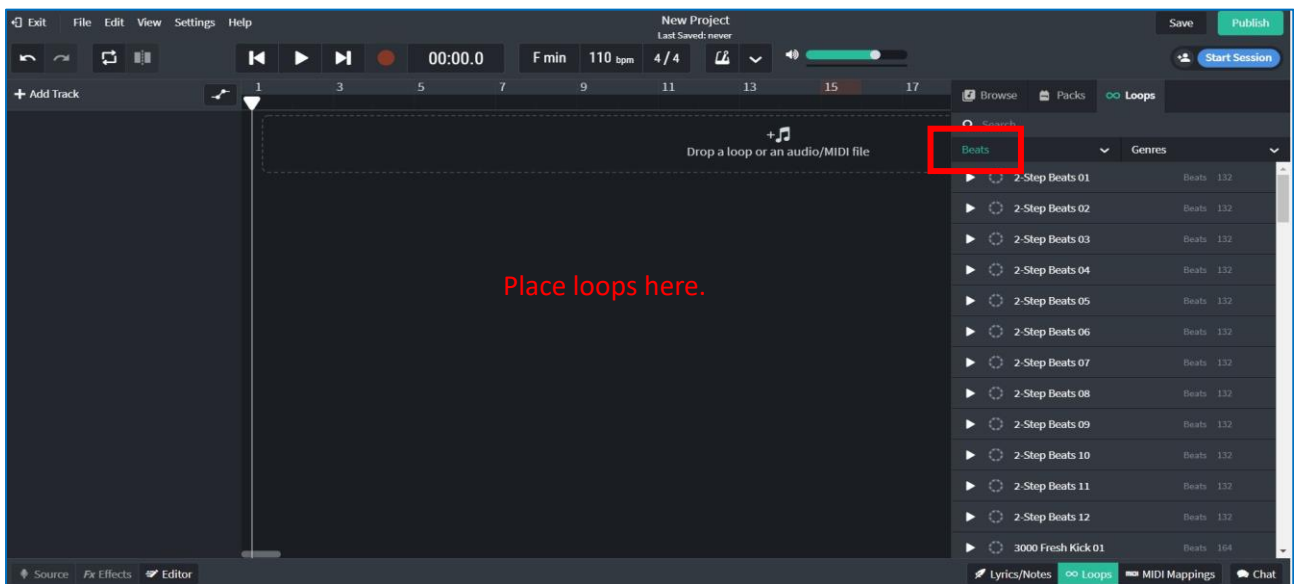
To do: Select the **'Beats'** category from the **'Instruments'** drop-down menu, as highlighted in red on the image above. Choose a drum loop you would like to use and drag it into your project.

Please note: for this particular tutorial, try selecting a drum loop that has lots going on so that you can hear the changes the effects are making more clearly. In my example I chose the loop 'Afrobeat Drums 20'.
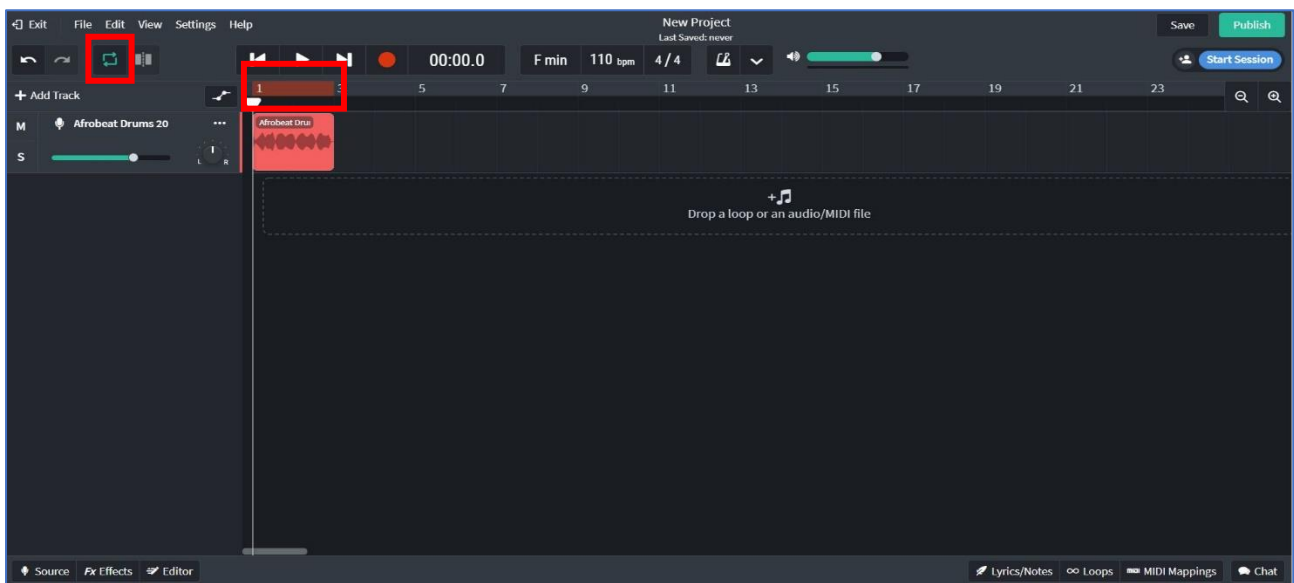
Once you have inserted your drum loop you will need to create a continuous loop; this will save you having to keep pressing play whilst you are playing around with the effects.

To do: Click the **'Cycle'** button, as highlighted in red on the image above. You will see a red bar appear, which can be dragged to set loop start and end points. Move this bar to start and end in line with your selected drum loop; when you press play, it will now continuously loop until you press stop.

We can now begin to explore adding an effect to the drum loop.
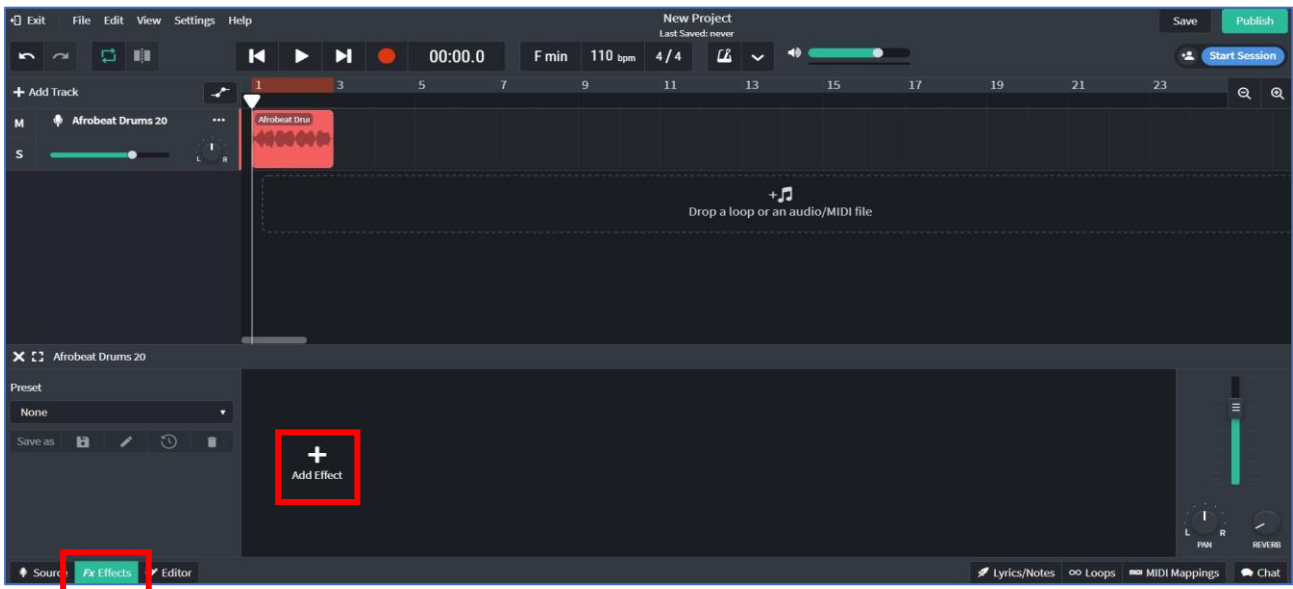
To do: Click the **'FX Effects'** button at the bottom left of your screen, as highlighted in the image above. This will open a strip at the bottom of the page where you can add effects by clicking **'Add Effect'**. You have lots of effects to choose from to alter your loop, some of the more common ones I have detailed below;

Distortion – distorts the sound, giving it a more aggressive feel.

*Delay – repeats the sound a number of times (like an echo).*

Reverb – puts the sound in a space, such as a cathedral or hall.

Filter – boosts or cuts frequencies that make up the sound.

Chorus – mixes in a second or third version of the sound that is being modulated.

EQ – adjusts the frequencies that make up the sound.

Compressor – squeezes the sound, making the louder and quieter parts more matched.
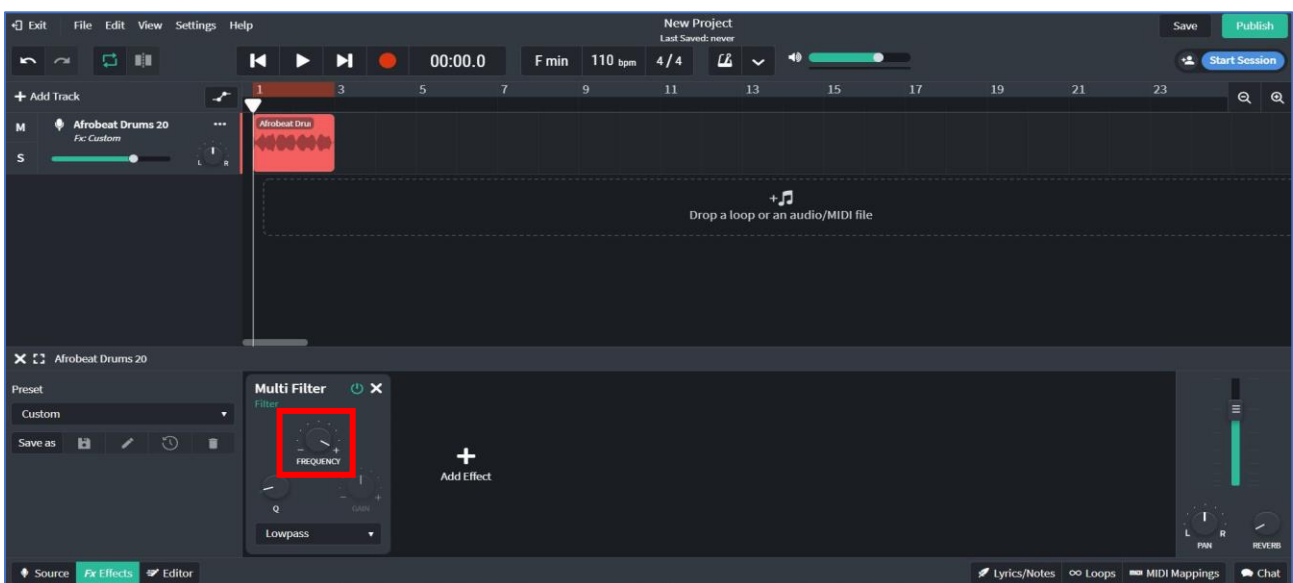

To do: Click **'Add Effect'**, then choose **'Tone'** from the menu and select **'Multi Filter'**. Whilst your loop is playing, move the **'Frequency'** dial, as highlighted in the image above. Hear how it changes the sound?

The filter is taking out all of the frequencies above whatever range you select. So, the lower the dial the less high frequencies in the sound are heard and the more 'muffled' it becomes.

Filters are particularly effective when 'automated'. Automation is where we make a dial, such as the 'Frequency' dial, move automatically.
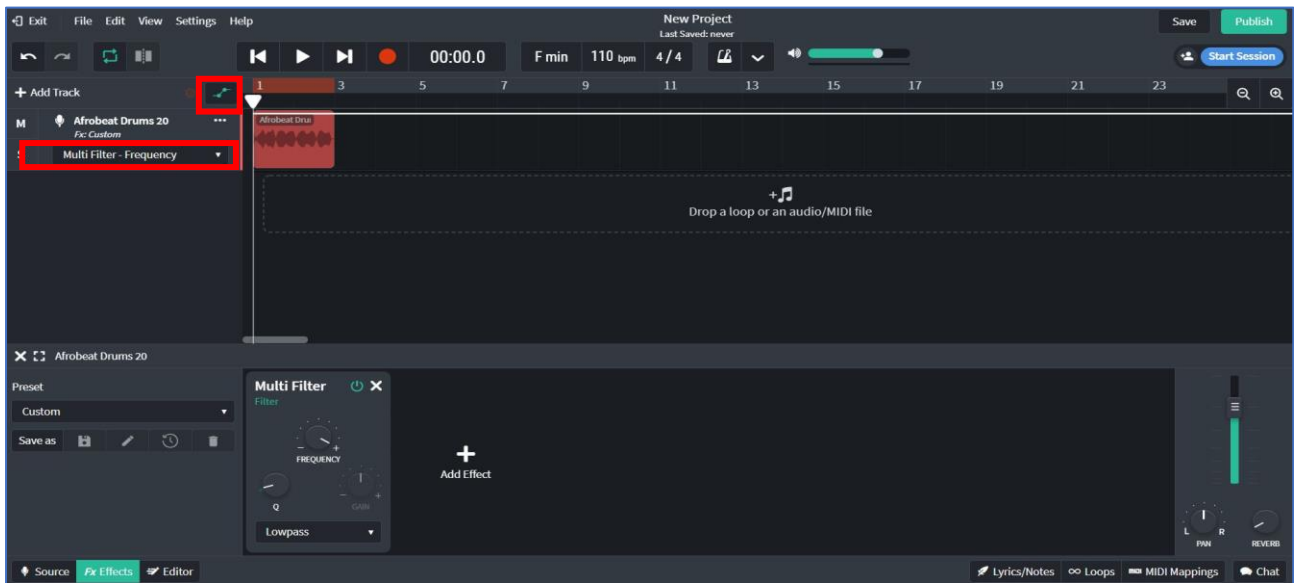

To do: Click on the **'Automation'** button then, from the drop-down menu, select **'Multi Filter - Frequency'**. These have both been highlighted in the image above. You can now start adding in points on the white line, which represent movements on the frequency dial.
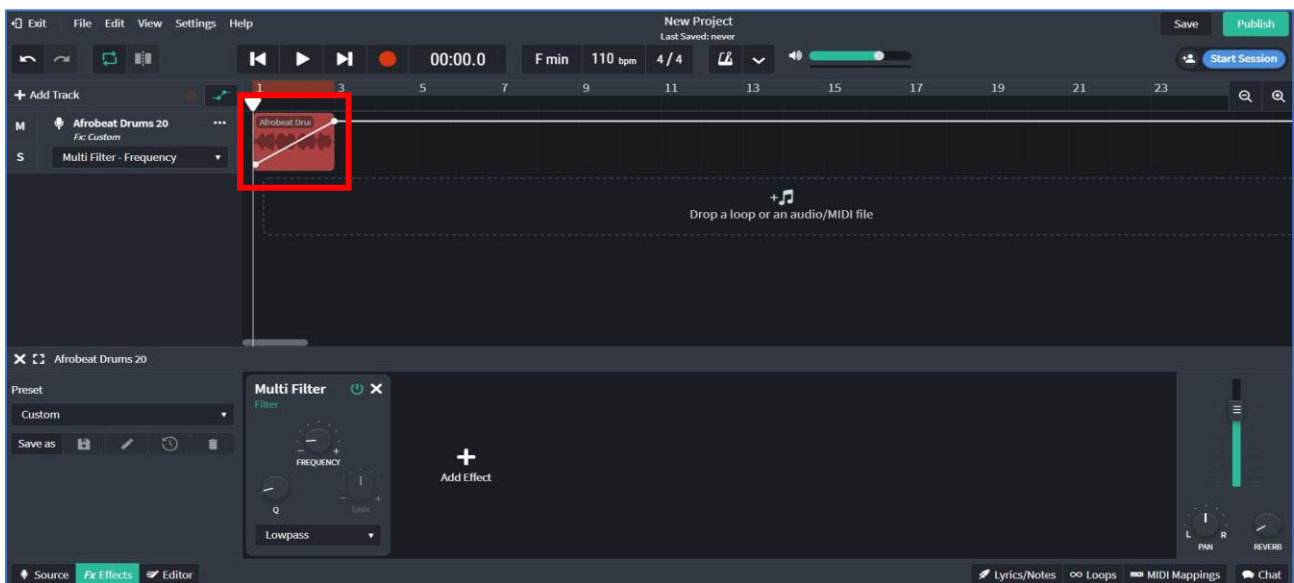
To do: Add a dot by at the beginning and end of your loop by clicking on the white line, then create a slope by pulling the first dot lower than the second. Your line should look similar to mine in the image above. Now, press your space bar to play the loop. You will now hear the 'Frequency' dial moving from low to high on its own. You can add further dots if you wish to create more complex dial movements.

This kind of automation can be used to move the majority of the buttons within the available effects.
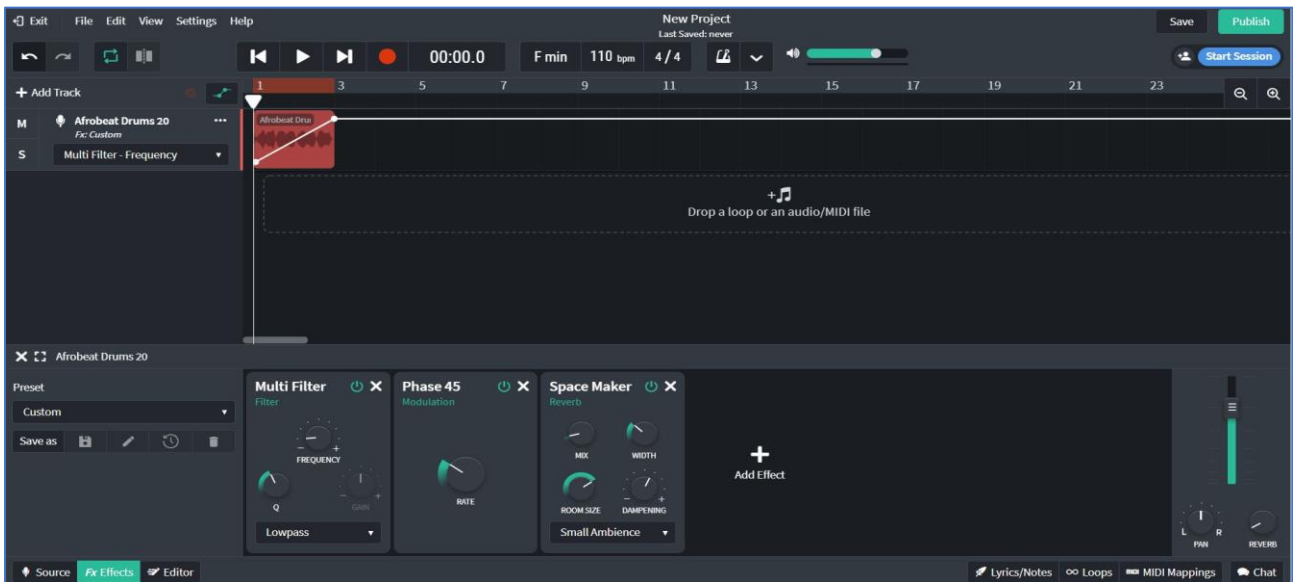
To do: Try adding further channel effects to change your sound further, as I have done in the image above. You may choose to automate dials on these effects too. Stacking effects is a great way of creating something really colourful and unique!

Quick tip: the order that your effects play can drastically change the sound, try moving the effects you are using into a different order.

Effects can be added to any sound, so don't just stop at your drum loop! Why not try adding some other loops and warping their sound too?

Effects are great for adding interest to your tracks and for getting really creative with your sound palette. Add some life and character to your loops, to your voices and to your instruments. Spice up your productions and, most importantly, create your own sound!