

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a DJ performing at a turntable. The DJ is seen from the side, wearing a dark shirt and a headband. The turntable and mixer are visible in the foreground, with a white cup and a bottle on the table. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a club or festival setting.

beatport. SOUNDS

Pro Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

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Not widely thought of as the sexiest of effects, reverb and delay can be used in all kinds of creative ways to introduce both subtle shades and striking color to a mix. Bruce Aisher delivers his latest series of pro walkthroughs.



Pro Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

Digital reverb plays two key roles in music production: giving specific sounds a sonic character and helping individual parts sit better in the mix.

Used in these ways, reverb is an incredibly powerful tool; using reverb to create depth in a mix is a skill in itself. But reverb can also be used as a creative effect, bringing life and interest to a mix.

The tools at our disposal for the following walkthroughs will be:

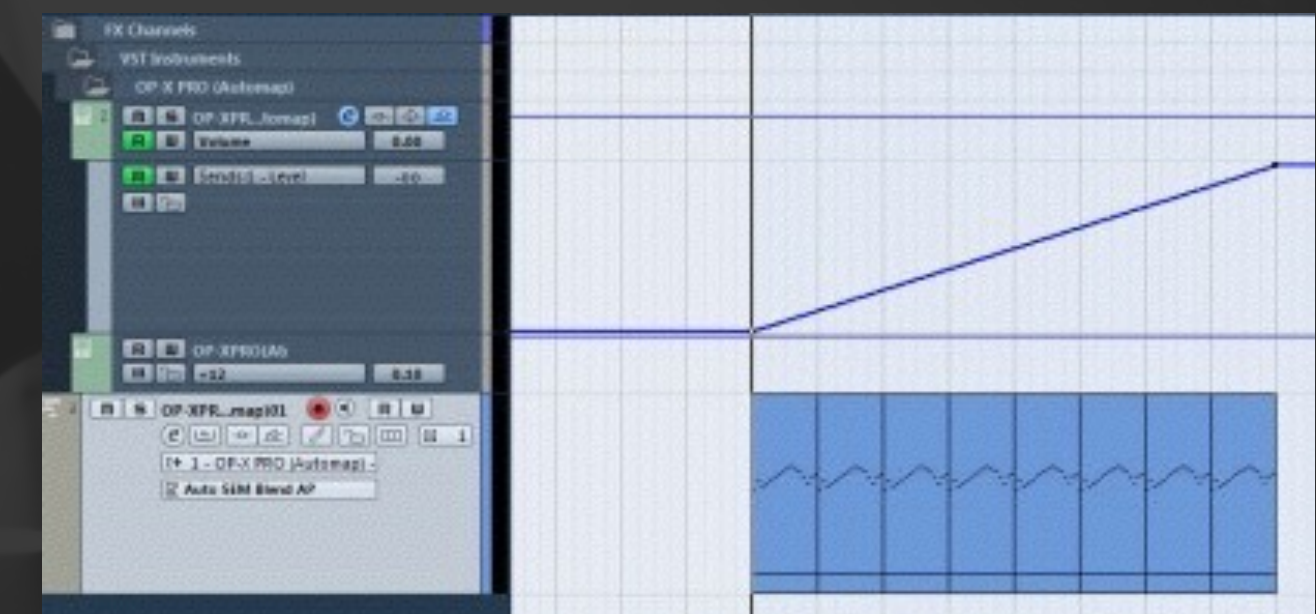
- Delay plugins (even a simple mono delay will work, but one with a few filtering and modulation options makes things more interesting)
- Reverb plugins (the algorithmic, rather than impulse response variety tends to be more flexible, but start with one with which you are familiar)

The other essential tool for many of the examples is the DAW's in-built parameter automation, so if you aren't already familiar with this side of music production, then now's the time to dive in.

Pro-Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

- **Automated Reverb Build**

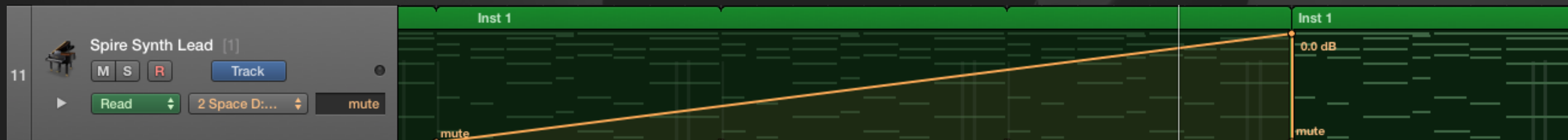
- One of the simplest and most effective reverb effects is the now near-ubiquitous reverb build. The effect is easily achieved using a quality reverb plugin and your DAW's native automation capabilities.
- To achieve the effect, start by opening a new reverb on a group / bus track. The reverb needs to have a long (slowly decaying) tail; try chamber or hall settings or even long plates. Adjust the low frequency decay to remove the lows (if available) in order to minimize muddiness. If this isn't possible, then insert a high-pass filter before (or even after) the reverb. The TC Classic Reverb to the right offers beautifully smooth tails.
- When you've got a verb setting that you like, start adding reverb using the synth track's FX 'send' control. Using a track's send allows you to control how much of the synth audio is sent to the reverb processor. The final step, and the one which creates the ever-building reverb wall, is to draw in an automation curve, or diagonal line, on the synth track from 0 to maximum (or near-maximum) send.



Pro Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

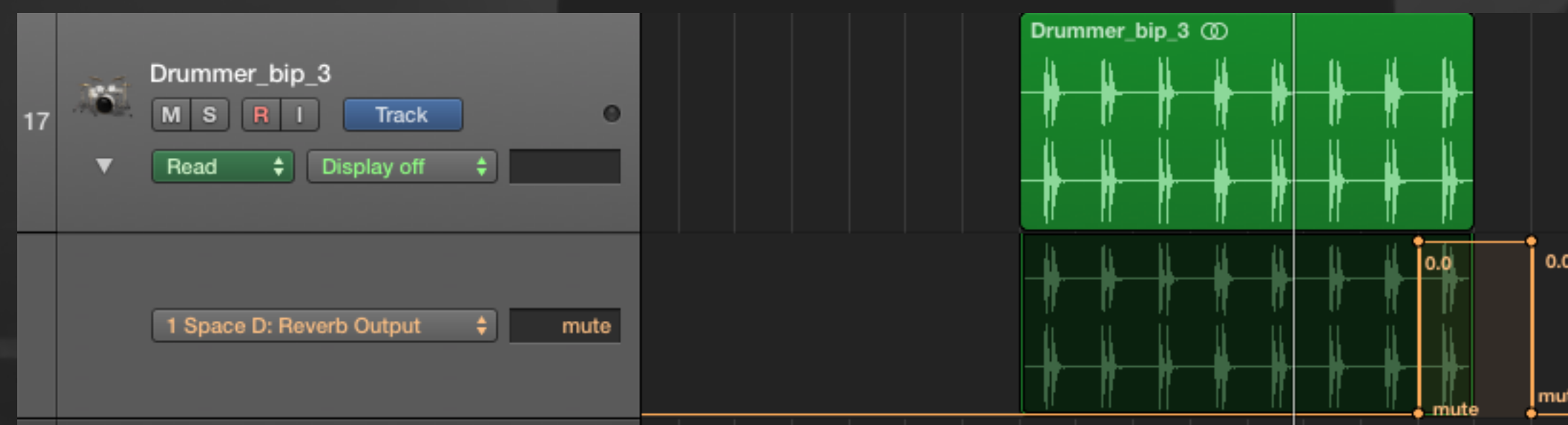
- **Automated Reverb Build**

- Once the drawn automation is in place, ensure that the automation plays-back OK (it will usually need to be write or read-enabled).
- The result is a synth part that gets ever-more swamped in reverb. When the synth part drops out, the reverb creates an ambient halo as the tail fades away.
- This effect works best on mid and higher frequency sounds as they don't clutter the mix as much as reverb-drenched bass elements, but it's worth experimenting with anything from vocals to percussive elements, pads to synth top-lines.



Pro Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

- **Percussive Reverb Hits**
 - A second trick, which has gained popularity among minimal and tech-house producers, is to use subtle and occasionally not-so-subtle reverb splashes to pick out selected drum and percussive hits to add interest and variation to a groove.
 - The trick works by using automation in a similar way to above, but only on select single hits. The classic example is on the first kick drum of a breakdown.
 - A more subtle refinement of this technique is to use it on snare or clap hits on the last downbeat of a bar. Mid-length reverb treatments work better here.
 - The same technique is equally useful during rolling grooves to introduce subtle shades of sonic color: just pick out individual hits, feed them to the send and then let the verb tail roll into the groove. Try side-chaining the tail to make it breathe in time with the wider rhythm.
 - You may find that automating the reverb send on/off status (rather than the level) makes things a little easier when handling short hits.



Pro Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

- **Vocal Delay & Reverb Spin Effects**
 - Spot FX also work by using delays like reverb. If you're looking to make different sections of a track flow together, then delay spot FX are a useful tool to throw into the mix.
 - Vocal sections can be neatly rounded-off with an automated feedback delay effect. Add a delay plugin to a bus as in the reverb example above. 1/8th or 1/4 note delays work well, as do triplet settings. The feedback should be pushed up to give a noticeable series of repeats. If there is a filter section in the feedback chain, then roll away the low (and high) frequencies to avoid audio clutter.
 - Anything in the tail can be automated – from repeat amounts to delay time (try changing this for some seriously messy builds) to low and high-pass frequency values.

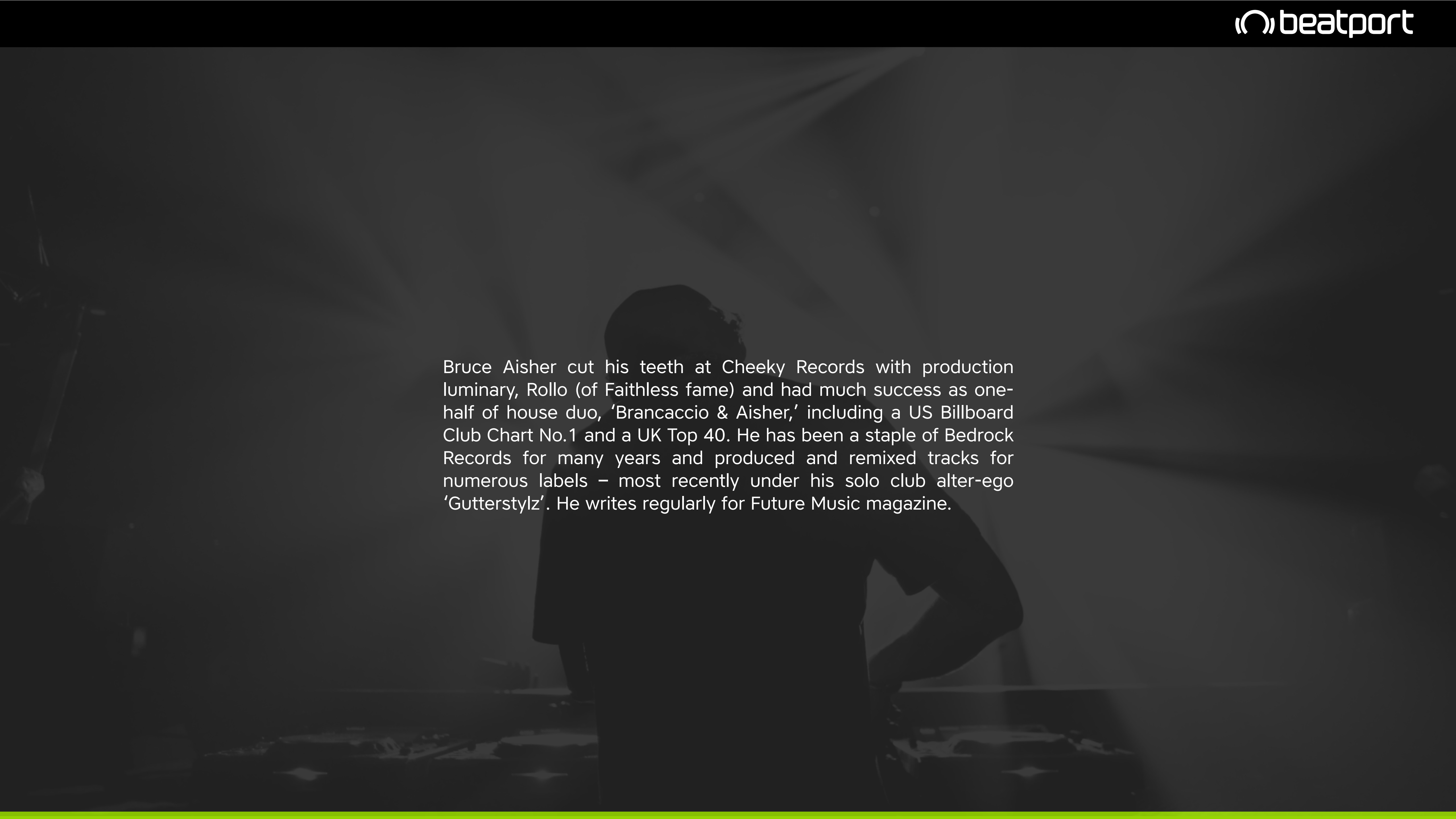
Pro Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

- **Reverse Reverb & Delay**
 - Another classic reverb effect – perhaps THE classic – is the time-honored ‘reverse reverb.’ You know the sound; It’s most commonly heard as a spooky.
 - Reversed reverb leading into a vocal: the classic ‘Poltergeist’ effect. Dating back to the days of multitrack tape, the effect is relatively easy to achieve.
 - Here’s how you get it:
 1. Find the audio that you want to process
 2. Make a copy of it and move it to another track
 3. Reverse the copied audio
 4. Set up a reverb plugin as an insert effect on the new track and set it to 100% effect
 5. Bounce / export the result to a third track
 6. Reverse the newly bounced, reverberated audio
 7. Tweak the start position of the new audio file so that it ‘rises’ into the original unprocessed audio
 8. Job done

You can repeat this process with a delay plugin for similar results. Try experimenting with different delay times, feedback values, and filter settings for a wide variety of effects.

Pro Tips: Reverb & Delay Effects

- **Cause & Effect**
 - The above techniques are great for getting you out of a creative rut; especially when trying to find something to make your arrangement work more seamlessly or add interest to any kind of hook line.
 - Remember that the reverb or delay parameter settings you use will have a dramatic effect on the success (or otherwise) of all of these tips, so spend time experimenting with values before committing to them.
 - Have fun!

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a DJ, Bruce Aisher, silhouetted against a bright, hazy background. He is standing behind a turntable, with his hands on the controls. The scene is dimly lit, with light rays filtering through the air, creating a moody and professional aesthetic.

Bruce Aisher cut his teeth at Cheeky Records with production luminary, Rollo (of Faithless fame) and had much success as one-half of house duo, 'Brancaccio & Aisher,' including a US Billboard Club Chart No.1 and a UK Top 40. He has been a staple of Bedrock Records for many years and produced and remixed tracks for numerous labels – most recently under his solo club alter-ego 'Gutterstylz'. He writes regularly for Future Music magazine.