

FROM LOOP TO SONG

by Lillian Frances

STUCK IN A LOOP?

- Every producer has been there... you make a bangin' four bar loop but then you get stuck building it out into a full song
- Here we are going to break down some approaches for expanding your ideas to create a full song with multiple sections



HOW TO CHANGE A SONG'S ENERGY

- The purpose of a song is to tell a story... and to do that we must build and dissipate the energy as we go
- It's important to be intentional about how the energy ebbs and flows throughout, and how energy shifts from section to section
- Here are the three main ways we can change a song's energy (they are interconnected!)

1. Rhythm

- Faster rhythm/more elements = more energy; slower rhythm/fewer elements = less energy

2. Frequencies

- More frequencies = more energy; less frequencies = less energy

3. Sound

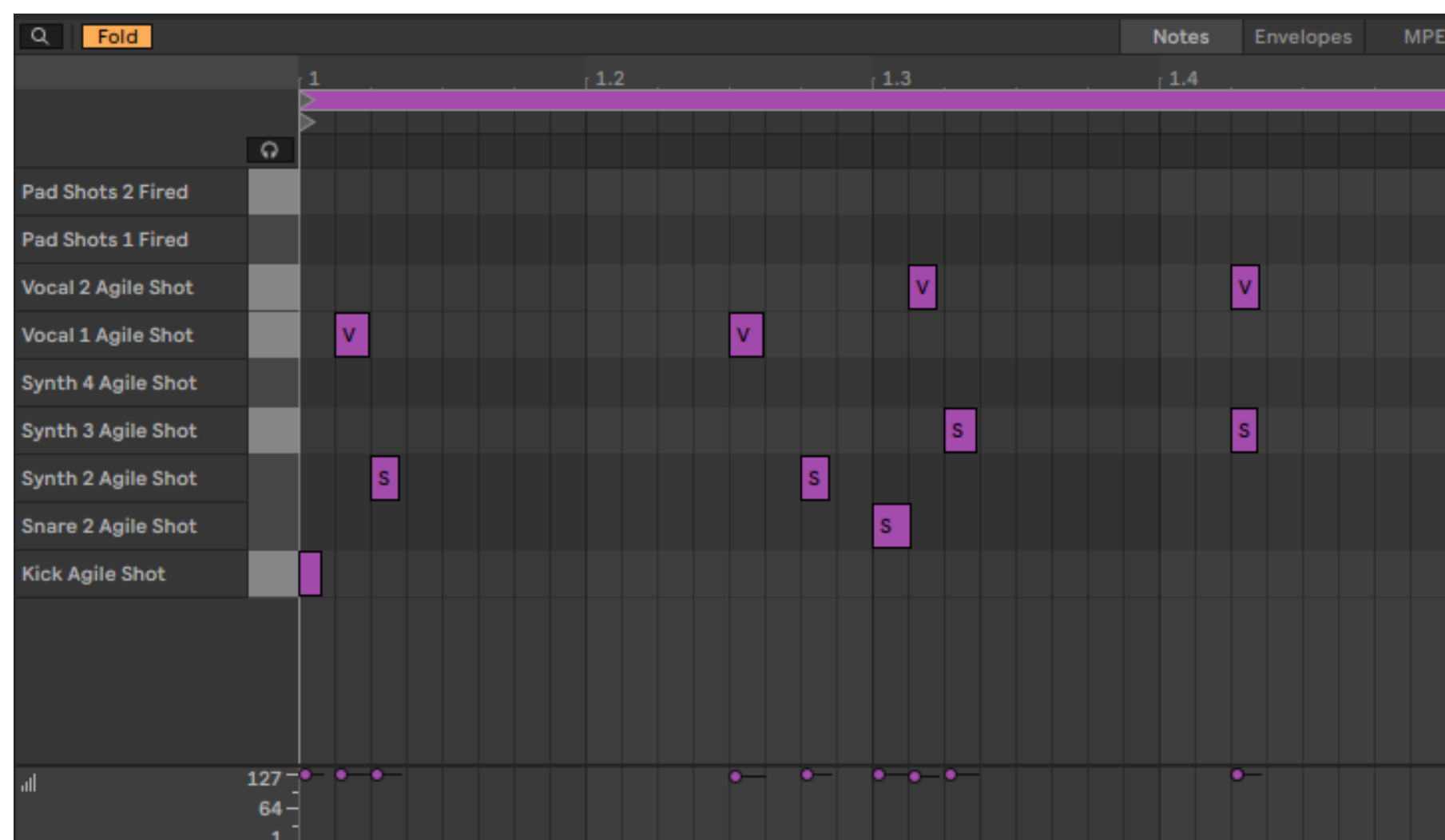
- More sounds = more energy; less sounds = less energy

THE TECHNIQUE

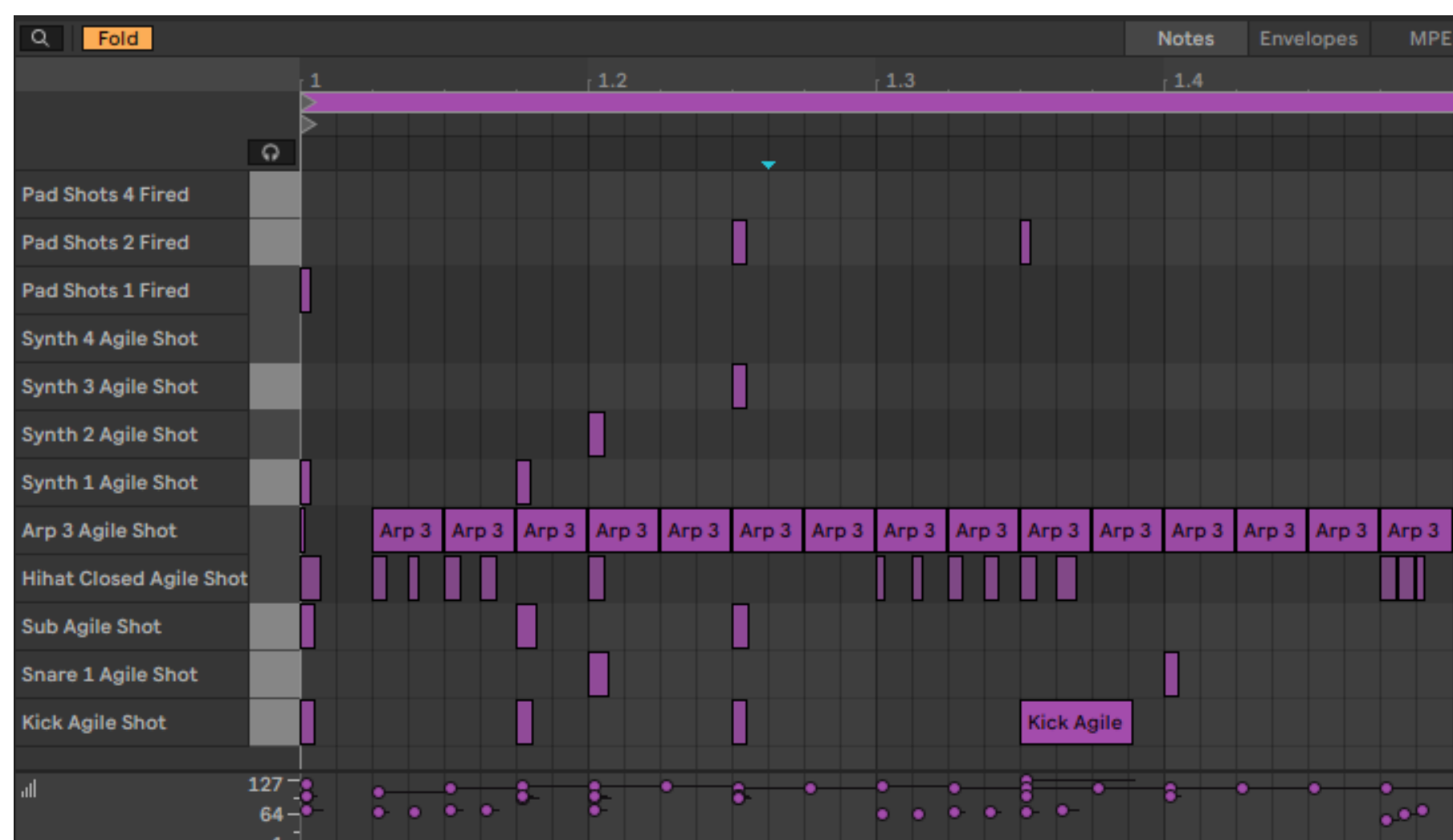
- When I'm at a loss of where to go next, I find that breaking down the song track by track helps
- I will literally go through the song track by track and ask myself for every track:
 - Should I change the rhythm?
 - Should I change the frequency?
 - Should I change the sound?
- By answering these questions for every track, you will be led into creating something new that fits with the vibe of the original section, while also bringing something new to the table
- By the time you get through all the tracks, you'll have a whole new section (if not several)

RHYTHM

- When programming another beat, try to keep the vibe “same, same but different”
 - I.e. you don’t want to go from a house beat to a to a cumbia beat (probably) – so you want to keep the groove similar, but just change it a bit
- You can move, add or take out percussive elements to switch up the beat
- If you have a percussive audio loop, also experiment with some creative audio moves: stretch or compress the loop, pitch it up or down, change the warp mode, reverse it, etc.
- To bring up the energy, create faster rhythms with more elements
- To bring down the energy, create slower rhythms with fewer elements



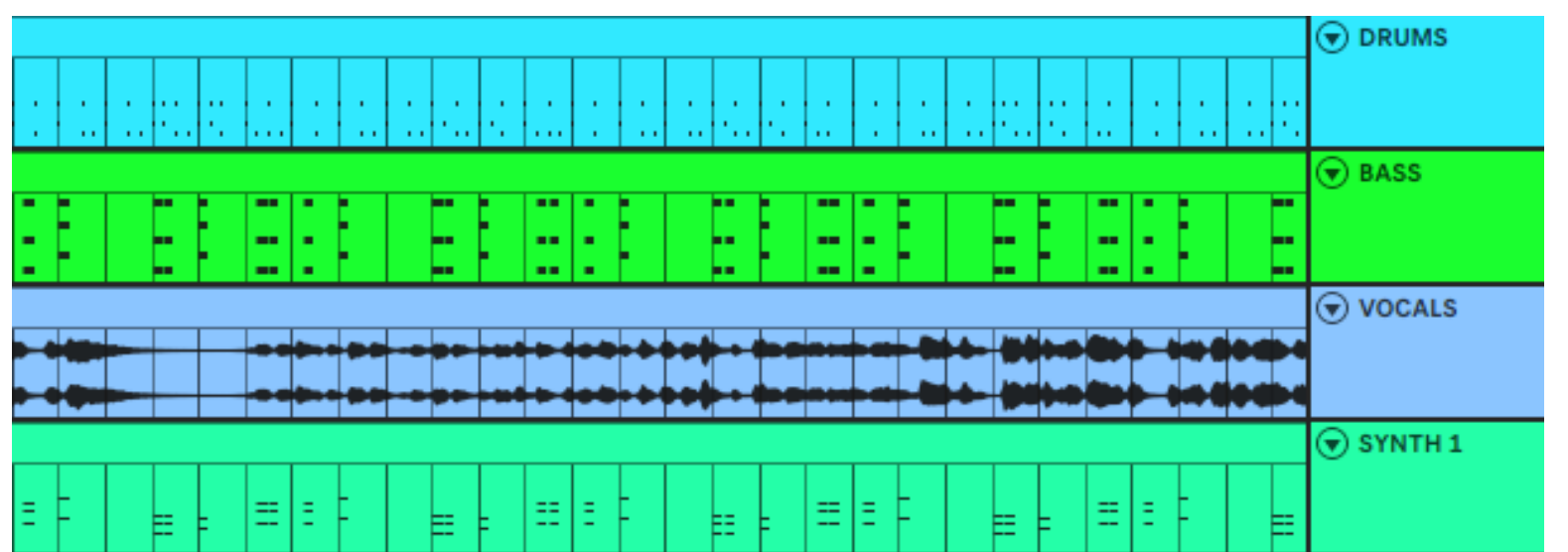
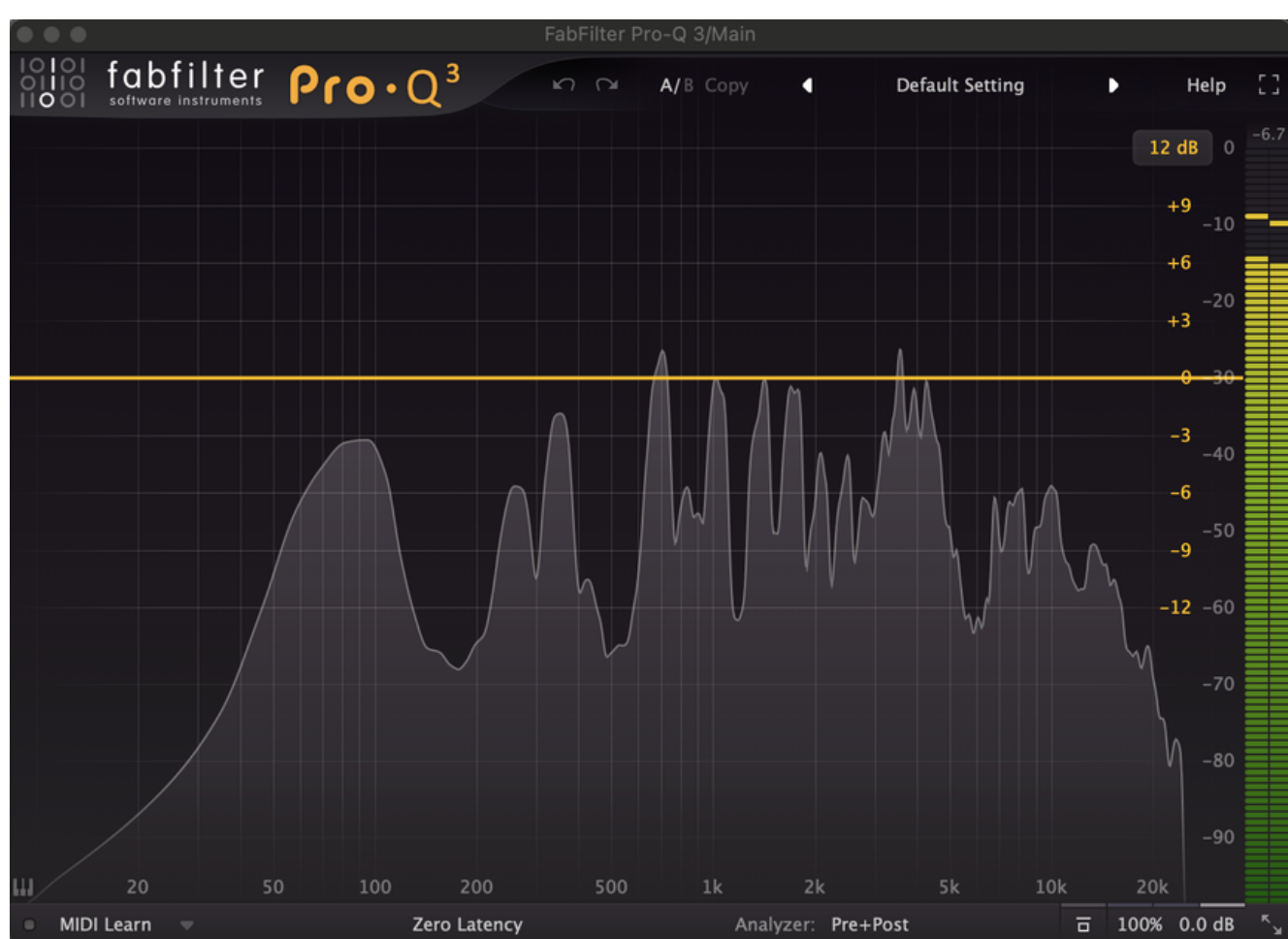
Low energy drums.



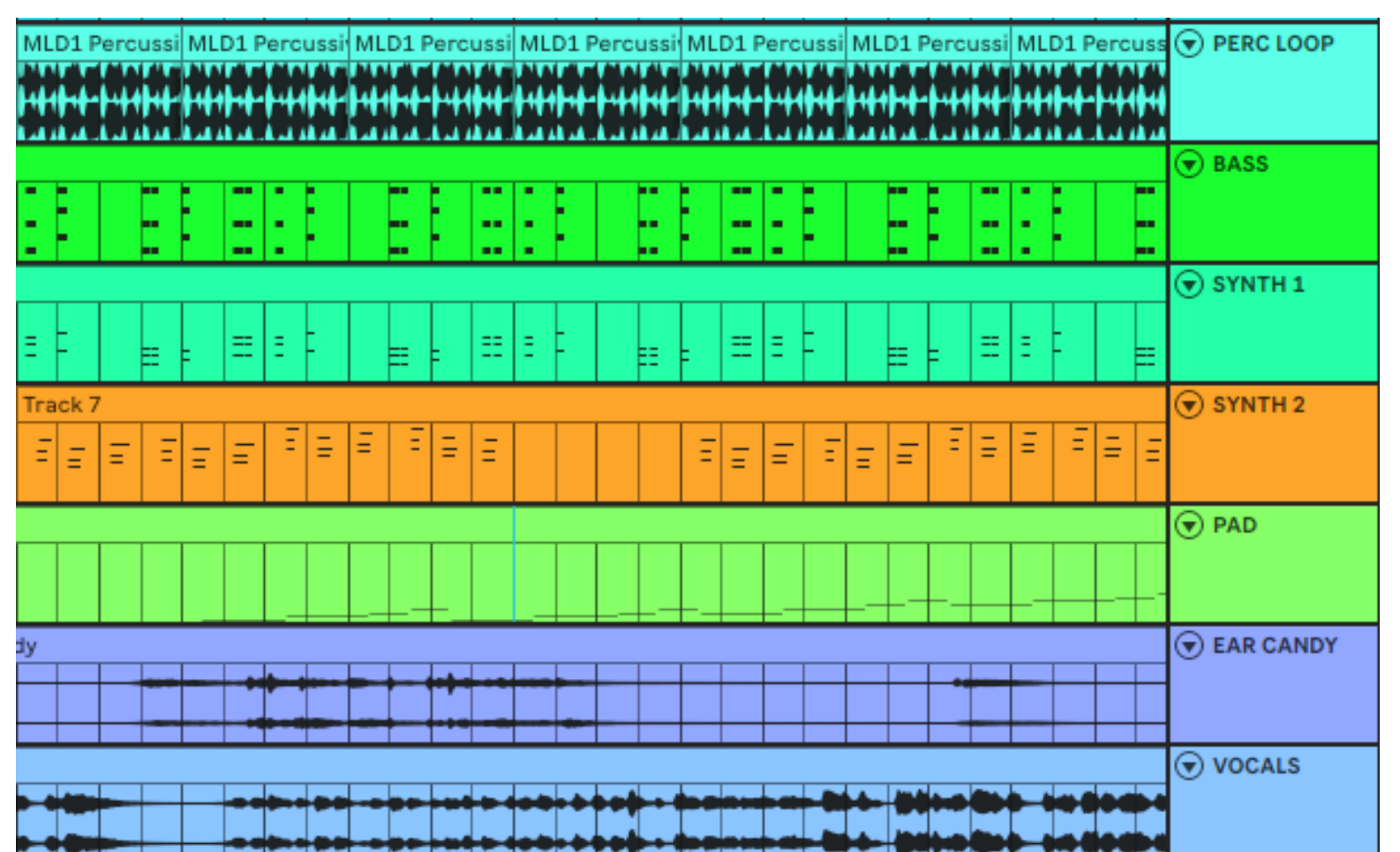
High energy drums.

FREQUENCY

- The frequency makeup of a song can determine how much energy it has
 - When a song is full with sounds from across the frequency spectrum, it feels big and energetic
 - When a song is more sparse (say, just drums, bass and vocals), the energy feels calmer
- Depending on whether you want to bring up or down the energy, you can fill out the frequency spectrum more or less
- Move between sonically full and sonically sparse sections to create dynamics and emotion in your track
- By simply re-pitching or transposing certain sounds/instruments you can access different timbres and fill the frequency spectrum in different ways



Sparse frequency spectrum.



Full frequency spectrum

SOUND

- Similar to frequency, but a slightly different way to conceptualize it
- For every track, you can decide to either:
 1. Take out the sound altogether
 - E.g. you have a piano going in one section, and you take it out and don't replace it with anything for the next
 - Silence is under-rated! When you take out an element, it gives more room for the other elements to shine
 - Just because you're doing "less" doesn't mean this option is inferior to the others!
 2. Choose a new instrument
 - This could be any software synth, or a new instrument you record in
 3. Create a new instrument out of sounds you already have in your track
 - There are lots of tools and approaches to creatively taking a sound and transforming it into a brand new sound
 - Add a creative audio effect (pitch hack, delay, pitchloop89) and resample into a new track as you tweak the effect's knobs

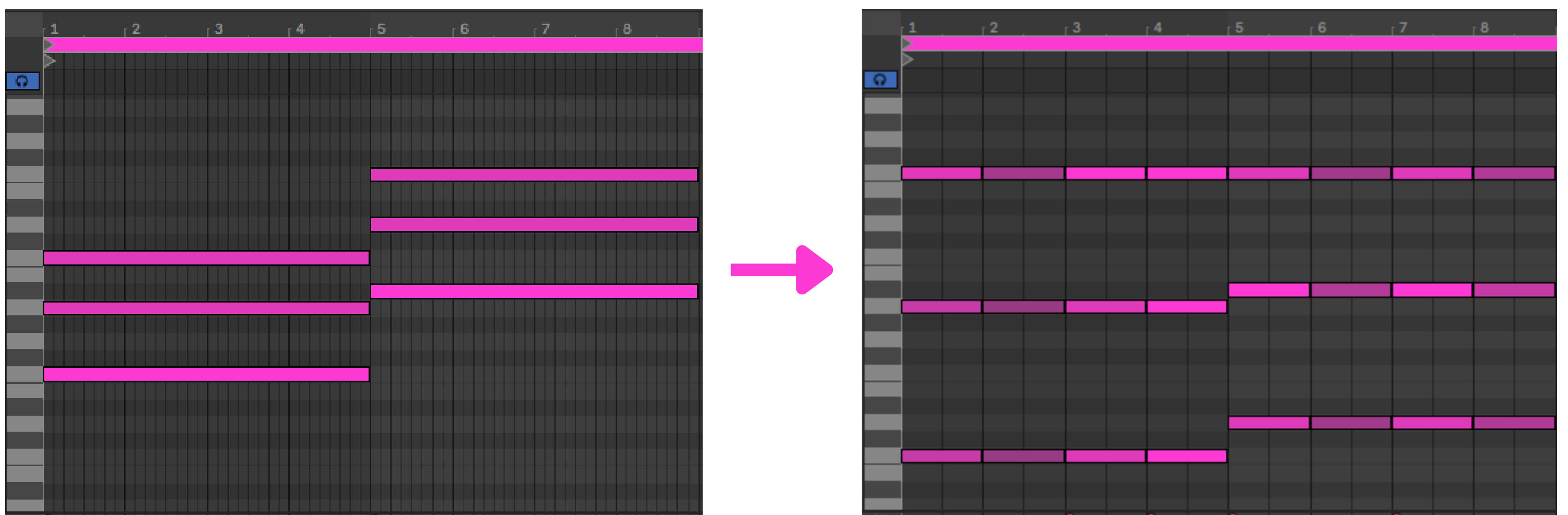


Pitchloop89

- Now you'll have a long recording full of new, experimental, original sounds to play with and incorporate
 - Play with your clip box options like: stretch, compress, reverse, re-pitch, warp modes, etc. to create new something new out of what you had
- This is my favorite approach because
 - i. It's fun
 - ii. We're recycling sounds that are already in the track so it's cohesive with our song's sound palate
 - iii. I almost always get something unexpected but cooler than I imagined

4. Use the same instrument you already have in the track

- As you're creating a new riff/progression/melody, think about rhythm and frequency as well:
 - Should the progression have a different rhythm here than in the previous section (say, held vs staccato chords)?
 - Do we want to play our instrument in the same or different octave? How is our frequency spectrum filling up?



Changing the voicing and rhythm of a chord progression.

IN CONCLUSION

- Creating a new section can seem daunting, but if you break it down track by track, and pay attention to: rhythm, frequencies, and sound, you'll come up with something new in no time
- And if you're really stuck, collaborate! Send the song to another producer or musician and ask them to put their own spin on it
- Now most importantly, have fun with it!