How to work with audio

At least half of your movie's impact comes from its use of sound. Adobe Premiere Elements provides the tools, such as the Audio Mixer and the Audio Meters, to create a high-quality sound mix. You can narrate clips or set beat markers while previewing in real time. You can add a soundtrack to your movie, and trim it to the proper length, or use SmartSound® soundtracks, which you customize to exactly fit your project. You can set the overall volume levels of clips and the relative volume levels within and among them. Finally, you can remove unwanted noises and add effects to the sounds in your movie.

Premiere Elements supports the following soundtrack file formats:

- Dolby AC-3 (.ac3)
- Macintosh Audio AIFF (.aif, .aiff)
- mp3 Audio (.mp3)
- MPEG Audio (.mpeg, .mpg, .mpa, .mpe, .m2a)
- QuickTime (.mov, .m4a)
- Windows Media (.wma)
- Windows WAVE (.wav)

Adding an audio soundtrack

To complement the sounds embedded in video clips and any narration you record, add audio clips to the Soundtrack track visible in Quick view timeline or the Expert view timeline (**Figure 1**). At times, you must scroll down the audio portion of the Expert view timeline to see the Soundtrack. These clips typically contain background music or recordings of environmental sound.

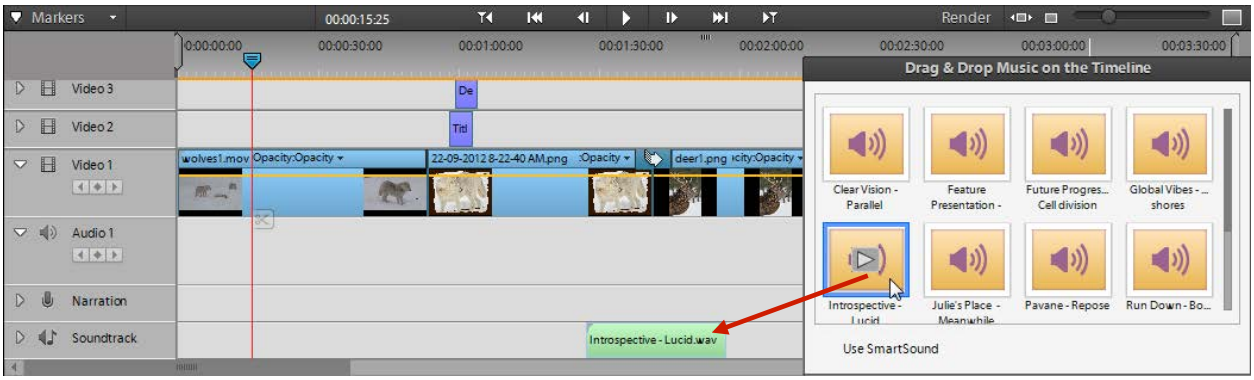

Figure 1 Audio file in the Expert view timeline

To import audio and add a soundtrack:

1. If necessary, add the desired audio files to your project.
2. Click Music on the Action bar to display the Music panel (**Figure 1**).
3. Drag an audio clip from the Music panel into the Soundtrack track of the Quick view timeline or the Expert view timeline where you want the audio clip to begin.

   Note: You can also drag audio clips to the Expert view timeline through the Project Assets panel.

4. To adjust the position of the soundtrack, drag it to the right or left.

   Note: There are separate tracks for narration and other music or sound effects. If you move a narration clip, this may cause the narration to become out of sync with the video.

5. In the Quick view timeline or the Expert view timeline, select an audio clip in the Soundtrack track. (You might need to scroll down through the audio tracks to see the Soundtrack track.)

6. Click the Play button in the Monitor panel (**Figure 2**).

   Premiere Elements previews the Soundtrack audio clip along with any audio and video clips above it in the Quick view timeline or the Expert view timeline.

7. To stop the preview, click the Pause button in the Monitor panel.

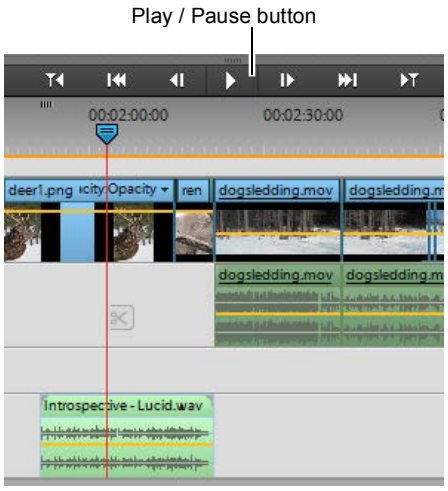

Figure 2 Monitor panel controls and Expert view timeline

Using SmartSound tracks

Included with Adobe Premiere Elements is the SmartSound Express Track plug-in. Use SmartSound Express Track to select from among a large collection of sound tracks for your video project. Then use SmartSound tools to customize the length of the sound track so that it corresponds exactly with the length of your movie.

To use SmartSound Express Track on your video project, select SmartSound from the Music panel in the Expert view timeline, and follow the prompts. The SmartSound Express Tracks dialog box (**Figure 3**) opens alongside the SonicFire Pro 5 window.

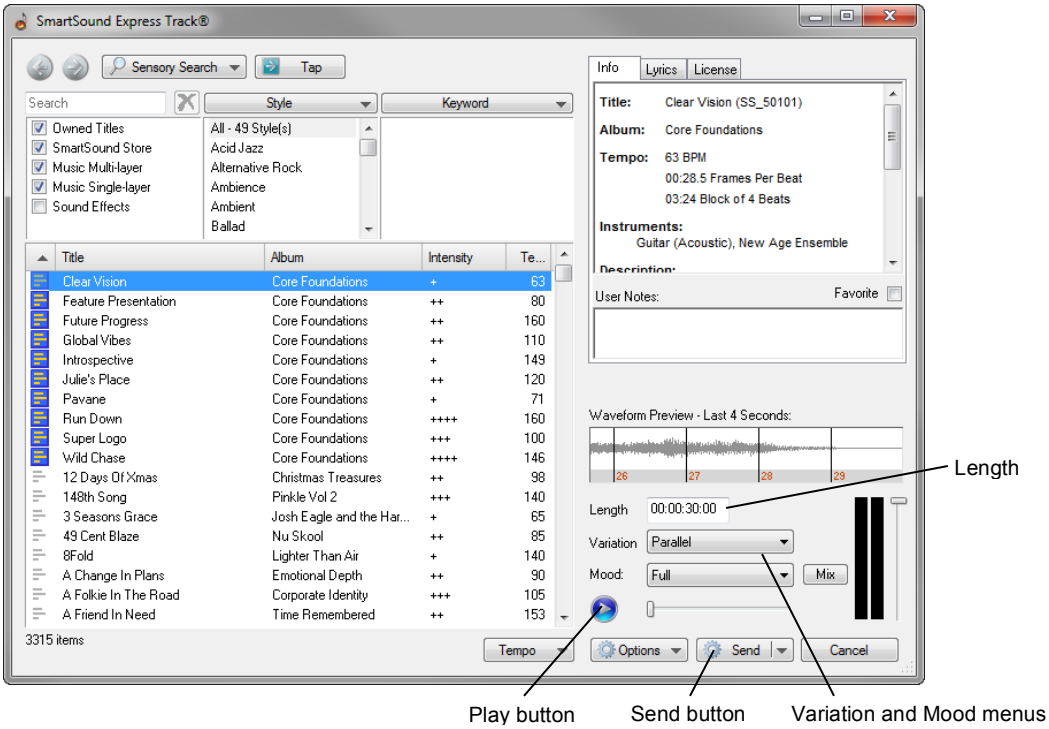

Figure 3 SmartSound Express Track dialog box

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To use SmartSound tracks:

1. From the Music panel in the Expert view timeline, click Use SmartSound (**Figure 4**).

   Note: if this is your first time using SmartSound, you may have to perform a one-time installation. Follow the onscreen instrucitons to download and install the SmartSound plug-in.

2. The Sonicfire Pro plug-in dialog box appears (**Figure 5**). It might take a minute for the dialog to appear on first launch as it updates sound files. Do not click the Cancel button.

   The SmartSound Express Track dialog also appears (**Figure 3**), the files with a blue icon are the files you can use for free. You can view them by unchecking SmartSound Store on the top left of the application. You can use the search and filter options at the top of the dialog box to search for music.

   If you are using SmartSound any time after the first installation, an update dialog appears asking you to install any latest updates. Click Update Now to update the plug-in, or click Update Later if you want to postpone installing the update. These updates are not necessary for using SmartSound with Premiere Elements.

3. Select a file that you want to use in Adobe Premiere Elements. You can click the Play button to preview a sound.

4. Enter a length for the soundtrack.

   This should match the length of the clip to which you want to apply the soundtrack.

5. Select a variation and mood for the soundtrack.

   Variations determine tempo, intensity, and other characteristics of the sound. Mood adjusts the volume and intensity of the instruments, such as drums, percussion, strings, and horns to set a desired mood.

6. Click the Play button to preview the changes.

7. Click Send to export the file to the Project Assets panel. Ensure that you do not click the drop down menu

   Switch to Adobe Premiere Elements and notice that the file has been added to the Project Assets panel.

8. Use the file as you would any other sound files in Adobe Premiere Elements.

9. (Optional) To import additional files from SmartSound, click Use SmartSound from the Music panel, and re-run this procedure.

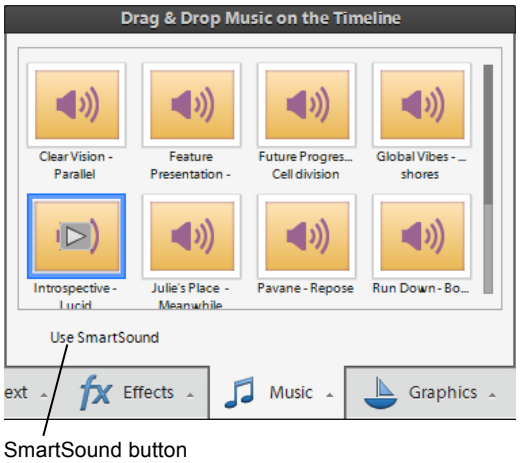

Figure 4 Music panel

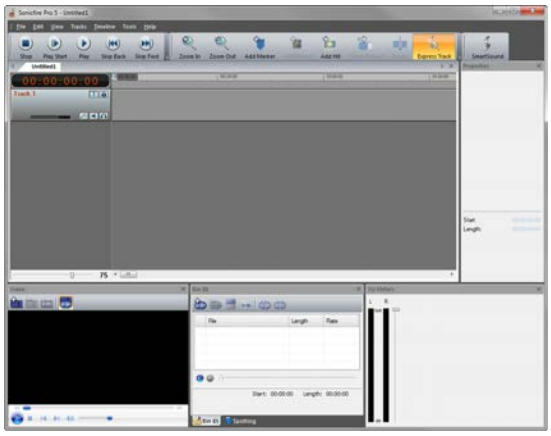

Figure 5 SonicFire Pro window

Creating narrations

Using your computer's microphone, you can narrate clips while previewing them in the Monitor panel. Your narration is then added to the Narration soundtrack visible in either the Quick view timeline or the Expert view timeline.

For best results, confirm that your microphone is working correctly with your computer and Adobe Premiere Elements before narrating a clip.

To narrate a clip:

1. Plug a microphone into your computer's microphone port.
2. Choose Edit > Preferences > Audio Hardware (Windows) or Adobe Premiere Elements 9 > Preferences > Audio Hardware (Mac OS).
3. From the Default Device menu, select your computer's sound device, and click OK (**Figure 6**).

   Note: If your mic is not listed, click ASIO Settings, click Input, select your device, and click OK.
4. Do one of the following:
   - In the Expert view timeline, drag the current-time indicator to the point where you want the narration to begin.
   - In the Quick view timeline, select the clip you want to narrate. Then, drag the current-time indicator to the point where you want the narration to begin.
5. In the Quick view timeline or Expert view timeline, select Narration from the Tools panel (**Figure 7**).
6. In the Record Voice Narration window, click the Mic Source button and select your sound device from the menu (**Figure 8**).
7. For best results, turn off your computer speakers to prevent feedback. To monitor sound while you narrate, plug headphones into your computer and deselect Mute Audio While Recording.

   Note: If your speakers are turned on, move as close to the microphone as possible, and keep the microphone as far away from the speakers as possible to prevent feedback.

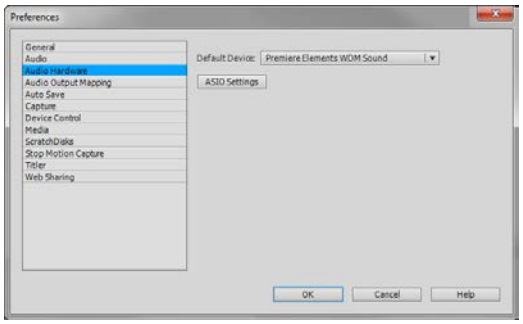

Figure 6 Audio Hardware Preferences

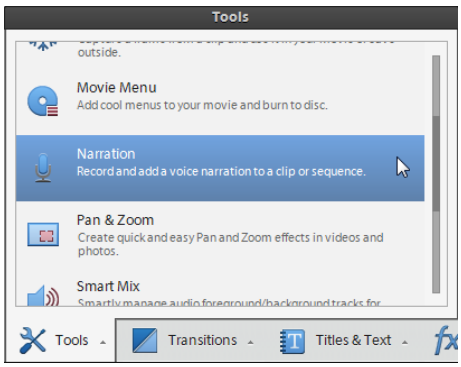

Figure 7 Tools panel

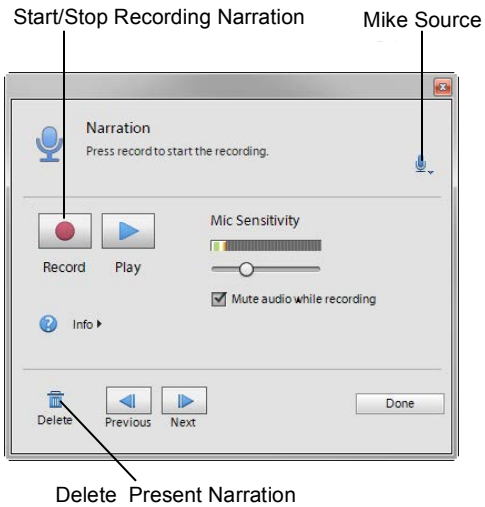

Figure 8 Record Voice Narration dialog box

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8. Speak into the microphone at a conversational volume, and raise or lower the Input Volume Level slider until your loudest words light up the orange part of the meters.
9. Click the Record button.

   Near the top of the Record Voice Narration window, a timer appears next to Start Recording In.
10. When Start Recording In changes to Recording, speak your narration as the selected clip plays.
11. When you finish narrating, click the Stop button.

    An audio clip containing your narration is added to the Project Assets panel and to the Narration track in the Quick view timeline or the Expert view timeline (below the selected clip) (**Figure 9**).
12. To preview your recording, click the Go To Previous Narration button. Then click the Play Present Narration button.
13. To continue recording from the position of the current-time indicator, click the Start Recording Narration button again.

    This new recording overwrites any narrations that are traced over by the current-time indicator in the Narration track.
14. Click the Pause Present Narration button at any time to stop the preview.
15. To discard a narration, click the Delete Present Narration button (**Figure 8**)

    The old narration clip is removed from the Timeline or Sceneline, but remains in the Project view of the Tasks panel.

Figure 9 Narration audio clip in the Narration track in the Expert view timeline

Layering sounds using multiple tracks

When creating the soundtrack for your video project, you will often want to include multiple tracks—for example, a vocal narration, background music, and sound effects.

In Premiere Elements, you can add multiple audio tracks and then use the built-in audio mixer to create layered soundtracks. Start by adding new empty audio tracks and then drag audio clips to the Timeline. By overlapping audio clips at the same position in the timeline (but on separate tracks), you create a layered multi track soundtrack (**Figure 10**). Adding multiple tracks is only available in the Expert view timeline.

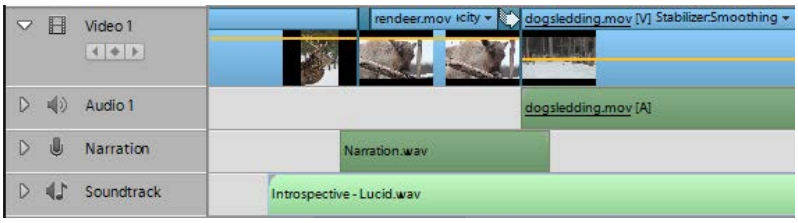

Figure 10 Multiple track soundtrack in Expert view timeline

You can also create and export a multi-track sound file using a separate sound editing application. You can then import the layered file for use in your Premiere Elements project.

To add audio tracks to the Expert view timeline:

1. Choose Timeline > Add Tracks.

   The Add Tracks dialog box appears **(Figure 11).**

2. Enter the number of tracks to add in the Audio Tracks Add box.
3. Open the Audio Tracks Placement menu, and choose either Before Last Track or After Last Track.
4. Click OK.

   The new empty audio tracks appear in the Timeline.

5. Drag audio clips from the Project Media bin to the empty tracks in the Timeline.

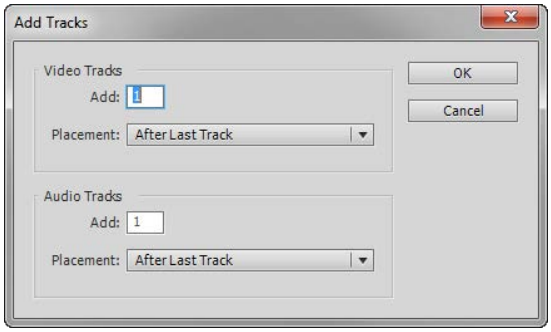

Figure 11 Add Tracks dialog box

Mixing and balancing audio elements

Mixing audio involves adjusting volume levels so that they maintain a good range within each clip, and then adjusting them in proportion to other clips used in the movie. For example, you might first adjust the volume of a narration clip so that there is little variance between its softest and loudest sections; then raise the narration's overall volume so that it is clearly audible over background sounds or music included in other clips.

In Adobe Premiere Elements, volume changes are measured in decibels. A level of 0.0 dB is the original volume (not silence). Changing the level to a negative number reduces the volume, and changing the level to a positive number increases the volume.

To control a clip's volume, you can use the Volume graph—the yellow line running horizontally across the audio track of each clip (sometimes referred to as the volume rubberband)—or the Audio Mixer. You can use the Audio Meters window to view the overall audio volume for your project.

Consider the following guidelines when adjusting volume levels:

- If you combine particularly loud audio clips on multiple tracks, *clipping* (a staccato distortion) may occur. To avoid clipping, reduce volume levels.
- If you need to adjust the volume separately in different parts of a clip (for example, one person's voice is faint, while later another's is too loud), you can use keyframes to vary the volume throughout the clip.
- If the original level of a clip is much too high or low, you can change the input level. However, adjusting the input level will not remove any distortion that may have resulted from recording the clip too high. In those cases, it is best to re-record the clip.

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Use the Audio Mixer to adjust audio balance and volume for different tracks in your project (**Figure 12**). You can adjust the balance and level of audio contained within your video clips, and within soundtrack and narration audio. For example, you may want to increase the volume of the narration and decrease the volume of the soundtrack at different points for emphasis or so that quiet voices can be heard above the music.

You can adjust settings while listening to audio tracks and viewing video tracks. Each track in the Audio Mixer corresponds to an audio track in the Timeline or Sceneline, and is named accordingly. As you make adjustments, keyframes are added to the track. You can specify a default minimum interval for keyframes in the Audio preferences.

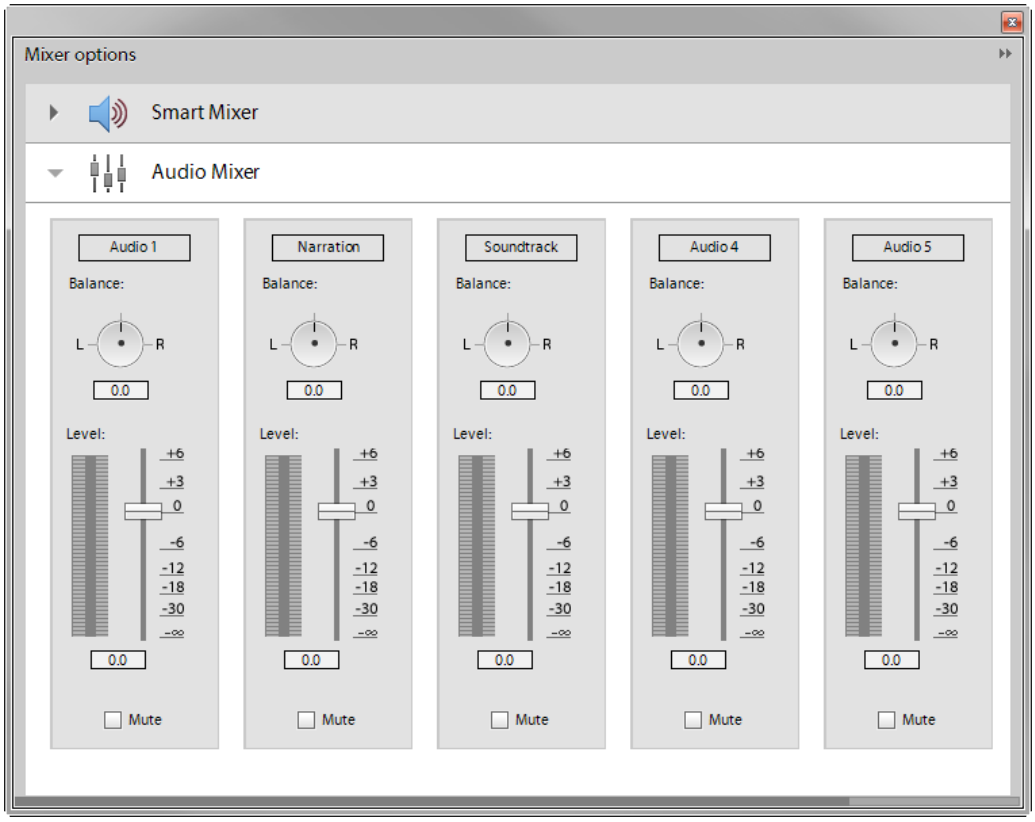

Figure 12 Audio Mixer

To use the Audio Mixer:

1. (Optional) Choose Edit > Preferences > Audio / Adobe Premiere Elements 11 > Preferences > Audio, and set a value between 1 and 2000 milliseconds for Minimum Time Interval Thinning (**Figure 13**) to limit keyframes to intervals larger than that value. If you don't want to hear audio while you scrub audio, deselect Play Audio While Scrubbing.

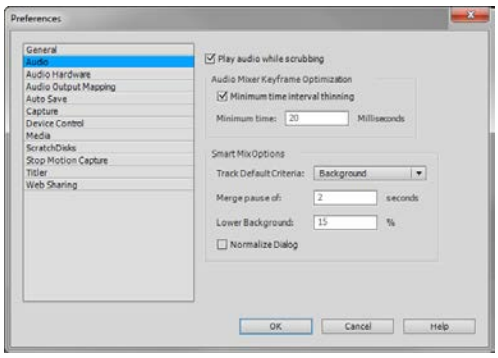

Figure 13 Audio Preferences

2. In the Expert view timeline, click the Tools panel and select Audio Mixer option (**Figure 14**) or choose Tools > Audio Mixer.
3. Drag the current-time indicator to where you want to start mixing audio.
4. Click Play in the Monitor window and adjust the controls in the Audio mixer (**Figure 15**) to automatically add keyframes to the track:
   - To adjust balance for a track, turn (drag) the Balance control left or right.
   - To increase the volume for a track, drag the Level control up or down.

   Note: You can specify the spacing of keyframes in the Audio preferences.

   To mute a track while mixing, click Mute. This option does not mute the track permanently—only while mixing.
5. Close the Audio Mixer when you are finished mixing the audio.

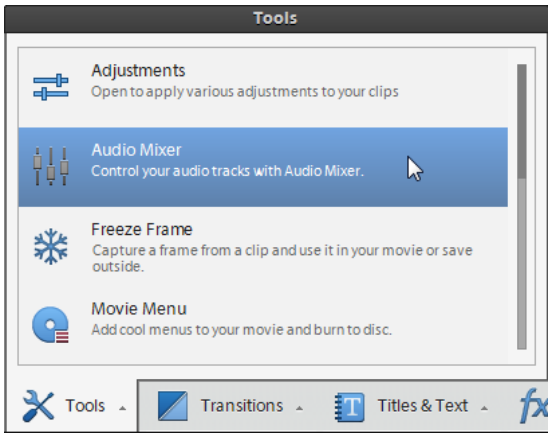

Figure 14 Tools panel

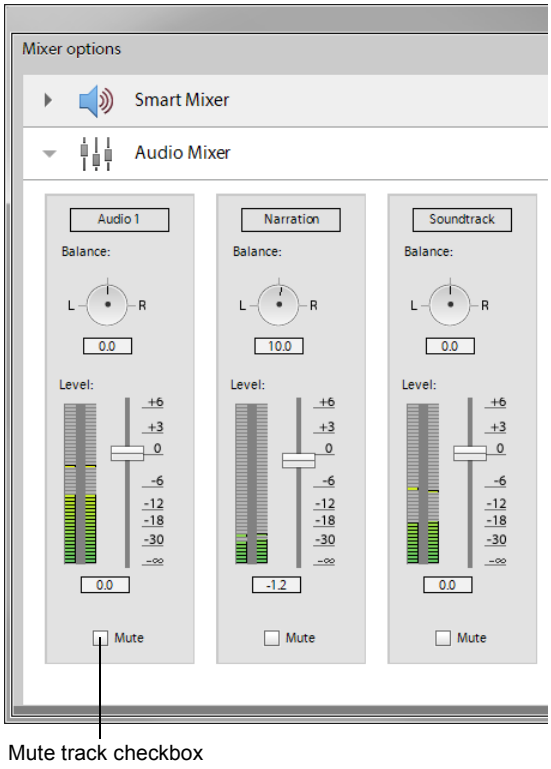

Figure 15 Adjust balance and levels in the Audio Mixer

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Using the SmartMixer

Sometimes the background music is loud and the dialogs in a clip are not audible. To ensure that the dialogs are easily heard, the volume of the background music must be lowered. SmartMix enables automatic adjustment of the volume of the background music (**Figure 16**). For best results, place dialog clips on the Audio 1 track or the Narration track (Foreground tracks) and music on the Soundtrack track (Background tracks). Premiere Elements analyzes clips on all Foreground tracks for dialogs. Keyframes are then smartly/automatically created to lower the volume level to ensure that the dialog in the Foreground track is audible. SmartMix adjustments apply to all audio clips on the Expert view timeline, not just on the selected clip. When you use SmartMix on an audio track, keyframes you applied previously on the Soundtrack are deleted.

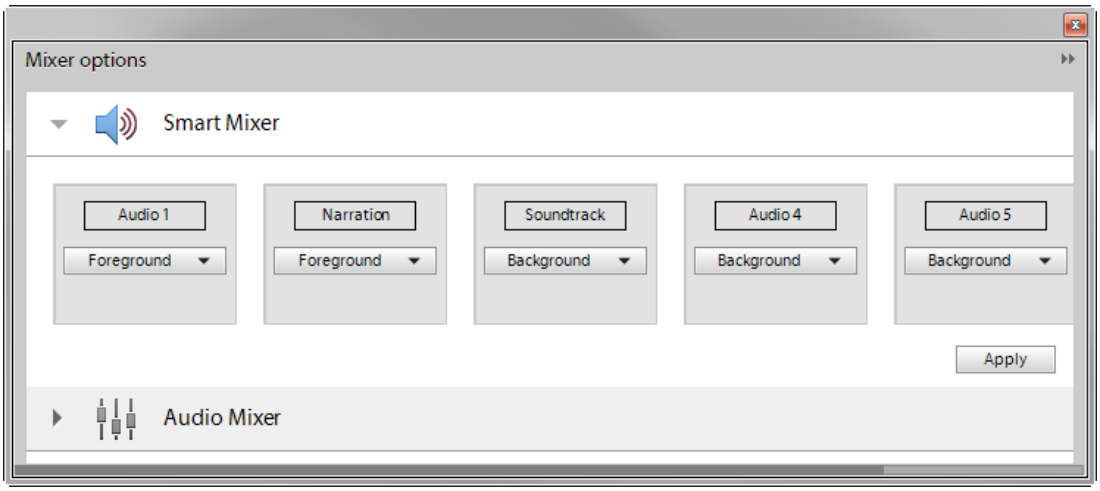

Figure 16 SmartMixer panel

To use the SmartMixer:

1. Finish adding all audio elements to your project, including:
   - Audio from original video
   - Narration
   - Soundtracks (including SmartSound soundtracks)
2. In the Expert view timeline, click the Tools panel and select Smart Mix (**Figure 17**), or choose Tools > SmartMix .

   The SmartMixer panel of the Mixer Options dialog box opens (**Figure 16**). Here, you set each audio track as foreground, background, or disabled (**Figure 18**).
3. Set options for each track. For example, if you want the narration always to be louder than the other tracks, set Narration as Foreground and Audio 1 and Soundtrack to Background (where Audio 1 is the sound attached to the video).

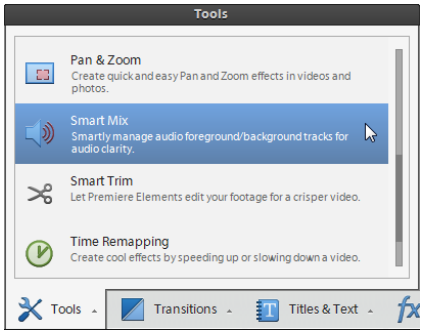

Figure 17 Tools panel

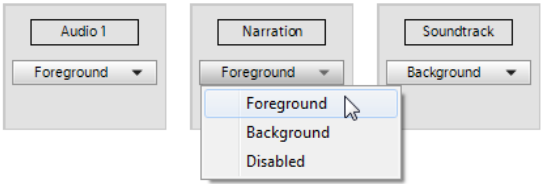

Figure 18 Setting Narration as Foreground

4. Click Apply.

   Premiere Elements automatically adjusts the volume of each track so that the narration is always in the foreground.

5. Close the Mixer Options dialog box.

   Premiere Elements automatically lowers the volume of Audio 1 and Soundtrack while Narration is occurring. The sound levels are raised when the narration ends (**Figure 19**).

6. To fine-tune audio track levels, expand the Audio Mixer in the Mixer Options panel. You can manually adjust Balance and Levels for each of the audio tracks in your project

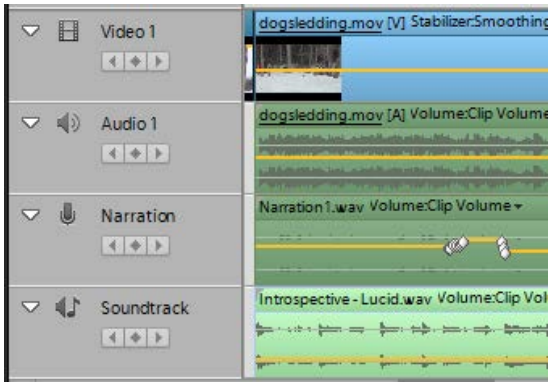

Figure 19 SmartMix applied

Repairing and enhancing audio

Sometimes your video clip contains an audio track that is poorly recorded, or includes unwanted noise. You can repair problems and enhance audio using audio effects (**Figure 20**). You can also apply multiple audio effects to a clip.

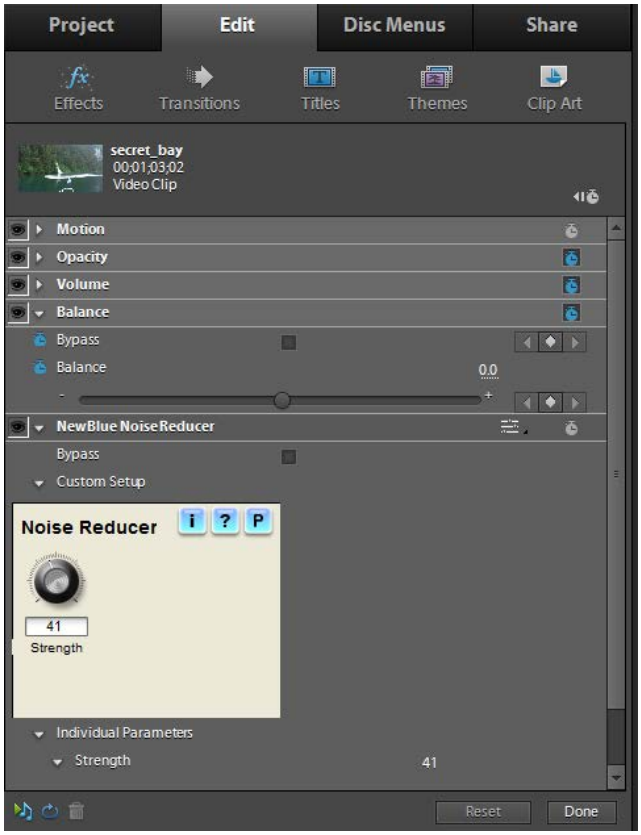

Figure 20 Properties for the New Blue Noise Reducer audio effect

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To repair and enhance an audio track:

1. Click Effects on the Action bar to open the Effects panel.
2. Select the effect you want to apply. To locate an effect, choose Audio Effects from the category menu at the top of the panel (**Figure 21**), or type the effect name in the search box.

   The Audio Effects appear in the Effects panel. To repair an audio track, you might choose the NewBlue Noise Reducer from the selection in the Effects view.
3. Select a clip or multiple clips in the Expert view timeline.

   Note: To select non-consecutive clips, Ctrl-click/Cmd-click each clip. To select consecutive clips, click in the Project Assets panel, and drag a marquee around the selected clips.
4. Drag the audio effect to the clip's soundtrack in the Expert view timeline.
5. To preview the audio effect, double-click the clip in the Project Assets panel and the click the Play button in the Preview window.

   Note: Audio playback controls are available only if the selected clip contains audio.
6. To adjust the settings, expand the effect in the Applied Effects panel, and edit the settings based on your requirement (**Figure 22**).

   Note: Each audio effect includes a bypass option that lets you turn the effect on or off as specified by the keyframes that you set.
7. To remove an effect, click the Trash button in Applied Effects panel.
8. (Optional) You can apply other effects to enhance your audio file, such as Bass to boost the low decibel response of the soundtrack.

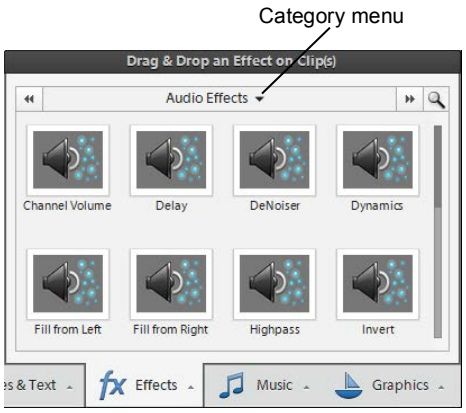

Figure 21 Effects panel

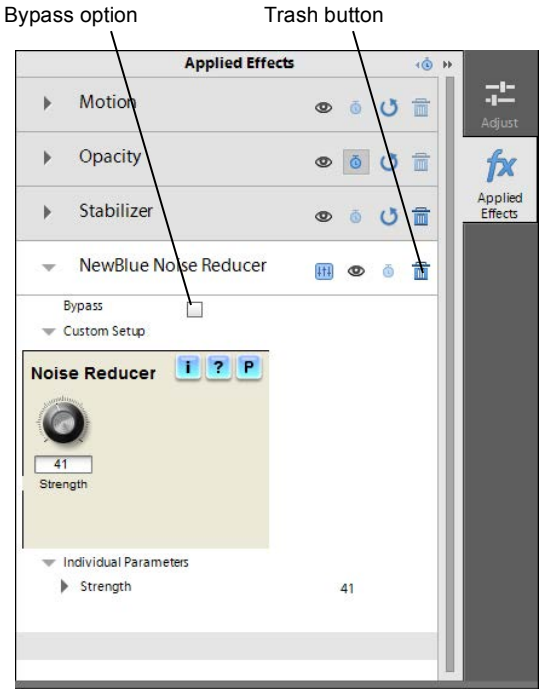

Figure 22 Applied Effects panel

Exporting an audio soundtrack

After creating and mixing the audio for a project, you can export the final soundtrack as a single file. To export the audio from a project, use the Share tab. The Export command on the File menu is used for exporting titles only.

To export audio from a project:

1. Before exporting the soundtrack, choose Timeline > Render Work Area.

   A progress bar charts the render process (**Figure 23**).

2. Click Publish+Share panel and click the Computer option (**Figure 24**).

3. Scroll the list of options and click Audio (**Figure 25**).

4. Select a file type from the Presets menu.

   Note: To specify advanced settings, such as frequency and bit rate, click Advanced, select the Audio tab, and adjust the settings.

5. Specify a location and filename, and click Save.

   The file is created in the format and location that you specified. A message tells you when the export is complete.

6. Click Done.

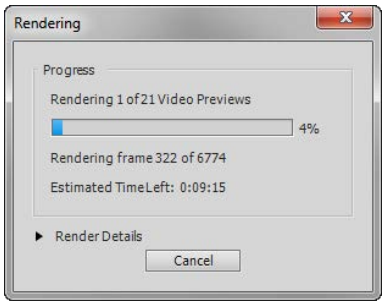

Figure 23 Rendering dialog box

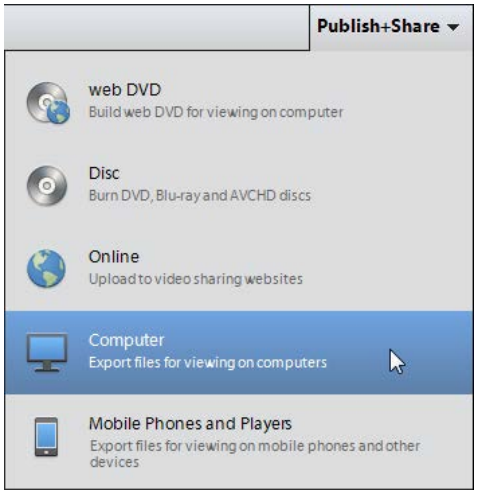

Figure 24 Publish+Share panel

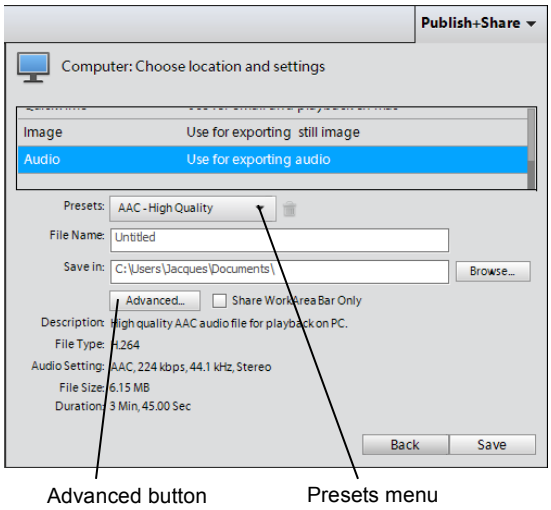

Figure 25 Publish+Share panel, Computer option

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