

# Logic Pro 7.1

Following the Apple takeover and subsequent re-branding of Logic Pro when version 7 launched, the first major update has arrived in the shape of 7.1, which is a paid-for upgrade albeit at an almost token price. This adds more new features and fixes some irritating bugs that appeared in version 7. Resolution has not examined Logic Pro since version 7 appeared, so **GEORGE SHILLING** considers all the improvements since 6.4.3, the last version provided with Emagic branding.



**B**Y V6, LOGIC had become very complex from the many new features strapped on over the years. Version 7 included hundreds of small improvements, and thankfully, Apple marshalled a tidy-up of many aspects of the program, with the Preferences menu greatly rationalised, for example. Regrettably, the overall appearance is now even darker and greyer, and sometimes looks more Vintage Neve than OSX Aqua. Dialogue boxes that were clear with a white background are now grey-blue and use a smaller font. But with such complex software, any graphic improvements are highly valued, and to that end there are plenty of small tweaks, such as adding indicators for parameter adjustments where previously there was nothing. Simpler plug-ins remain blue and graphically clear, while new, more complex, additions continue the elegant but slightly fiddly look of the relatively new instruments such as EXS24 and ES2.

Apple's headline feature is Distributed Audio Processing. This enables G5 Macs to do some of the CPU processing on behalf of the main computer via a Giga Ethernet connection. Perhaps Apple's motivation here is to increase sales of G5 hardware, but it is a clever idea that enables far more processing power to be unleashed if you happen to have a spare G5 Mac or two to act as Nodes. The process of connection is fairly painless. And if you start to run out of power, for example, on a G4 laptop, hooking up a mate's G5 will get you motoring along without having to transfer all the files onto the more powerful machine. It is certainly more convenient than installing PCI processing cards



— this is Apple's rather neater answer to TDM. However, there are limits; tracks are assigned to Nodes on an individual basis and while Audio tracks and Instruments can be assigned, auxes, buses and outputs cannot, understandably. Furthermore, the EXS24 sampler is unable to use Nodes because of potential problems accessing samples.

Some elegant features have been included that first appeared in Apple's GarageBand software, a freebie that ships with new Macs and comes as part of the

iLife package. GarageBand songs can now be imported and the software's Apple Loops feature is available in Logic 7 and further improved with 7.1. Such is the power of this feature that one long-standing Logic power-user colleague of mine says it has changed his entire working method. Apple Loops is indeed a clever concept that seems to combine aspects of Ableton Live and Propellerheads' ReCycle. Audio loops are previewed at the Song tempo and desired pitch, then dragged from the Loop Browser into the arrangement — as in Live, tempo change requires no action on the part of the user, the loops adapt to fit. The algorithms used work well, even at extreme tempo and key changes there are few audible artefacts in most cases. Logic ships with a selection of loops of many different styles and instruments and additional Jam Packs are already on sale. It's a fabulous system, with loops easily searchable by genre, instrument or mood and auditioned at the correct tempo and in any key. Creating your own loops is straightforward using the Apple Loops Utility — simply select a piece of audio, add a few bits of meta information to the file (such as key, time signature and 'mood'), and on another page (which looks like ReCycle), check that transients have been correctly identified. It is simple to use, and this is a great new feature for inspiration, or for quickly knocking tracks together using library material. The technology has benefited Logic further in that any audio recorded into 7.1 can now be locked to tempo for instant stretching in the Arrange window to fit new tempi.

Among the numerous small improvements are some ideas pinched from Pro Tools, which can only be a good thing. Two new parameters appear on the Arrange window. A choice of Snap modes can now be instantly selected from a drop-down menu with values such as Beat, Bar, Frames, Ticks and Smart (relating to the zoom scale). Alongside this is a Drag drop-down menu that selects how regions behave when dragged across each other — whether they overlap, crossfade or shuffle, but you'll still need to go into the familiar Sample Edit window for sample-accurate editing.

Automatic crossfading is another neat Pro Tools-inspired trick. The cursor now changes when hovered appropriately to indicate these and other hidden functions like changing the length of notes or Regions — Arrange page Objects are now called Regions (sound familiar?) to distinguish them from Environment Objects. Double-clicking an Audio Object in the Arrange page no longer takes you to the Audio Environment, but rather to the Track Mixer — a more logical way to work.

Individual channel strips can be imported and exported, complete with all their plug-ins and settings, and a huge number of preset instruments and effects are included, much like Reason and its Combinator settings. Another feature that greatly rationalises and simplifies operation is Global Tracks, not dissimilar to Pro Tools rulers. These run along the top of the arrangement or edit window to allow viewing and editing of functions such as Transposition, Markers, Time Signature and Tempo, plus a new Beat Mapping function that replaces the Reclock function. A new Video track replaces the older Video Thumbnail track. And thankfully the toolbox can now be accessed with a right mouse-click — a feature from Atari Cubase!

Caps Lock Keyboard is a brilliant feature for the mobile musician: simply turn Caps Lock on and your computer keyboard becomes a MIDI keyboard. A graphic representation appears onscreen, with keys arranged in conventional keyboard layout across the

middle, with octave selection using number keys, and velocity setting using the lower row. It's great fun, and you can even play chords.

There is simply not the space to detail all the new effects plug-ins, but worthy of note are the excellent Guitar Amp Pro simulator (although the new Bass Amp is, by comparison, disappointing), Apple's Pitch Corrector version of Auto-Tune, and the wacky RingShifter, which combines a ring modulator with a frequency shifter for some wonderful effects from subtle phasing to crazy alien noises. Also useful is the clever GrooveShifter that analyses and manipulates audio in real-time using mini timestretches to change the groove. Match EQ is in a similar vein to Waves Q-Clone, although this matches the tone of existing audio passages — it is very effective and simple to use. Other additions include excellent utilities including several metering options. Plug-in Delay Compensation is now available for all signal paths, but enabling it on everything and making a recording results in that audio playing back out of time with existing tracks, so this feature appears to need further improvement.

EFM1 is a simple FM synthesiser, the provided presets are lively and clear, and although the structure is rather different and far simpler than your old DX7, a good range of rich FM sounds can be achieved.

Sculpture is the most advanced and unusual new instrument. This combines different types of synthesis and bases sound creation on the principle of a modelled vibrating string or bar. The timbre is created by adjusting parameters such as the string or bar's material, thickness, tension and playing method. Unlike most synthesis, re-striking the string will cause the existing vibrations to harmonically interact with the new note. It is an extraordinarily complex instrument to fully understand, so if programming sounds is your thing, this is something to spend time exploring, working with the reference manual for hours rather than minutes. Of course, there is nothing to stop you loading some of the provided presets, but I suspect these barely scratch the surface of Sculpture's possibilities.

Ultrabeat is another hugely complex beast, a drum machine that uses various synthesis methods and incorporates its own step sequencer, perhaps inspired by certain Reason devices. You have at your disposal 24 discrete sound engines, plus a 25th chromatic voice. FM, Phase Oscillator, physical modelling and sample playback are all available for sound creation. A narrow piano-keyboard runs down the side

for clicking to easily audition sounds. Loading and Saving drums sets is straightforward, and problems importing individual voices seem to have been fixed in 7.1. The supplied library is of variable quality, but

with time and inclination the possibilities are huge, and it is great fun tweaking and envelope filtering, say, the noise component of a snare sound to get it really crunching.

All 22 GarageBand instruments are also present, they generally seem to be EXS24-derived, including the new Hybrid Morph synth. On a related note, the EXS24's editor is slightly improved, and EXS24 now helpfully shows a progress bar when loading samples.

To improve stability, Logic now automatically scans the Audio Units plug-ins on the computer on initial launch, and only loads those that it is happy with — most manufacturers have now updated any incompatible versions. Although much more stable than version 6, I still experienced one or two crashes. Startup of the program is much faster, as after the initial AU scan, this stage is skipped. However, there is no way of escaping the EXS24 library scan.

You could argue that rather than adding more and more tempting plug-ins and instruments, there is much that the developers could do to Logic to make existing functions work in a more straightforward manner. But there have been large steps in the right direction — I particularly like the improved audio editing features. The layout and graphic appearance is generally much better, albeit with a rather drab colour scheme. As a Pro Tools user, there are many additions that make a lot of sense but there are many functions that are still counter-intuitive, especially to any newcomer. Surely further rationalisation is possible — the new Apple Loops browser is evidence of superb ergonomic design.

Thankfully, the reference manual has had a major update and rewrite — the V6 manual was riddled with

errors and outdated information. I had no problems loading and running older Songs (unlike working up through the various 6.x upgrades, which sometimes produced a few odd bugs).

Logic has long been a top MIDI sequencer, but it is now arguably the best writing and production tool and the ultimate aim of a self-contained computer-based studio is now just about reality, with sound sources and effects covering most aspects of production, integrated into an increasingly useable DAW. I'll still record and mix rock bands with Pro Tools, but for machine-led composition and production this is surely the best system. ■



## WaveBurner

WaveBurner CD mastering software is also bundled with Logic Pro. This is a separate application that includes Red Book authoring, a number of Logic plug-ins (although oddly not Match EQ), and access to your Audio Units plug-ins. It is a very useful and well thought out program, with two stereo audio tracks to enable crossfading of CD tracks, and a clean, straightforward user interface.

While grey is the predominant colour, the overall appearance is more iTunes than Logic. The version initially bundled with Logic 7 had its critics, but the new version included with 7.1 seems fine, although there are still some niggles — for example, the counter will only display total elapsed time rather than track time.

### PROS

Apple Loops; great new plug-ins; huge number of detail improvements; audio editing starting to catch up with Pro Tools; Node processing.

### CONS

Dark graphics; environment and audio assignment still not particularly fathomable or logical to newcomers; no off-line Logic or AU plug-in processing; lacks a great acoustic piano.

### Contact

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