

Presonus Studio One 2

GEORGE SHILLING looked at Presonus's Studio One DAW and mastering package almost two years ago (*Resolution V9.4*), and in this major upgrade, version 2 brings a handful of major additions along with a raft of smaller tweaks.



There are now three versions of Studio One: Artist, Producer and Professional. The Artist version is bundled with Presonus hardware and includes Presonus's own excellent effects and instruments, with no track count limits. Producer adds ReWire, AU/VST support, MP3 import/export and additional third-party content. Professional adds 64-bit processing, the Project (mastering) section, QuickTime and SoundCloud support, further native effects and a Melodyne licence.

The biggest boast is the integration of Melodyne. Simply selecting an audio clip and selecting the context-menu item Edit With Melodyne (or using a key command) causes Melodyne to open in the lower window area and begin the detection process. The Professional version comes with Melodyne Essential which must be separately installed and authorised. The Artist and Producer versions include a 30-day trial. However, if a licence and installation of Melodyne Editor is detected, the more advanced features are seamlessly unlocked and immediately available. Clips that have been edited with Melodyne are instantly visible as such in the main edit window as there is a mini graphical representation of the edited notes superimposed on the audio wave graphic.

A feature that I missed in the earlier version was transient detection. This has now been implemented beautifully, incorporating an 'Audio Bend' function, and integrating audio quantisation and groove extraction using Studio One's typically straightforward drag-and-drop methodology. You can even group tracks before quantising to retain phase coherence. They appear to have taken the best elements from Pro Tools and Logic and made them work in a simple-to-use fashion, with modern stretching algorithms, making this kind of manipulation of sound pretty good.

The next new feature is Track Comping, which again seems familiar to a Logic and Pro Tools user. Looped takes each create a new hidden Layer, or you can manually add a Layer for each new take. You can then unpack them to see all the takes onscreen. Swiping sections and promoting them to the main track can all be achieved easily with mouse dragging and shortcuts. In a related enhancement, there is now a Pro Tools-style tracklist viewable on the left side of the screen, for easy show/hide functions, reordering, and there are management tools for saving and recalling preset views. The mixer can be optionally linked, so the same tracks are available in each window. And

there are now Logic-style folder tracks that can be packed and unpacked as necessary. Folder tracks can easily be routed to their own bus, and then effects can be dragged and dropped from the list onto that bus. Another excellent improvement is that the audio and MIDI editors are now detachable from the main window, so for multiple

monitor setups or for just simply maximising the editing area this is a great boon. And these windows now also feature a track list on the left, so you can jump between editing tracks easily, or even edit multiple MIDI tracks simultaneously, with colour-coding helping the identification of particular tracks' notes.

In the Professional version, the mastering (Project) page has been greatly enhanced with DDP export and proper PQ editing, although there is no printable PQ sheet (yet). There are also useful tools such as detection of loudness showing peak and RMS levels, along with a DR figure, and an ITU BS1770/EBU R128 figure. Cleverly, updated songs automatically update in the mastering window, making file management slightly more streamlined.

The File Browser has been improved so that you can search within particular locations, and has Google-style immediate searching of text as it is typed in. And SoundCloud is now integrated directly with the browser, allowing you to view your own account and tracks from people you follow. Downloadable tracks can be simply dragged into the Song, which is great for internet collaborations.

The extensive included plug-ins have been further enhanced with improvements to the guitar amp modeller with new convolution-based cabinets, and a big range of effects. There is also an excellent new convolution reverb plug-in with its own library and capture tool.

There is comprehensive control surface support. I lazily set it to work with my Tascam US-2400 without reconfiguring from Pro Tools use, and I could arrange the three banks as desired; it worked fine, and would no doubt enable further features with a different mode. Video integration is also straightforward; dragging movie files in brings them up in a window with relevant controls for linking to timeline, extracting audio and so on.

Automation is comprehensive although Touch didn't seem to glide back until it met a previously written node. Automating effects' parameters was

achieved easily with no reference to the manual; these moves can be displayed.

Some of Presonus's own included instruments' presets are a little bit average sounding in many instances, but the library included is a generous size, 24Gb for the Professional version, and some of the drum loops and Impact drum kits are good. Also included is some third-party content including Native Instruments Complete Elements, Ueberschall Impact Drums and Nine Volt Audio Guitars.

I particularly like the Pipeline plug-in utility for integrating hardware effects, which allows unrestricted routing, trimming, mixing, manual and automatic latency offsetting, and multiple channels can even send to the same output.

Using Studio One is highly intuitive. The mouse is needed for quite a bit of dragging and dropping, but there are good context menus, and keyboard shortcuts can be configured; the Pro Tools set worked well for me. Rarely did I need to explore the PDF manual. Menus and context menus are sensibly organised, and

the clean design seems to present familiar concepts learned in other DAWs. But a beginner will find this the easiest DAW to learn. Everything happens quickly and operation feels very snappy. I found no major bugs, just the occasional odd thing that could probably be mainly put down to operator error! I'd have loved TDM compatibility for low-latency (unlikely) or even just easier file interchange between Studio One and other DAWs.

I have a client working with various producers who has bought a Presonus AudioBox interface, but she is determined to learn Logic because the other producers she collaborates with use it. But you must also consider the excellent Project Mastering section;

with Apple seemingly abandoning Waveburner in its App Store, this is an excellent budget disc mastering application. There is already much love on the internet for Studio One, with plenty of tutorial videos, a helpful and good-humoured forum at the Presonus

website, and discussions elsewhere. It seems many are finding it a pleasure to use. The version 2 upgrade is significant and enhances the experience in a number of ways. Do take a look. ■

PROS

A fantastic usable DAW that deserves wider adoption; seamless Melodyne integration; easy to learn and use drag-and-drop principles; snappy operation.

CONS

No TDM mixer integration; no continuous tempo ramping; no part repeat function other than one-at-a-time duplication; no ReWire Slave function (only works as Master); no MIDI Score or List Editors; little concession to easy import/export from other DAWs.

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