SONAR 2016.11 Update

Cakewalk 2016.11 Update

ENGINEERED IN BOSTON, MA
SONAR

Well, last month we said the dev team was hard at work on some bigger features that would roll out in the next few months…and there are some pretty big features in this update, so let's dive in.

It's hard to decide what to mention first, but the new WASAPI drivers are game-changers—now you can run SONAR on a laptop with 3 ms of latency (not a typo—that's 3, not 30, ms). Say goodbye to MME, ASIO4ALL, and having to carry around an ASIO interface: SONAR can actually exceed Thunderbolt performance with a computer's internal sound chip. And the Shared mode, which increases latency a bit to 10 ms, allows running SONAR concurrently with other programs that want to use the system audio, like YouTube or Groove Music.

Next up: Lenses. These let you customize your workspace to focus on specific tasks, so everything you need is at your fingertips—and what you don't need is hidden. In conjunction with Screensets, you can customize the SONAR experience more than ever.

There are major improvements to the Matrix View, as well as enhancements to the Control Bar, Start Screen, Synth handling, an easier way to navigate preferences through improved onboarding, an integrated Project Info place for notes, Melodyne updates, and more. Still not enough? We talk plug-ins in our Top 10 Chart, review of KRK's new V Series monitors, and of course, give you the best of the forums in Surfboard. Now we're going to relax for a few minutes…and then we'll be back to work on the December update. *– Your Cakewalk Team*
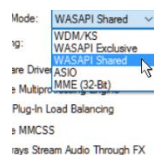
Improved Built-In Audio Support: With new WASAPI drivers, SONAR now delivers extremely low-latency performance with laptops and tablets that rivals Thunderbolt—we're talking truly high-performance mobile setups, whether for Artist, Professional, or Platinum.
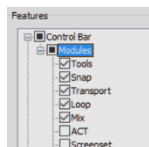
Lenses: The new "Lenses" feature optimizes the SONAR UI based on what you want to do – record your guitar or vocal, edit drum loops, or mix your song - - Lenses will give you the right tools at the right time – nothing more, nothing less. Get started with built-in Lenses, then customize them to create *your* SONAR.
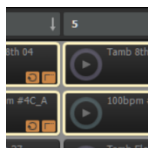
Matrix View Enhancements: Those of you who've wanted to see some love for the Matrix View will be very happy to check out the latest improvements, which speed up workflow and allow much more flexible Cell manipulation—as well as tighten the relationship of Cells to the Track View and timeline.
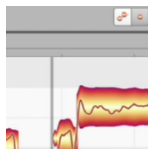
Melodyne Essential 4.1: Melodyne's pitch-correction software is already widely considered the best collection of pitch and time correction tools, but this free update takes it to another level with better comping workflow, improved sound quality when stretching with ARA, a new Track Edit mode, and more.
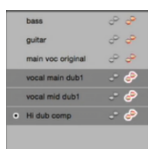
Melodyne Studio 4.1 Multitrack Support: If you own Melodyne Studio, in addition to other Melodyne 4.1 features SONAR now supports Studio's multitrack workflow. This makes it much easier to work on multitrack projects because you can edit multiple tracks simultaneously, as well as view one track while editing another.
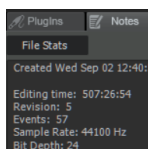
Browser Notes Tab: It's important to keep notes on your projects. Now notes are integrated right into the Browser, and it's so convenient songwriters will appreciate being able to jot down lyrical ideas quickly. You can even add custom artwork that will be displayed in the Start Screen.
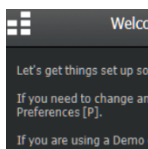
Improved Audio & MIDI Setup for New Users: To improve the first time user experience, SONAR will now walk you through getting set up the first time you launch the program. This helps ensure that new users, or users switching to a new computer or interface, can start making music immediately.

Synth Handling Improvements: The Synth Rack has a lot going for it, specifically the assignable controls. However the only way you could access them was by undocking the Browser, or docking the entire Browser in the Multidock. Now the Synth Rack can live in the Multidock all by itself, or in the Browser.

Control Bar Lock and Justify: Now that you can store Control Bar configurations in Lenses, you can choose to limit the number of modules to simplify your workspace. And with the ability to justify left and right, the modules can be spread out across the Control Bar to make them easier to access quickly.
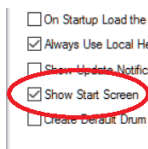
New Start Screen Behavior: With more and more users choosing to use the Start Screen to access projects or start new ones, it was inconvenient to have to call it up whenever you closed a project. Now you can choose to have the Start Screen appear automatically when you close a project.

Fixes and Enhancements: Once again, there are a bunch of fixes and enhancements that cover multiple SONAR aspects including the audio engine, the Matrix View, user interface aspects (like full screen mode restoring to the original application size), clef type fixes in Staff View layout, and more.

Charting Now in SONAR | The Top 10 Non-Bundled Plug-Ins: Granted, SONAR comes with a pretty comprehensive collection of plug-ins. But the VST standard exists for a reason, and in this Top 10 chart, we'll find out which non-bundled plug-ins get used the most in SOANR projects.
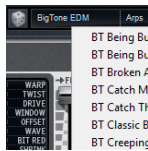
Review | KRK V6 Series 4 Nearfield Monitors: They were a big deal at AES, and depended on the input from literally hundreds of producers and engineers. Phil O'Keefe grabbed a pair to check out, and finds out why there's a considerable buzz about these high-end entries from Cakewalk sister company KRK.

SurfBoard: Surfing the internet can be fun, but surfing the Cakewalk forums can be downright instructive because community members are constantly sharing tips and techniques. We've scoured the forums for the latest threads that can help you get the most out of SONAR, and compiled them here.

How to Download the SONAR 2016.11 Update

Open the **Cakewalk Command Center**. If you are prompted to download a newer version, please follow the on-screen instructions to download it.

To download the **SONAR 2016.11** core update, download from the core SONAR Artist, Professional, or Platinum category. Optional updates are also available for the following:

- Classic Creative FX Suite (updated to support SONAR Home Studio)
- Studio Instruments Suite (updated to support SONAR Home Studio)

Improved Built-in Audio Support
Artist, Professional, Platinum

This breakthrough gives extremely low latency performance—typically 3 ms, but no more than 10 ms (!)—using a computer's onboard sound options, like common chipsets (e.g., Realtek, Intel HD Audio, and IDT). This opens up vast improvements for all kinds of applications, especially with laptops.

- In some cases, you'll get lower latency than with a Thunderbolt interface.
- Your portable music production setup's portability isn't compromised by having to carry around an ASIO interface and cable (and possibly AC adapter)
- For all practical purposes, Bluetooth latency is slashed to the latency of Bluetooth itself; there's no longer the additional latency resulting from having to use 32-bit MME drivers. Listen to your mixes over your car's Bluetooth-friendly audio system—there's no need to burn a CD to play in your car.
- Without low-latency operation, the Virtual Controller was of limited use with laptops—which of course is where you need a virtual controller the most. Now when you hit a note, you *hear* a note.
- USB mics no longer have the 20-50 ms of latency that require feeding a separate hardware output from the mic (if available) for zero-latency monitoring. Plug in a USB mic, strap on headphones, and then start playing, singing, or podcasting while being able to monitor yourself in near-real time.
- With guitar, you can plug the Rocksmith guitar-to-USB cable into a laptop, process the guitar, and send the audio output to an amp with undetectable latency (or to headphones for practicing).
- Products like the Surface Pro become viable music production centers—use the internal sound until it's time for critical mixing.
- On a fun level, there's a Shared mode with slightly higher latency so you can surf the web while SONAR is open—great for following a lesson on YouTube with SONAR running, or if you get a great idea for a song in the middle of watching a movie online.

For details on the new features, please refer to the online help. The following gives a high-level view of the audio engine improvements in 2016.11.

Before this update, the primary way to achieve low-latency performance with Windows' internal audio was the ASIO4ALL "wrapper" driver. While ASIO4ALL is a valiant attempt to overcome audio limitations, results are mixed at best—from "works okay" to "crash city." Another problem was if you wanted to use SONAR in conjunction with other Windows audio; you couldn't use ASIO, which usually meant the high-latency MME protocol. However, these

problems are now history thanks to several very significant audio engine improvements for both WDM and WASAPI (Windows Audio Streaming API) modes.
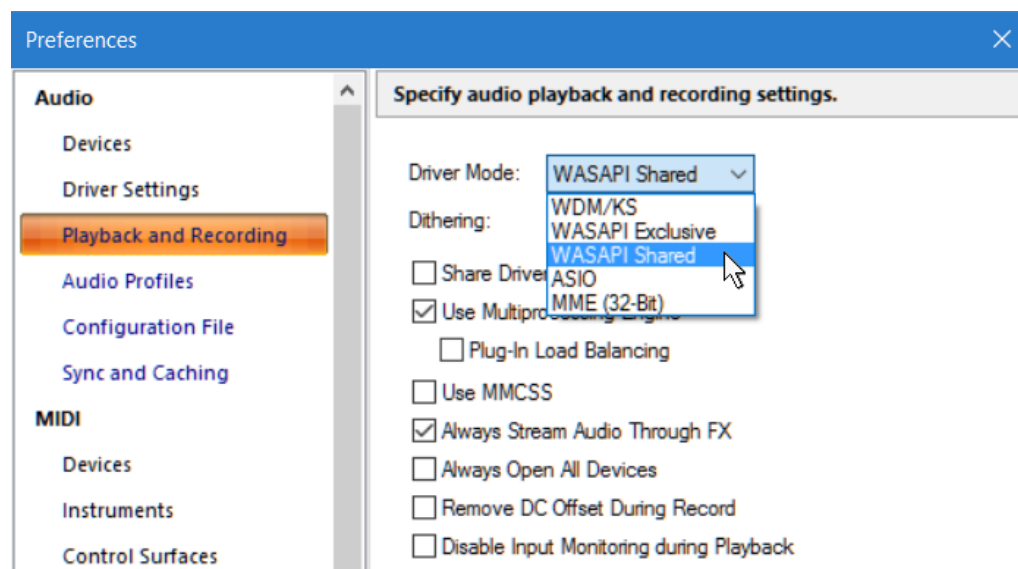
WASAPI Exclusive mode accesses the driver directly, without needing to go through the audio engine or requiring other "layers" like USB buffering. Typical latencies with Windows 10 can be as low as 3 milliseconds, so it's common to achieve much better latency than dedicated ASIO drivers with an external interface.

WASAPI Shared mode allows running audio from multiple Windows programs simultaneously, with the tradeoff being somewhat higher latency (typically 10 ms or so with Windows 10). However this is still much less than MME and often, less than ASIO.

To access these new modes, choose *Edit > Preferences > Playback and Recording.* Please note that the improvements with WDM are not as dramatic but you should still be able to achieve somewhat lower latency. There are also several other significant improvements.

IMPROVED AUDIO FORMAT SUPPORT

The audio driver determines buffer sizes and sample rates based on the audio hardware's requirements. SONAR now uses the driver's preferred formats for onboard audio instead of having to round buffer sizes up or down to match the preferred format. This solves many problems with possible glitches at certain buffer sizes or sample rates.

ENABLE/DISABLE BUILT-IN DSP (WINDOWS 10 ONLY)

WASAPI Shared mode supports onboard audio devices with built-in DSP, such as noise reduction for mic inputs. This adds latency, so SONAR allows editing the AUD.INI configuration file to disable using onboard sound card DSP.

BLUETOOTH DEVICE SUPPORT

You can easily send audio to Bluetooth audio devices, without having to resort to the MME drivers that pile on additional latency and use an obsolete driver model. They're also unstable and not suitable for recording via Bluetooth.

SINGLE ENDPOINT DEVICE SUPPORT

The enhanced WASAPI support now allows connecting multiple "single endpoint" devices such as USB mics, Rocksmith Real Tone guitar cables, and the like while playing back through a different device like USB speakers. This is not supported at all by ASIO, is unlikely to work with WDM, and can work with MME, but only with "deal-breaker" levels of latency.

Finally, please note that the WASAPI-based audio engine improvements have the greatest impact with Windows 10, but still offer improvements for Windows 7 and 8.

Lenses

Artist, Professional, Platinum (Presets-only with Artist)

This was formerly announced as "workspaces," until the Bakers realized the feature offers a lot more than what some other programs identify as "workspaces." (And by the way—if you think getting four or five band members to agree on a band name is difficult, imagine what it's like to get an entire company to agree on a feature name!) You can think of Lenses as Screensets on steroids, but the customization goes considerably deeper than that.

A "Lens" gets its name because it's a global preset (SONAR also remembers the selected Lens between sessions) that provides focus on just the task at hand. For example if you're working only with making beats using the Step Sequencer, you're not interested in audio editing, the Video window, the Loop Construction view, etc. Those items can disappear from menus and the UI, which brings back another customizable element of SONAR 8.5. But just as the Theme Editor does more than the color customizations in 8.5, Lenses combined with Screensets do more than the menu customization options in 8.5.

Another reason for using the term Lenses is that like camera lenses (wide-angle, close-up, macro, fish-eye, etc.) a Lens can provide a different way of seeing a project. And because Lenses are files, you can share them, upload them, send to a collaborator, etc. As another example, you could have a Lens for tracking, another for Editing, and another for Mixing. However, note that a Lens won't open if there's no underlying data—for example, the PRV won't open if the project has only audio.

HOW TO USE LENSES

You select Lenses from the Lens drop-down menu toward the upper right, which shows both the five Factory Lenses that can't be overwritten, and for Professional and Platinum, User

Lenses. This is also where Professional and Platinum users can save Lenses and create new Lenses, as well as open the Lens Manager.

CREATING LENSES

The Lens Manager is where you create new Lenses and manage existing ones. For example, the following shows a Tracking Lens that's optimized for songwriting. It's intended to be as simple as the early digital tape recorders because it's eight tracks, a transport, timeline, a customized Control Bar, metering…and not much else. As to why the Control Bar is on the bottom, this is ideal for touch applications on a sloping touch screen; it sits above where the keyboard and mouse are, so you don't need a lot of arm movement to initiate functions in the Control Bar. This Lens also calls up a high-contrast, simplified Theme.
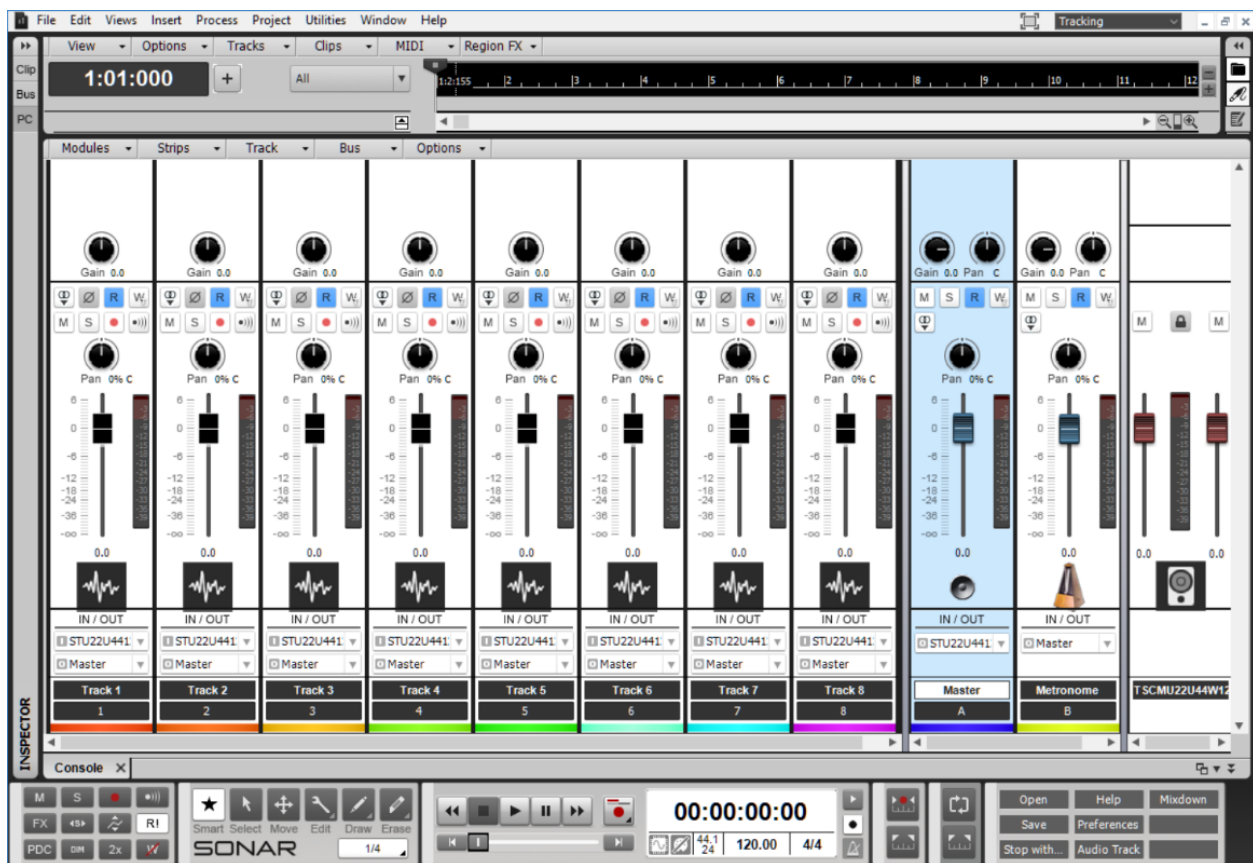

After you've recorded some basic tracks, you could then switch over to an Editing Lens that concentrates on Track View so you can cut, paste, move, etc. Then after editing, switch to a Mix Lens with a focus on plug-ins and the Console…and if you need to add a track quickly, switch back to the Tracking Lens for a bit.

FEATURES AND SETTINGS

The Lens Manager has two main panes for customization.

- **Features** chooses the Control Bar modules, main Views, MIDI views, Surround Sound, Video, and Screensets. For example, if you're working only with audio, you can de-select all MIDI-related views.
- **Settings** is more global, and selects whether the Lens will recognize changes in Themes, the Control Bar Layout, Window Layout, Track Control Manager, Track View Control Order, Keyboard Shortcuts, and Plug-In Layout.
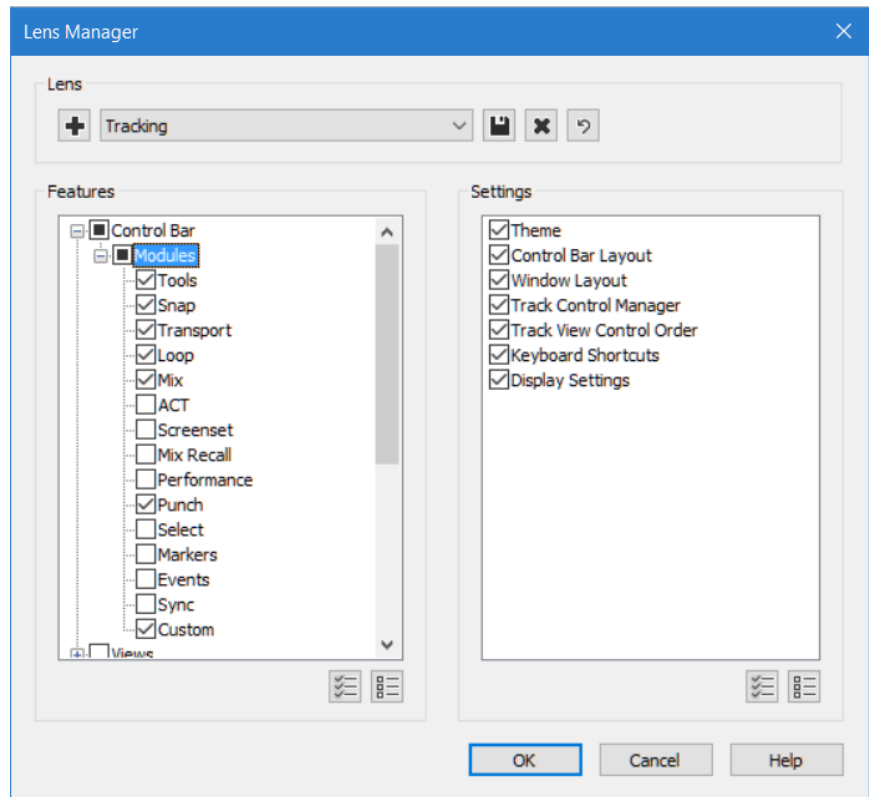
LENS BEST PRACTICES

It takes some thought to come up with a really useful, universal Lens, and some time to get everything "just right" before saving the Lens. As with any aspect of customization, you don't want to go too crazy at first.

Working on a Lens can also have a beneficial side effect by causing you to think about what would optimize your workflow.

VERSION DIFFERENCES

Although SONAR Artist can't create, delete, save, or rename lenses, it can load Lenses that are placed in the folder %AppData%\Roaming\Cakewalk\SONAR\Lenses\User. For any version, the non-modifiable Factory Lenses (Advanced, Basic, Mix, Record, and Make Beats) are located in %AppData%\Roaming\Cakewalk\SONAR\Lenses\Factory.

SONAR Professional and Platinum have a Save Lens menu command (and associated Key Binding) to save user Lenses. If a Factory Lens was chosen, this works like a Save As function and will save to the User folder.

RESET AND RENAME LENSES

- To reset a Lens, select it again from the drop-down menu, without saving any changes.
- To rename a Lens, change the file name in the %AppData%\Roaming\Cakewalk\SONAR\Lenses\User folder.

Matrix View Enhancements

Artist, Producer, Platinum

You asked, we listened, we implemented—and the Matrix View has become both more capable and efficient. These changes not only up the ante for groove-oriented applications, but help turn the Matrix View into even more of a songwriter's tool. For a complete list of all the improvements look under "What's New" in the online help; here are some of the highlights.
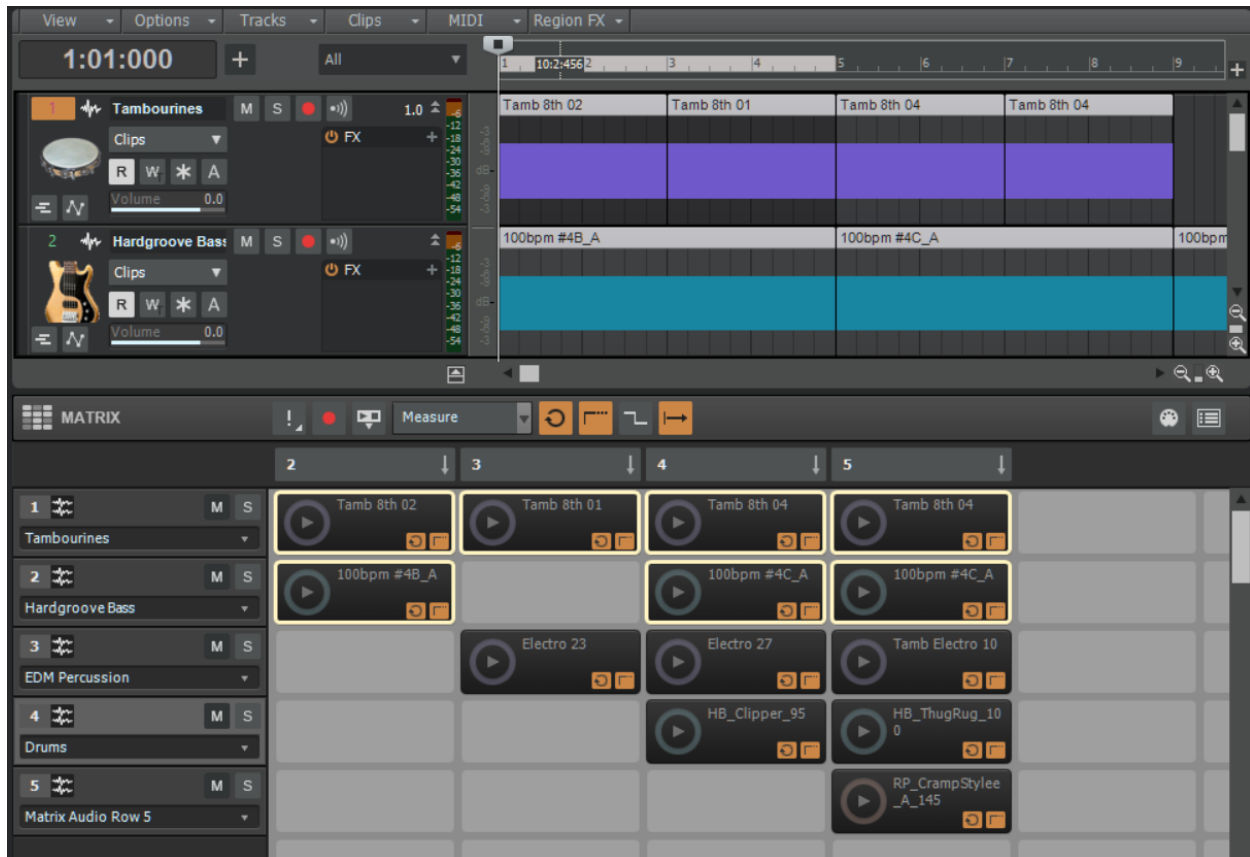
Multi-selected cells have been ctrl+dragged to create clips in Track View. Releasing the mouse button, displays the audio or MIDI data in the copied clips.

IMPROVED CELL MANAGEMENT

- Multi-cell selection means you no longer need to move, clear, or copy cells one at a time. Selecting follows the usual Windows protocols: click on the first cell then shift-click on the last cell for a contiguous selection (or hold Ctrl+Shift and use the arrow keys), or ctrl+click for non-contiguous cells.

- Drag partial clip selections into cells. This is great for when you record a long clip with lots of potential loops; just drag over the sections you want to use into cells. And with the simpler track routing (see next), it's easy to host multiple clips in the same track.
- Drag selected cells into the Track View's Clips pane.
- Swap cells by holding down the Alt key while dragging one cell to another.
- Copy cell content to the Clips pane at the now time by clicking on a cell's trigger area while holding Ctrl+Alt+shift.

SIMPLER TRACK ROUTING

The Matrix view still retains the option of a 1-to-1 correspondence of Matrix Row to SONAR track, however this can lead to a lot of tracks as you drag in content. With this update, holding the Alt key while dragging brings content into the first audio or MIDI track that matches the content type (or creates a track if no track with the same content exists). This makes it easy to build up more complete rows without generating a bunch of extra tracks.

IMPROVED COLUMN TRIGGER

Now when you trigger a column, it triggers all cells instead of toggling each cell's state. You can also clear all cells in a column by right-clicking on the column header and choosing Clear Column.

ROW MANAGEMENT CONTEXT MENU

Right-click a row, and you can choose to insert a MIDI or Audio row (and assign to a particular track if desired), as well as delete, copy, or clear the row.

NEW OPTIONS MENU FUNCTIONS

You've always been able to drag a Step Sequencer clip into a cell, but they were always linked. Now you can unlink them so they can operate independently. You can also choose Follow Transport Restores Pending Cells on Stop. This means that if you had cells queued up to start when you hit Play, the same cells will be queued up again when the transport stops.

Melodyne Essential 4.1
Professional, Platinum
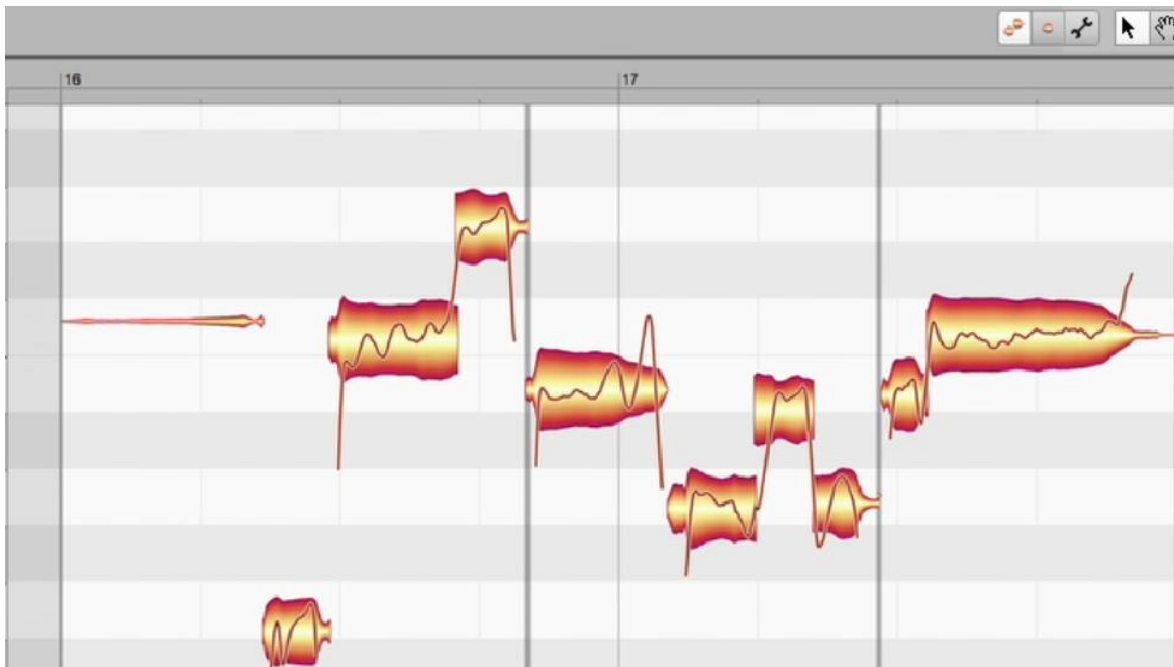
Melodyne Essential version 4.1 adds extremely useful new features and benefits to all users of Melodyne Essential. These enhancements include:

- **Audio improvements.** There's now better sound quality when stretching with ARA (Audio Random Access)
- **Improved comping workflow.** Previously, you had to make comping decision without Melodyne, then bounce the comp and apply Melodyne. Now you can have Melodyne on each clip in Take Lanes, so you can verify if a take benefits from Melodyne before you decide whether or not to use the take.
- **Track Edit Mode.** This new mode provides an overview of all the clips sequenced on a track, so you can easily repair overlapping notes or unwanted pauses at clip borders (indicated in Melodyne by vertical gray lines). When you move the clip borders in SONAR's Clips pane, Melodyne's clip border indicator lines move correspondingly.
- **Local playback.** When starting playback by clicking in Melodyne's note background, you'll hear only hear the tracks shown in Melodyne, and you can adjust the balance between the tracks without affecting the project's mix in SONAR.
- **Tempo operation advancements.** Melodyne 4.1 offers improved tempo-related processes, including tempo detection.

Please see the Melodyne help for more information about this significant update.

Melodyne Studio 4.1 Multitrack Support

In addition to all the enhancements in Melodyne Essential 4.1, SONAR also supports the new multitrack workflow in Melodyne Studio 4.1, which makes it easier to edit multiple tracks side-by-side in Melodyne Studio. For example, you could choose to see all the tracks used for background vocals so you can edit them all in the context of the other tracks. Or, show a track for reference but not editing (like a lead vocal), but also show a doubled version of the lead vocal that you can edit.
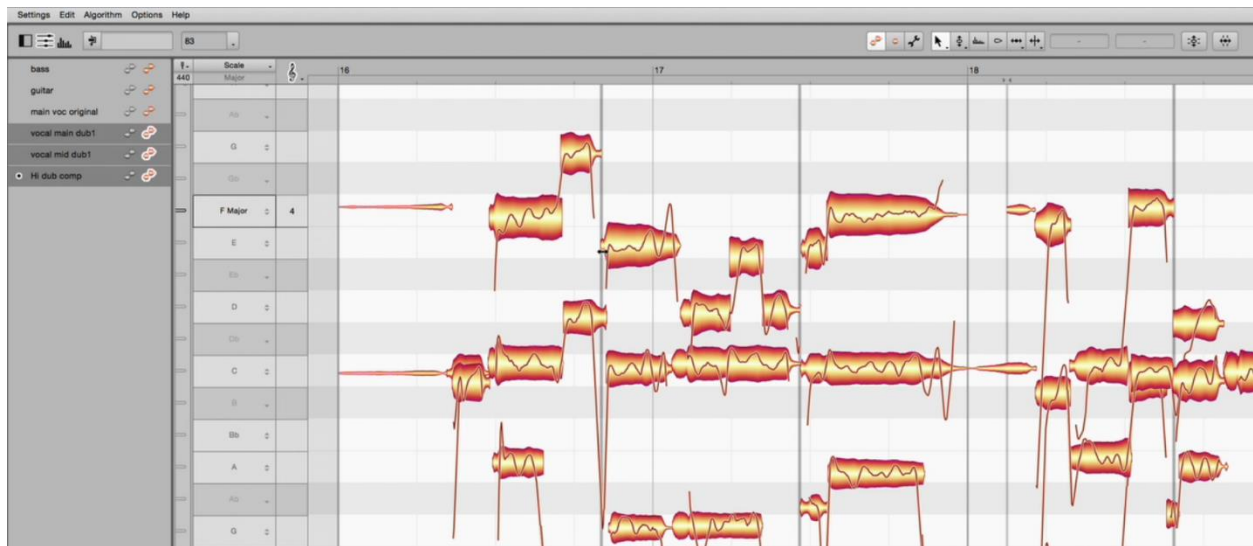
Please note this feature is not available in Melodyne Essential; for more information, see the Melodyne help.

Browser Notes Tab
Artist, Professional, Platinum

There's a line in Amadeus where Emperor Joseph II tells Mozart "There are simply too many notes." But surely he wasn't referring to taking notes about a session, which is important should you ever decide to return to a project and wonder what the heck you were thinking by keeping five tracks that seem identical, but you know one of them was *the* take.

Prior to this update, *Project > Info* would open a large text editor in a separate window. While helpful, it was also inconvenient because it tended to take over the screen.

The Notes tab in the Browser replaces the older text editor, and can hold over 29,000 characters—almost 5,000 words. You can do the usual cut/copy/paste commands, but note there's no formatting (font, size, bold, etc.). Also, you need to use the up and down arrow keys to move through the text as there's no scroll bar. One very considerate new feature is that when entering text, it becomes larger and bolder so it's easy to read.

You can also show/hide file stats with the File Stats button, as well as add an image (like album art). Supported formats are BMP, PNG, and JPEG; although the recommended size is 600 x 600 pixels, larger images will be scaled to that size. Simply click on the + button to add an image, and on the X button to remove it.

 And as the screen shot proves, if you used Project Info in older versions of SONAR, that info (except for the Pan Law being used) will be imported into the Notes tab in newer versions.
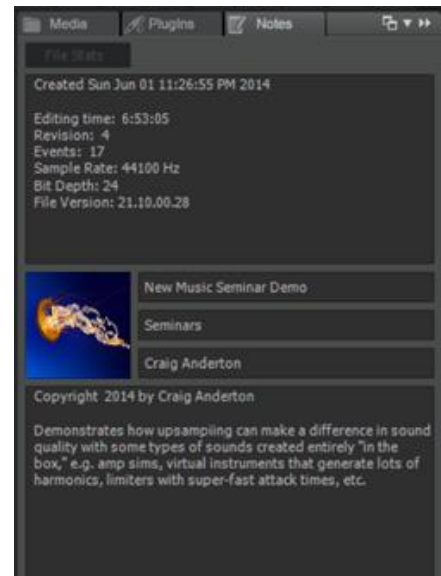
Improved Audio & MIDI Setup for New Users

Artist, Professional, Platinum

It's now easier than ever to get started with SONAR, and navigate the world of audio and MIDI setup. The onboarding process takes a new user through setting all necessary preferences, without having to visit the Preferences menus, and starts with the following screen shot.

After the welcome screen, additional dialog boxes appear for audio setup where you can choose the input and output audio devices, MIDI setup, the option to enable analytics, and finally, a "Let's Get Started" screen when you can choose to open a demo song, use a template, or start a new empty project.

The Audio Setup screen also has an Advanced option for choosing the driver mode, sample rate, and bit depth.

Note that if you change interfaces or want to alter preferences, even veteran users can find following this process faster than going through the Preferences menus. As a result, you can call up the onboard process at any time by choosing *Utilities > Audio & MIDI Setup.*

Synth Handling Improvements
Artist, Professional, Platinum

The 2016.11 update includes three enhancements for virtual instrument handling.

SYNTH RACK DOCKING IMPROVEMENTS

The Synth Rack offers some extremely useful features, like being able to show a select group of controls without having to open an instrument's user interface. Previously, you needed to undock the Synth Rack in order to expose its controls, but now if you open the Synth Rack by choosing *Views > Synth Rack Views* (or typing CtrL+Shift+S), it will default to opening as a floating window which you can dock in the Multidock or the Browser. Opening in the Multidock is particularly useful, because it helps make full use of the Synth Rack's capabilities—it's easy to see lots of assigned controls. Note that you will not see assigned controls when the Synth Rack is docked in the Browser.
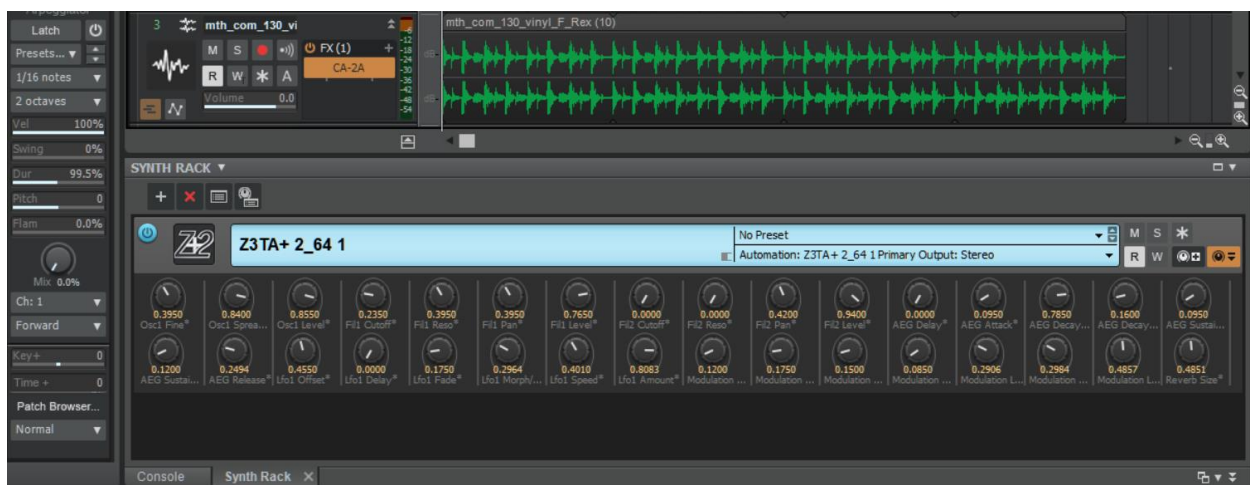
AUTOMATIC SYNTH DELETION

If you delete an Instrument track, whether a Simple Instrument track or part of an instrument folder, SONAR will no longer "orphan" the synth. As long as no other tracks route to the synth, it will be deleted upon deleting the instrument track, thus freeing up memory.

OPEN SYNTH FROM TRACK VIEW
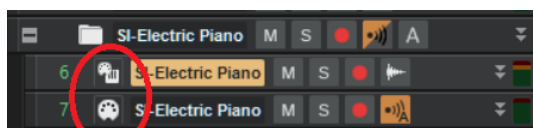
You can open a virtual instrument's UI by clicking on a track header's audio or MIDI icon, whether as a Simple Instrument or as tracks within a folder.

Control Bar Module Lock and Justify
Artist, Professional, Platinum

The Control Bar was a big hit when it was introduced, and it has undergone several enhancements. In previous versions, you could lock the module order to remove the "grabbers" to the left of each module to create more space for Control Bar modules but with the new Module Lock and Justify command, you can justify the modules to spread them out over the Control Bar's length.

This is particularly useful now that Lenses allow for simplified setups that can store custom Control Bar setups. These can now be spread out so you can see each module clearly and obviously.

To Lock and Justify Control Bar modules, right-click in the Control Bar and choose (perhaps not surprisingly) Lock Module Order and Justify. The following screen shot shows a custom theme, with the modules used for the Basic Lens spread across the Control Bar.
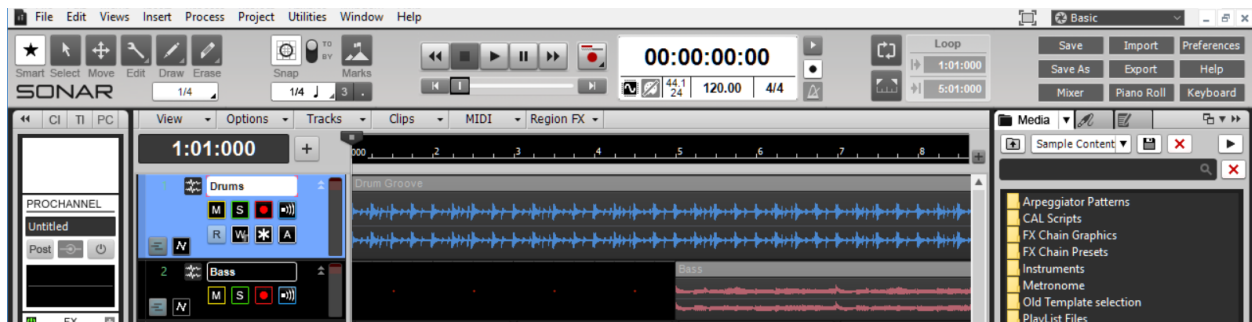
New Start Screen Behavior
Artist, Professional, Platinum

After a steady stream of enhancements, for many users the Start Screen has now become the "go-to" way to start or open a project, as well as to keep up on notifications for when updates are available. So in response to many requests, if the preference "Show Start Screen" is checked you no longer have to open the Start Screen after a project closes—instead, the Start Screen re-appears after closing a project so you can open or start another project easily. If you don't want to use the Start Screen, leave "Show Start Screen" unchecked and the Start Screen will not appear under any circumstances.
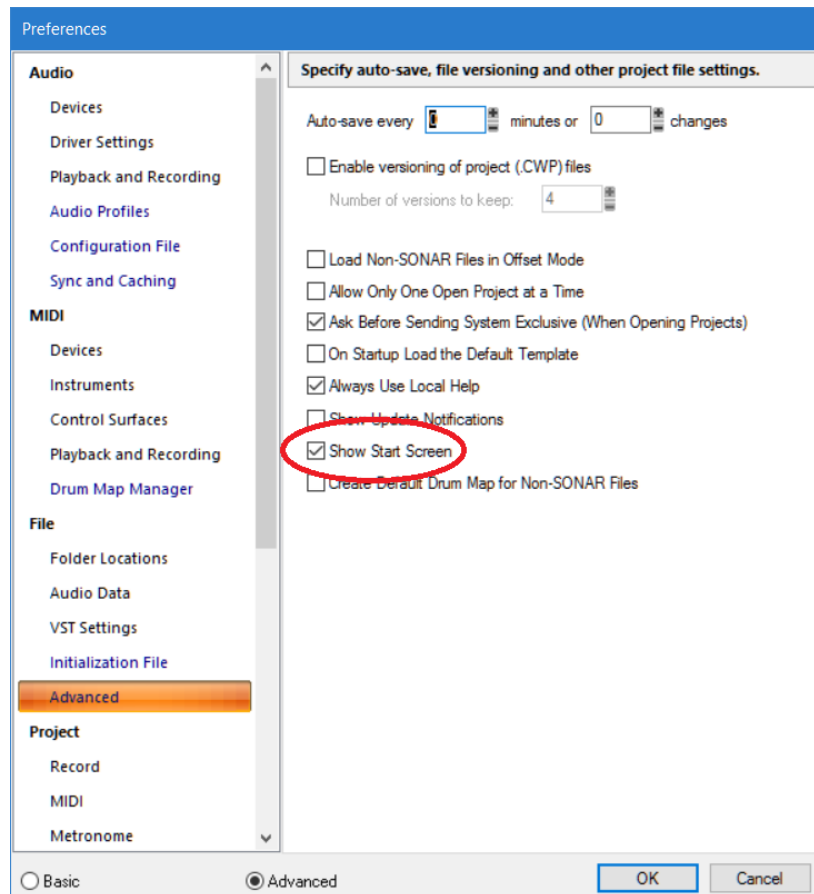
Fixes and Enhancements

- Various audio engine improvements for WASAPI Exclusive driver mode
- Fixed glitching with WDM/WaveRT drivers on devices that have a preferred buffer size
- Plug-ins are no longer hidden behind floating windows when the floating window has the focus
- Dragging from Matrix View to Clips Pane draws correctly, and drops in the right location
- Full screen mode now restores to original app size
- SONAR Artist EQ Module has correct text color
- Undo Delete Synth reconnects to the correct Synth in the Synth Rack
- Re-doing a drop into the Matrix View to create a cell restores color properly
- Replacing Matrix View cells restores the original correctly on undo
- Clearing a Step Seq pattern no longer orphans Matrix Cells linked to the pattern
- Preview in Loop Construction view always begins at the start of the clip
- 32-bit Boost 11 is properly categorized in the plug-in database
- Note head is visible, as expected, when selected with the right-click lasso
- Clef types are consistent in the Staff View Layout dialog
- LANDR is now downloaded from the Utilities Menu, and has been removed from the SONAR C3 download

Charting Now in SONAR:
The Top 10 Non-Bundled Plug-Ins

SONAR's bundled plug-ins (for the purposes of this Top 10, I'm also considering third-party plug-ins included with SONAR as "bundled") get far and away the greatest number of instances in your projects, and why not? They're great, and provide a really comprehensive selection.

However there's a whole wide world of other plug-ins, and some are definitely more popular than others. So, let's take a look at the Top 10 non-bundled plug-ins that are inserted in your projects.

#1: Slate Digital Virtual Mix Rack

Slate Digital made a smart move: Their Virtual Mix Rack (like a software version of a 500 series module rack) is a free download, and you can also download the Monster Extreme Dynamic Processor for free to get you started. From there, you can popular the mix rack with a bunch of other plug-ins—not unlike having a secondary ProChannel in your FX Rack—from any one of several subscription options.

#2: FabFilter Pro-Q2

The Pro-Q2 has garnered a near-fanatical following in the world of EQ plug-ins—not surprising, because before Cakewalk introduced the LP EQ, it was many SONARians' go-to processor for mid/side processing as well as standard EQ, with the ability to do linear-phase operation. But it has lots of other goodies—up to 24 bands of EQ, auto-gain and auto-scale, EQ match using the sidechain input, and more. At $179 it's not necessarily cheap, but enough musicians have spent the bucks that this popular plug-in has a solid lock on the #2 slot.

#3: Native Instruments Guitar Rig 5

Even though Overloud's TH3 is bundled and gets a ton of inserts, every guitarist knows just one guitar and one amp is never enough—and when NI's Guitar Rig turned into more of a processing rack, it became more than just a tool for guitar players. Holding on to the #3 slot, Guitar Rig's specialty is blending synthesis modulation with down and dirty guitar amp tones.

#4: Slate Digital Virtual Tape Machines

One reason Console Emulators and Tape Emulators get a lot of inserts is because it's common to add these types of emulators to every channel. Among non-bundled tape emulation, Slate Digital's Virtual Tape Machines rules the roost, and provides a useful variation on SOANR's included tape emulation. Analog tape may be dead (or at least, on life support) but apparently, the sound of analog tape is alive and well.

#5: IK Multimedia AmpliTube 4

We know that a lot of SONAR users play guitar, and all you need for proof is the presence of three non-bundled amp sims in the Top 10. This also means SONAR users realize that amp sims are as individual as physical amps—if for no other reason than because Overloud, Native Instruments, and IK Multimedia bring their own unique modeling methods to giving us cool amp sounds.

#6: Antares Auto-Tune VST

Admittedly, Melodyne gets a zillion more inserts than Auto-Tune. But for a non-bundled plug-in, Antares's venerable pitch correction making #6 in the Top 10 is a bit of a surprise. Clearly, it's still alive and kickin'—as well as still correcting warblers.

#7: Toontrack EZMix

EZMix is one of those clever "Why didn't someone think of this before?" processors. For those who want to use presets—either as a starting point, or a final destination—EZMix makes it…well, easy. Even if you're not really into using presets, EZMix will get you in the ballpark so you can do additional tweaking. But will iZotope's Nucleus take some of the wind out of EZMix's sales? We'll find out.

#8: Waves RCompressor Mono

All of the plug-ins in Waves' Renaissance Series have been popular, and many have attained the status of being classic plug-ins. But of all of them, SONAR users give a big thumbs-up to the RCompressor. Light on CPU, easy to use, and with an internal brickwall limiter for a clip-free output, it provides another flavor of compression to complement SONAR's bundled compressors.

#9: IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3

Like Slate Digital, IK Multimedia has two slots in the Top 10—and they're both guitar amp sims. However, it's surprising that given AmpliTube 3's popularity, more people haven't upgraded to

AmpliTube 4 to push the newer amp sim higher in the charts. Then again IK really got it right with AmpliTube 3, if you have that and Overloud's TH3 Cakewalk, you're pretty much covered anyway.

#10: iZotope Alloy 2
Some people think of Alloy as "Ozone lite," but that's not really the case. Alloy is more CPU-friendly, and consolidates a bunch of useful modules (equalizer, transient shaper, exciter, dual dynamics, de-esser, and limiter) in a single plug-in to make it a one-stop solution for a multitude of processing applications.

Conclusions

Few developments have affected the world of digital audio as much as Steinberg's invention of Virtual Studio Technology (yes, that's what VST stands for). Although as expected the most popular "go-to" plug-in choices for SONARians are ProChannel modules and bundled plug-ins, there are some definite favorites from the "outside world." If you spend time in the SONAR forums, you've seen a lot of references to FabFilter's Pro-Q2 so its popularity comes as no surprise; but what *is* a bit of a surprise is that amp sims hold down three of the Top 10 positions, especially given how often the bundled TH3 Cakewalk amp sim gets inserted. But overall, it's a pretty well-balanced collection.

Review: KRK V6 Series 4 Nearfield Monitors

by Phil O'Keefe

[Note: This article is adapted with permission from <u>Harmony Central</u>, which like Cakewalk and KRK, is a Gibson Brand. However the V Series, which previewed at AES, has had an extremely positive response so we felt this was something SONAR owners would want to know about, regardless of corporate entanglements. Besides, we were able to pull some strings to get them for review before everyone else ☺.]

When KRK first came to prominence, it was as a high-end monitor manufacturer with a reputation for making products that were embraced by well-known recording engineers. Eventually KRK branched out and offered products targeted to various markets, including the larger home recording market, where products like the ROKIT series have been extremely successful. However, the company remains committed to providing products for serious project studios and professional users, which brings us to the KRK V6 Series 4 nearfield monitors.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- The V6 is the middle monitor in the new V Series generation 4 lineup, with the larger V8 and slightly smaller V4 filling out the series. The V6 is a two-way nearfield monitor with a 6.5" woofer and 1" dome tweeter.

- The cabinets on the 4th generation V6 are made from MDF with an aluminum front baffle plate, and feature a front-ported bass reflex design. Each monitor measures 13.89" H x 9.09" W x 11.34" D and weighs 20.72 pounds.

- On the bottom of the cabinet, a non-skid EVA foam pad helps isolate the speaker acoustically from the surface on which it sits. You'll also find threaded universal mounting points installed on the bottom of the cabinets.

- A large port located on the bottom of the monitor's front face, just below the woofer, looks roughly rectangular at first glance but is actually shaped as an isosceles trapezoid. The shape, coupled with the large size, really does a good job at all but eliminating distracting wind blasts that often accompany front-facing round ports.

- The KRK custom-designed 6.5" woofer is made from woven Kevlar, which translates to low weight and incredible strength. It uses a ferrite magnet and has a cast aluminum frame to help reduce the weight.

- Unusually, the 1" dome tweeter is also made from Kevlar. Like the woofer it was custom designed by KRK and features a ferrite magnet.

- The woofer and tweeter are bi-amped, and driven by lightweight and efficient Class-D amplifiers with 125W dedicated to the woofer and 30W for the tweeter (155W total per speaker). This drives the KRK V6 Series 4 to a maximum peak SPL of 115 dB.

- The KRK logo on the front panel is illuminated and serves as a power-on indicator. You can dim or even turn off the illumination with rear-panel switches.

- The logo slowly dims and brightens cyclically to indicate when the monitors have gone into their low-power standby mode (i.e., when they haven't received any signal for more than 30 minutes). You don't have to think about this feature or "do" anything - when you're not using the speakers they go to low-power mode, and once they start receiving signal again, they wake up.

- The monitors include optional metal grilles. You remove six bolts from the monitor's front, lift off the aluminum faceplate, place the grille and faceplate into position, and then re-attach the bolts. Those who travel with their speakers will appreciate the grilles, but just about everyone else will probably leave them off.

- The rear panel has not only the XLR input jack, IEC power cable port, and power switch, but also various controls for adapting the monitors to your room and preferences. KRK gives a lot of options; There are a total of 49 different combinations of EQ voicing variations.

- A -dB Level Attenuation switch trims the response from 0 to -3.0 dB in half-decibel steps, which is handy for matching the KRK V6 Series 4 monitor levels to another set of speakers you may also be using as a secondary reference.

- The High and Low EQ Controls each have seven-position knobs, with settings of H1 - H7 for the highs, and L1 - L7 for the lows. The "flat" position for each is the 4 setting.

- Going from H1 to H7, the high frequency switch positions let you select among a high shelf with -2 dB at 10 kHz, high shelf with -1 dB at 10 kHz and a parametric EQ with -1 dB at 3.5 kHz, high-mid parametric EQ with -1 dB at 3.5 kHz, flat, high-mid parametric EQ with + 1 dB at 3.5 kHz, high shelf with +1 dB at 10 kHz and parametric EQ with +1 dB at 3.5 kHz and high shelf with +2 dB at 10 kHz.

- The low frequency switch offers a similar set of cut and boost options, with the low shelf being set at 75 Hz, and a PEQ adjusting the low-mids at 200 Hz.

- A panel of five DIP switches, labeled System Settings, control standby, ground lift, input sensitivity, input level attenuation (-10 dBV or +4 dBu), and the behavior of the front panel logo LED.

- With this many switch positions it would be easy to forget what everything does, but fortunately KRK has clearly labeled the rear panel so you don't need to hunt for a manual.

LIMITATIONS

- You'll find a Micro USB port on the rear panel. KRK says that at some point they may offer user-updates to the onboard DSP (which is mainly used for the EQ adjustments) via this port, but it currently offers no user options, nor can it charge external USB devices.

- While it's easy to set up the speakers to run at -10 dBV levels, there are no unbalanced RCA or stereo 1/8" inputs. If you need to connect your mobile device or something using RCA connectors, you'll need suitable adapters.

- The EQ switches, while powerful and offering settings that are generally useful in a wide range of situations do not allow boosting the high mids at 3.5 kHz while slightly attenuating the highs at 10 kHz, or vice versa. In other words, the highs and mids cannot be adjusted independently. Likewise, the low and low midrange EQ cannot be adjusted individually, so you can't cut the low mids at 200 Hz while boosting the bottom at 75 Hz with the low frequency controls.

CONCLUSIONS

KRK says they sought the input of hundreds of professional engineers, producers and mixers in developing the 4th generation V Series monitors. This input obviously played an important role, and helped KRK dial in the sound in a way that is accurate and yet still widely appealing. These speakers were designed to provide the crucial monitoring accuracy that's essential in professional studios, and which will also be appreciated by professional sound design and broadcast facilities. With loads of options available for tailoring their response to your room and personal tastes, they're bound to work well in a variety of acoustical environments—although I do wish the high and low midrange parametric equalizers at 3.5 kHz and 200 Hz were adjustable separately from the high and low shelving equalizers. Fortunately that won't be a significant issue for most users.

I really like the sound of these monitors. They're plenty fast in terms of the transient response, and you'll find ample bass too, especially for a mid-sized nearfield with only a 6.5" woofer. The treble is unique from the Kevlar tweeter, with a very alluring and expansive stereo soundscape that's almost three-dimensional in character. A step up from the KRK ROKITs, the KRK V Series is more refined, detailed and expensive sounding without costing a lot more money. I can see these becoming popular with discerning home studio users as well as with professional engineers, especially because the price is so surprisingly low for a professional reference speaker of this quality.

RESOURCES

KRK V6 Series 4 powered nearfield studio monitors (each $799 MSRP, $599 "street")
KRK's product web page
KRK V Series 4 quick start guide (PDF file)

Surfboard

Surfing the boards in the SONAR forum can uncover a wealth of great tips, like these…

On Stop, Rewind to Now Marker

A simple question leads to a plethora of ways to speed up workflow by assigning key bindings for transport functions—and you'll also find out about the mysterious "stop on fade" function.

Will SONAR 6 CWB Files Open in the Latest SONAR?

In addition to answering the OP's question, there are several great tips about what to do when switching over to a new computer—especially in terms of dealing with third-party plug-ins.

SONAR X3 and Update Kontakt 5.6.1 Failure

This thread is about a lot more than just a problem with updating Kontakt—it gets to the heart of Windows, the importance of making sure the C++ Runtime Libraries are up to date, and how to make sure that they are.

How to Modify Video Position in SONAR Platinum?

Some people think you can't move a video along the timeline in SONAR Platinum, but you can. The trick is knowing what file format to use, and what video engine to use—this thread reveals all about how to move videos in SONAR.

SONAR Professional or Platinum? Is Platinum Worth the Extra Money?

This thread not only gives perspective on the original question, but turns into a wide-ranging and informative discussion of the necessity (or lack thereof) to invest in third-party plug-ins, the value of SONAR's bundled plug-ins, whether Lifetime Updates are enough of a reason to upgrade to Platinum, and a lot more.

SONAR 2016.11 Release eZine