

SONAR 2015

“Hopkinton” Update





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This update (and there really is a town named “Hopkinton”) brings a renovated Start Screen, along with a new family of templates so you can get started recording or songwriting faster. And it’s not just about starting projects, but also finishing them—courtesy of six mastering FX chains from Dan Gonzalez. There are also bug fixes and a review of the JamStix controller...and while we’d love to stay and chat, we need to get back to work on the enhanced track routing and recording features coming in the next two months. Stay tuned. – *Bill Jackson and the Cakewalk Team*



Enhanced Start Screen: The new Start Screen is designed to make it easier to locate and load projects, find out the latest news about SONAR, choose templates easily, pin projects so they’re always available until unpinned, scan thumbnails of projects, and more—including a rotating series of tips.



New Project Templates: We’ve added several new templates, including Mastering templates so you can drag in your mixed file and start tweaking, MIDI songwriting templates with a standard instrument collection, Showcase templates for auditioning SONAR features, and Mixing templates for common mixing scenarios.



Mastering FX Chains: These six chains, designed by Dan Gonzalez, complement the new Mastering Project Templates with chains that can help tweak your stereo mixes—from smooth to seriously nasty.



Workflow Enhancements and Fixes: This update includes multiple fixes, but this month the emphasis is on graphic improvements to waveform drawing, particularly with Groove Clips.



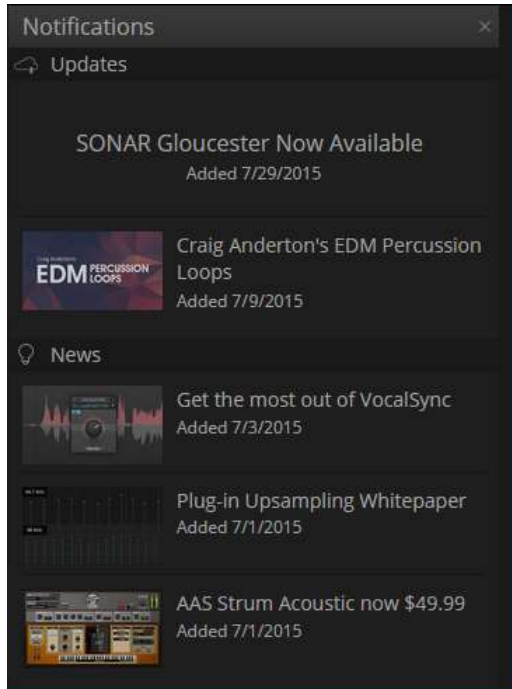
Review | TC Electronic Polytune Plug-In: Of course, SONAR includes a tuner. However, the Polytune offers a different take by including a polyphonic mode that shows at a glance which strings are out of tune and need a touch-up.

How to Download Hopkinton

Open the **Cakewalk Command Center**, then download from the core SONAR Artist, Professional, or Platinum category. Please note that a **Command Center 1.1** was introduced during July; please update to the latest version if you haven't already done so.

Enhanced Start Screen

Artist, Professional, Platinum



SONAR's new Start Screen is designed to connect users to SONAR through a screen that's helpful, engaging, and doesn't intrude on the creative process. Its main goals are to provide a more efficient way to find and open projects, as well as offer notifications.

NOTIFICATIONS

The notifications "bell" in the upper right shows the number of unread notifications, so you don't need to click to find out if there's anything new. Notifications include update announcements for SONAR (you won't have to keep looking for that sticky at the top of the forum any more), links to new blog posts, Cakewalk-related news, limited-time offers, and the like. Most notifications have clickable links to take you to a web page with more information.

CREATING AND WORKING ON MUSIC

Starting a project and working on music is the Start Screen's top priority. The left side of the Start Screen shows various options; selecting one populates the center with possible choices.

New Project opens the default template from the enhanced Templates screen.

Recent Projects shows the 16 most recent projects opened within SONAR. Here are some additional features.

- If you want one or more of these to remain available regardless of when they were opened, click on the pin button in the project slide's upper left.
- The thumbnail is a snapshot of the project's state when it was closed, which can be helpful in confirming this is the project you want.
- To show project info (when last modified, when created, tempo, sample rate, and time signature), click on the Info button in the lower right.
- You can launch the project from the info window, by clicking on the project thumbnail, or clicking on the project name.

New from Template is an upgrade from the former “template laundry list.” Hopkinton includes new types of templates including Mastering, Mixing, and Showcases. Note that it’s also easy to “favorite” a template: click in the template image’s upper left corner; the star indicates which template will load when you select New Project. For more details, see the section on templates.

Existing Project opens the Program Files/Cakewalk Projects folder using the original “File Open” dialog so you can choose any project in the folder.

Video Tutorials populates the center screen with a variety of “how-to” and tip-oriented videos.

QUICK TIP

The Quick Tip section in the lower left rotates among various tips and also may include some thought-provoking quotes. Reading the tips is a painless way to gain a little more SONAR expertise every time you open the Start Screen.

BYPASSING THE START SCREEN

If you’re in a hurry, type Ctrl+N to open the favorite template immediately, without seeing the Start Screen first. However, this requires creating a project folder manually when you save; see New Preferences for details.

YES, THE FILE MENU STILL EXISTS

- *File > New* opens the New Project File dialog box introduced in Gloucester where you can specify project parameters such as Meter, Tempo, Bit Depth, and Sample Rate, as well as access a template using the standard file selector.
- *File > Open* opens the Program Files/Cakewalk Projects folder.
- *File > Revert* shows a list of saved versions so you can “roll back” to a previous version.
- *File > Start Screen* opens the Start Screen.

NEW PREFERENCES

You can control SONAR’s behavior when it starts up with additional preferences under *Preferences > File > Advanced*.

- To open SONAR to an empty project and choose what you want from the Start Screen, uncheck “On Startup Load Basic Template” and check “Show Start Screen on Launch.” This provides the greatest flexibility on startup.

- To always open with your favorite template and bypass the Start Screen, check “On Startup Load Basic Template” and uncheck “Show Start Screen on Launch.” Because you don’t have to name the project, this offers the fastest way to get started if you usually start with a template. However, note that in this case file management is under Windows and not SONAR, so to create a per-project folder you’ll need to create a folder and choose it when saving. This is also the case if you create a new project by typing Ctrl+N.

New Project Templates

Artist, Professional, Platinum

To get you started making music faster, Hopkinton includes several new templates including Mastering, Mixing, and Showcase templates.

MASTERING TEMPLATES



These six templates come pre-loaded with their respective mastering FX chains (see the Mastering FX Chains section for more information), designed by Dan Gonzalez.

MIX TEMPLATES



The Mix templates (one each for Rock, Pop, and Hip Hop) have track/bus names and icons for common projects in various genres.

SHOWCASE TEMPLATES

The Showcase Templates highlight particular SONAR features, facilitate songwriting, or make it easy to check out particular effects or FX chains. Furthermore, if you encounter an effect or instrument you like, you can save it as a track template and use it in any of your projects. Here are details on the various showcases.

Amps: Loads ten tracks with effects based around Overloud's TH2 amp sim.

CA-X Amps: Loads 12 tracks, each with its own CA-X custom guitar amp.

CA-X Bass: Loads 11 tracks, each with its own CA-X custom bass amp, and five more tracks with individual effects.

Drum Loop FX: Loads empty tracks populated with 16 drum-friendly effects and FX Chains—drag some drum loops in to hear how these effects can process the sounds.

Electronic: Loads six synth-oriented patches based around the Cakewalk Sound Center, and two around the SI Bass instrument.

Mastering FX Chains

Artist, Professional, Platinum

By Dan Gonzalez

These mastering FX chains complement the new Mastering Project Templates. While they're optimized for stereo mixes, as usual with recording there are no rules—feel free to try these with individual tracks as well.

Remember that the input levels to these processors will impact the sound considerably; if the mix is hot, you'll probably need to start with any "Louder" control pulled down a bit, and you'll get more compression than if the mix has a fair amount of headroom. The control settings provide a good point of departure, but don't be afraid to tweak the parameters to match the mastering to your music.

A BIT LOUDER



A single soft-knee compressor provides 6.5 dB of gain, but the output limiter is enabled so the sound stays clean. The Attack and Release settings have been stylized for a smooth character; adjust them to taste. For more compression, drop the Threshold and if needed, raise the Louder control to provide makeup gain. Note that while the Limiter can keep levels under control, you can push it only so far—if the audio starts pulsing or rushing, turn down Louder.

BRIGHT AND AGGRESSIVE



A hard knee compressor pulverizes the incoming audio signal the more you turn up the Aggressive knob. Once you've nailed the character, then drop the threshold for even more compression on your mix. The "Brighter" button defaults to on, and adds an element of "air" to your mix. This Mastering effect is ideal for dull and boring mixes, and depending on the other control settings, you can often get away with turning up the Louder control so the processed version is quite a bit louder than the unprocessed version.

CRUSHED



This is the quintessential compressor processor for take-no-prisoners mastering. There are two compressors in series: the first one mashes down outlying transients, while the second one adds a smooth finish to your master. The default settings are pretty extreme, so use Tighten and Aggression to find the best character, then boost the overall signal with the Louder knob. As an added touch, the Brightness switch banishes dullness if needed.

LOUDER AND SCOOPED



Does your mix sound, well, strange? This FX chain boosts and cuts in all the right places, with a Drive button and Tighten control to add character. Note that you'll probably want to start off with the Louder control around 50%, and be careful about turning up too far—or the output limiter will complain and start to stutter. Add some focus to the sub frequencies, and your master should start to sound like record.

SMOOTH



This is based on a soft knee compression-based architecture that widens and smoothes out your master. The Smooth and Aggression parameters can add excitement with the added benefit of a Width button which, when activated, spreads out the stereo image by 150%.

WIDER



This FX Chain offers both a Width control and two Tighten parameters to simplify the mastering process. Add a bit of Tighten 1 for some control, and then a bit of Tighten 2 to completely crush your mix.

Fixes and Workflow Enhancements

Artist, Professional, Platinum

Control Surfaces / ACT

Fixed an issue where input echo would not work correctly when using ACT.

Lanes / Comping

Fixed an issue where adding fades could cause waveforms not to draw correctly on Groove clips

Track View: Strips and Clips

- Unmuting a clip with the Mute tool always displays mute states of clips correctly
- Fixed an issue where waveforms would draw as if faded while extending groove clips
- Waveforms always draw correctly under crossfades when zoomed in
- Shift-clicking a track number in the Track View immediately draws the selection range
- Tracks remain selectable if track strip icons are disabled
- Groove clip waveforms will correctly display over tempo changes (CWBRN-7012)

Demo

Sonar Demo now longer prompts to save a project.

Drum Replacer

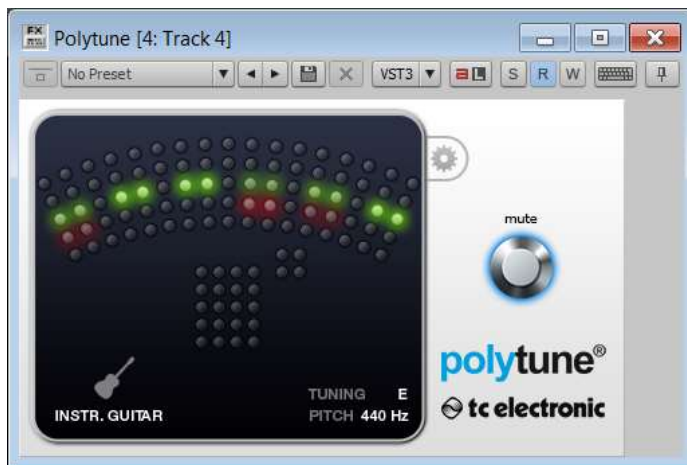
The Drum Replacer now opens the correct help topic.

Review: TC Electronic Polytune Plug-In

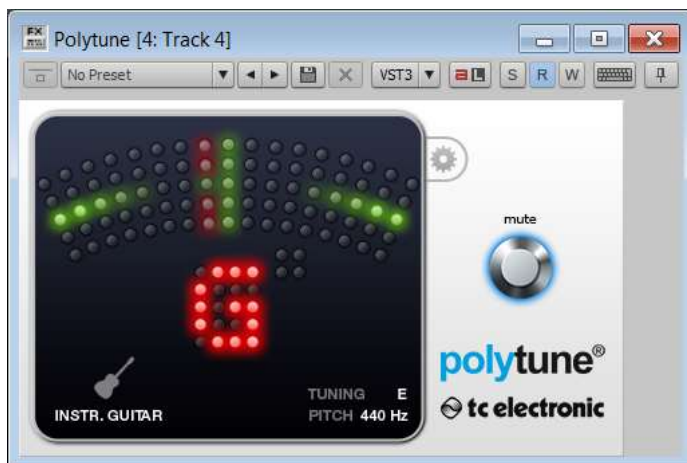
By Craig Anderton

Occasionally someone asks in the forum if SONAR includes a tuner. It does, because the TH2 amp included in all versions incorporates a tuner. However, TC has an interesting variation on the tuner concept because it shows a readout of the tuning for all six strings to indicate which ones are out of tune. Pluck that string, and the tuner automatically goes into a chromatic tuning mode to tweak that one string. The plug-in (which is available in 32- or 64-bit VST2, VST3, AU, and AAX formats) is \$50, or about the same price as the hardware version.

When you first strum, the display shows all six strings.



The display above is indicating that the E, G, and B strings are slightly flat, with the G string being most out of tune. When you start to tune an individual string, Polytune goes automatically into Chromatic mode.



However, note there are several options. You can choose between guitar or bass tuning, needle or strobe mode for the chromatic tuner, reference pitch from 435 to 445 Hz in single-digit increments, and dropped tunings that are down from 1 to 5 semitones, in semitone increments. There's also a mute button so you can tune while recording without sending any signal to SONAR. The only significant limitation is you can run only one instance of Polytune in a project at a time, so if you're switching back and forth between two tracks of guitars, you'll need to drag Polytune to the appropriate FX rack.

Now, I have to admit I don't mess with tuners much anymore because 90% of the time I'll use a guitar with Gibson's G FORCE, but I've found this extremely handy for bass and guitars that don't have G FORCE. The polyphonic mode does speed up tuning by giving an instant "reality check" on what's going on with your tuning, and besides, it looks really cool. Unless you want to spring for the Deluxe version of Peterson's Strobosoft (\$99), the Polytune is all you need to help you tune simply and efficiently.

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“Hopkinton” Release eZine

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