

Rocked & Rated



Audio Pro Tools SE can record up to 16 audio tracks from your guitar or microphones



Pro Tools SE You get a cut-down version of the most famous recording software ever created

Loops Using the included loops, you can create backing tracks in no time

Avid Recording Studio £109

Get in on the recording game with this entry-level version of Pro Tools

Some products cater to their core market so well that they become by-words for their uses: we're used to 'Hoovering' our floors and hearing 'Auto-Tuned' vocals. The Pro Tools software is another such product, which revolutionised computer-based digital recording in the 90s and is now an industry standard, used in professional studios around the globe. Accordingly, the top-flight versions aren't cheap, but Avid's new package places the software within reach of those with a notepad full of songs and a wallet full of cobwebs.

Bundled in this package is a copy of Pro Tools SE and an M-Audio Fast Track interface. Once you're installed, you can get your audio signals into the computer via the Fast Track, which is equipped with a guitar-optimised input and an XLR socket with phantom power for using a condenser mic (this is perfect if you're recording acoustic guitars or vocals).

The Fast Track lets you record from both inputs at once, but because Pro Tools is locked to

Avid's family of interfaces, those who need more inputs/outputs (for recording a whole band at once, for example) will have to upgrade to a compatible device with more sockets.

If you've used Logic or Cubase in the past, you'll feel at home with Pro Tools. Building a track is quick thanks to the host of loops and virtual instruments. Once you've created your basic backing, you can overdub up to 16 audio tracks on top and then apply effects to the results. The loops are recorded at specific tempos, but Pro Tools automatically stretches them to fit the bpm of your song. For the most part, this works seamlessly, but it does become noticeable when you're making extreme stretches to the loop.

Let's not forget latency, the nemesis of computer recording. It's less of a problem these days, but if you do experience a delay between hitting your strings and hearing the sound in your headphones, the Fast Track offers Direct Monitoring. This feature routes the interface's inputs directly to its outputs and

you can blend between the input and computer-processed sounds with the level control.

Conclusion: Choosing your first recording package can be confusing, and that's after you've wrestled with the decision of recording on a computer vs a dedicated multi-track machine. But when you consider you'll be getting your ideas down using the same (albeit cut-down) format as many big-name artists and studios, you'll realise £100 is a small price to pay.
Stuart Williams

At a glance

Avid Recording Studio

TYPE: Recording software/interface bundle
SOFTWARE: Pro Tools SE
INTERFACE: M-Audio Fast Track
SOCKETS: Guitar/mic inputs, headphone out, line out, USB
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Windows XP/Mac OS X 10.5.8, 1.8GHz multi-core processor, 1GB RAM, USB
CONTACT: Avid 01753 659590
WEB: www.avid.com

SUMMARY

For: Access to Pro Tools on a budget

Against: The software only works with Avid interfaces

★★★★☆

TG says... All the tools for pro demos

"BUILDING YOUR BASIC BACKING TRACK IS QUICK THANKS TO THE HOST OF LOOPS AND VIRTUAL INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE"



This basic USB box has all the ins and outs you need to record guitars and vocals