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TRACKING
Determines how much variation in the waveform is deemed acceptable, affecting note tracking

KEY / SCALE
Select the key root note and scale type to base the pitch locking on

TRANSPOSE
Shift the entire output by up to an octave in either direction, in semitone increments

FORMANT
Activates formant correction, emulating the harmonics of a vocal tract

INPUT TYPE
Select between different vocal pitch ranges, instrument or bass

PITCH CORRECTION CONTROL
These are the basic controls for tweaking Automatic mode's retuning 'character'

MIDI CONTROL
Evo can learn a scale from the notes you play, or you can feed it target notes via MIDI

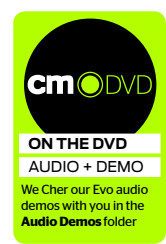
CORRECTION MODE
Select between Auto mode shown here and Graphical mode

VIBRATO CONTROLS
Breathe extra life into a tuned performance

EDIT SCALE DISPLAY
Make fine manual adjustments to the snap scale by removing or bypassing individual notes

Antares PC MAC COMPUTER MUSIC PERFORMANCE AWARD

Auto-Tune Evo £280



Vocal repitching is all the rage again, making the latest evolution of this infamous tuning plug-in all the more relevant

System requirements

- PC** Windows XP/Vista, VST/RTAS host
- Mac** OS X 10.4.11, VST/AU/RTAS host

Test system

- PC** Intel Core 2 Duo 1.86GHz, 2GB RAM, Windows XP

> When it first appeared in 1997, Antares Auto-Tune fast became a near-household name, which is unusual considering that audio plug-in technology was still in its infancy. Remarkably, despite a climate of growing controversy surrounding its use, Auto-Tune was rapidly accepted as an essential tool in studios around the world. It was heard applied to vocals on countless high-ranking chart releases, most notably Cher's *Believe*. Auto-Tune's abilities range from gentle tuning improvements to hard, robotic tuning that's anything but subtle.

Over the years, other companies have taken shots at creating alternative tuning products, to varying degrees of success. Antares have continued to develop a variety of (mostly vocal-orientated) effect plug-ins, including new versions of Auto-Tune, raising the bar a little each time. In recent months, Auto-Tune has enjoyed a surge in popularity, with artists such as T-Pain relying on it for their signature sounds.

A giant leap

Auto-Tune Evo represents a jump in functionality. All the familiar features remain intact, of course,

including highlights from Auto-Tune 5 (8/10, **cm109**), such as the Humanize and Natural Vibrato controls. Many features have been vastly improved, the most impressive being note-based graphical editing, which addresses the often fiddly nature of pitch editing in previous Auto-Tune incarnations.

Auto-Tune Evo certainly pulls no punches and is noticeably more accurate than previous versions, and over a broader variety of signal sources, too. For example, earlier Auto-Tunes sometimes had trouble with octave tracking, resulting in nasty side effects. While vocals are the main focus, other monophonic instruments are also catered for - including bass - by way of the Input Type control.

Time vs pitch

Working with Auto-Tune is much quicker in the classic Auto mode, but the improved pitch tracking is perhaps even more essential in the offline Graphical mode. Instead of snapping to a predefined musical scale, this plots a clear graph of time against pitch, known as the Pitch Graph. It shares many common controls with the classic

“Auto-Tune Evo represents a jump in functionality. Many features have been vastly improved”

Auto mode, such as the key/scale, throat modelling and transpose settings.

However, whereas in previous versions you edited a continuous line representing frequency, Evo can make musical sense of the content and present it to you as Note Objects – it’s like a monophonic piano roll for audio, which will be familiar to users of Celemony’s Melodyne. The editor has its own unique set of controls, which vaguely resemble Melodyne’s.

To get started, click the Track Pitch button and play back the section of audio to process. The Pitch Graph generates Evo’s interpretation of the pitch, represented by a red line. Clicking the Make Notes button creates Note Objects based on the original pitch contour, using bold white blocks to indicate where each note falls. You can then make virtually unlimited adjustments to the tuning using dedicated tools. Correction Curves and Correction Lines can also be used for wilder adjustments or for designing transitions between Note Objects. Once you’ve made your tweaks, you’ll see three contours: the original tracked pitch, the Correction Object pitch and the actual output pitch (the latter is new for Evo).

Host with the most

Because Evo synchronises playback with the host sequencer, it’s a lot like having an extra editing window in your DAW. Professional results are very easy to accomplish using this system, especially as it allows free copying and pasting of Correction Objects. This means that you can repeat corrections elsewhere in the project.

Simple pitch corrections are a doddle and unruly effects just as quick to accomplish. There’s even a window resizing function for the Pitch Graph mode; unfortunately, like the synchronisation feature, this only works in compatible hosts. At the time of writing, our test host (Cubase 4) doesn’t support real-time window resizing, although the default is reasonably sized and it’s possible to configure custom sizes from the options menu.

Other key new features include an automatable transpose control for pitchshifting the output by up to an octave in either direction,



Setting your vocals to a musical scale, throat modelling and wild effects can all be achieved with Auto-Tune Evo



Tuning up is easy in Auto-Tune Evo’s Pitch Graph mode, especially when using note objects

The numbers game

One of the finest new features of Auto-Tune Evo is related to note objects in the Pitch Graph mode. While other graphical tuning software packages have been known to demand a great level of skill and a significant amount of time, Antares have managed to simplify the process with the Number of Note Objects dial.

Essentially, this control enables you to define the level of detail with which you can edit Note Objects. With fewer Note Objects, you’ll be working with big blocks of notes; with more, musical phrases are split into multiple chunks, with fewer wild pitch modulations within. It’s readily comparable to

working with the sensitivity control in a hit-point editor such as ReCycle, whereby the higher the detail, the greater editing control you have over the audio.

Combine the Number of Note Objects tool with all the other editing features and it should be clear why we love Auto-Tune Evo so much. It’s very easy to achieve quick results, but just as importantly, all the tools are there for fine surgical adjustments – you can even set the Retune Speed for each correction object. Particularly when working with vocals, where you’re keen to maintain as natural a sound as possible, these tools are awesome.

and formant correction, which gives more natural results when shifting vocals by a large amount. There’s also a throat modelling feature: activate the Formant switch to use the Throat Length dial. A smaller vocal tract sounds more feminine or child-like, while a larger one sounds more masculine. Slight changes in either direction go a long way, but insane creative effects can be had with extreme settings. Bizarrely, the considerably pricier TDM version (for Pro Tools HD) *doesn’t* have the formant or throat modeling features.

It’s clear that Antares have worked hard to make Evo compete with the rivals that have popped up over the years. Although Celemony’s impressive-looking polyphonic Melodyne DNA technology is about to debut, it remains to be seen whether it can oust Auto-Tune from the monophonic throne, especially when it comes to handling those all-important vocals.

Celemony speculation aside, then, Auto-Tune Evo does its job remarkably well and sets new standards for vocal processing. It’s stable, tidy, flexible and sounds simply awesome. **cm**

Contact Sonic 8, 08701 657 456
 Web www.antarestech.com
 Info Upgrade, \$129; TDM version, £450

Alternatively

Celemony Melodyne plugin
cm110 >> 9/10 >> £250
 Auto-Tune’s biggest threat, sporting many similar features

GVST GSnap
N/A >> N/A >> £Free
 Windows plug-in with the most basic automatic tuning features

Verdict

For Easier to use than ever
 More control over fine details
 Note Objects system is great
 Sounds impossibly good
 More creative applications
 Two MIDI input modes

Against No formant mode included in TDM version

The best iteration of Auto-Tune yet offers great new features, easier editing and improved sound quality. Viva Evo!

9/10