

Sony Creative Software PC Sound Forge Pro 10 £380

You can master and edit audio inside most of today's DAWs, so is there still a case for using a dedicated audio editor like Sound Forge?

System requirements

PC 1GHz CPU, 512MB RAM,
Windows XP/Vista SP2

> Many **cm** readers will no doubt be familiar with Sound Forge, at least in name. From more humble beginnings back when it was a Sonic Foundry product to the brand new Sound Forge Pro 10 from Sony Creative Software, this audio editor has long been a staple of many studios and editing suites thanks to its straightforward layout and solid functionality. The last time we took a long, hard look at it was with version 7 (8/10, **cm70**), so we were keen to see how the app would stack up five years on.

Forging ahead

In case you're unfamiliar, Sound Forge is a standalone app that enables you to perform all the usual audio editing operations (cut, paste, trim, normalise, etc), add effects/fades, resample, record and even restore audio files, all through an intuitive interface. SF10 supports pretty much any audio file format, working at up to 64-bit/192kHz resolution, and it can host both DirectX and VST plug-ins, all while offering full Windows 7 compatibility - it's certainly what you'd call comprehensive.

Firing up SF10, it looks and feels almost

identical to the preceding version, which is actually reassuring. The menus and windows work in the same way, making experienced users feel instantly at home - if it ain't broke, don't fix it! Going a bit deeper, it's evident that some niggles have been addressed: working with multiple files in v9 led to a baffling mess due to the use of Windows' clunky multiple document interface, but they now appear neatly tabbed along the base of the work area.

Sticking with the visuals, there are plenty of View menu options for customising the main work area to your heart's content, and everything seems to dock together more neatly than before. Something we wish Sony had addressed this time, however, is that navigating the FX Favourites can be slow - if, like us, you have a multitude of plug-ins installed, the menu takes a very, very long time to scroll all the way to the bottom, which can be a pain.

Previous versions of Sound Forge included the Sony Time Stretch effect, which gave mixed results, often suffering from nasty flanging side effects. SF10 boasts the addition of zplane's tried-and-tested élastique Pro timestretching

“The new event-based editing system makes working with multiple audio events child’s play”

and pitchshifting plug-in. It does exactly what you’d hope, changing the pitch and/or time of your musical source with minimal artifacts. And if you just want to convert from one sample rate to another, the new iZotope 64-bit SRC function will do this for you with no discernible artifacts.

Keep the noise down

SF10 contains over 40 effects and still comes with the Noise Reduction 2 package, which is a helpful set of tools for restoring poor-quality recordings. New effects include a Resonant Filter plug-in (which is exactly what you’d expect) and the iZotope Mastering Effects Bundle 2, more on which you can read in the boxout, right. As in previous versions, there are plenty of automation and batch processing functions for alleviating the tedium of carrying out repetitive tasks.

Although SF10 is ideal for editing standard stereo format audio files, it also supports multichannel editing/recording and also boasts Dolby AC3/surround sound support, not to mention all-new direct editing of individual samples in GigaStudio/Sampler and SF2 instrument formats. Also on the editing front, the new event-based editing system makes working with multiple audio events in a single window child’s play, and becomes indispensable when fading together files or arranging audio into tracks for CD.

Feeling the burn

Not content with making audio editing look easy, burning audio CDs is also a doddle, with a new disc-at-once (DAO) burning option and CD-Text functionality included. It’s a little basic but handy for chucking files onto CD without the hassle of firing up a separate burning app. Another improvement is the replacement of the simplistic file properties editor with the more comprehensive Metadata editor, enabling you to tag each file with relevant information – vital when mastering for CD and using CD-Text.

For those who need greater CD-burning functionality, Sony’s CD Architect 5.2 is also included, giving you access to Red Book specification audio CD burning and being spot-on for producing pre-masters for replication. It’s dead easy, with drag-and-drop ordering of files, and it enables you to be as specific as you like regarding the layout and

configuration of your disc.

SF10 also has a genuinely useful Help menu and interactive tutorials, with the boxed version including a voucher for video training tutorials, all of which are great for audio editing novices. If you’re in need of an audio editing suite, or you’re dissatisfied with mastering/editing inside your sequencer, we heartily recommend SF10. However, existing users who own the already well apportioned version 9 will need to consider whether the revisions to SF10 make this upgrade worthwhile. **cm**

Contact Sony Creative, 0800 028 1475

Web www.sonycreativesoftware.com

Info Download version, £356

CD Architect 5.2, £90

Sound Forge Audio Studio 9, £45



The included iZotope mastering effects are rather similar to those in Ozone 4

Masters of the universe

SF10’s plug-in chainer enables you to connect up to 32 plug-ins in any order you like and process your audio files with that chain. This is pretty essential for mastering, and our time-honed preset chains created in v9 worked just fine in SF10, as you’d expect.

Now included with Sound Forge is the Mastering Effects Bundle 2, provided by audio wizards iZotope, makers of the excellent Ozone 4 (cm138, 10/10). In fact, the contained effects read almost identically to the module list from Ozone: Mastering EQ, Mastering Reverb, Multiband Compressor, Mastering Exciter, Mastering Imager and Mastering

Limiter. It’s no surprise, then, that the processors offer great quality and are thoroughly suitable for the majority of mastering situations. Though featuring slightly different GUIs and fewer features than the Ozone 4 modules (the absent MBIT+ dithering is actually included in the main Sound Forge Process menu), they’re certainly from the same stock and yield extremely similar results when loaded into an Ozone-esque plug-in chain. If you don’t already have Ozone 4, the Mastering Effects Bundle 2 could be a compelling reason to snap up SF10 – the only downer is that you can’t use the plug-ins outside Sound Forge.

Alternatively

Adobe Audition 3

cm126 >> 8/10 >> £320

Audio editor with novel graphical analysis and editing functions

Steinberg Wavelab 6

cm100 >> 7/10 >> £499

Sound Forge’s main rival, this PC audio editor has functions galore

Verdict

For Familiar interface

Easy to use

Extensive tutorials and good help

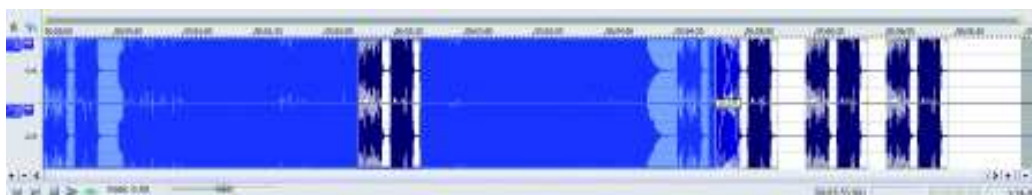
Includes iZotope mastering plug-ins

CD Architect 5.2 bundled in

Against Not vastly different to SF9

As with many of today’s updates, this is more of a refinement than an overhaul, but Sound Forge remains a strong option

8/10



The event-based editing system is new for Sound Forge Pro 10 and works a little like a single audio track in your DAW