



**WHAT IS IT?**

Steinberg's audio-to-picture focussed DAW

**CONTACT**

Who: Steinberg Media Technologies  
 Tel: +49 (0)404 2236 115  
 Web: [steinberg.net](http://steinberg.net)

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Batch audio export offers unparalleled possibilities
- 2 Enhanced media database system
- 3 Excellent native convolution reverb plug-in

**UPGRADES**

Upgrades from £212



# Steinberg Nuendo 5 | £1,531

Cubase's big brother promises new heights in DAW workflow, especially for post-production applications. **Robbie Stamp** evaluates the 'Nu' update

**N**uendo may rarely grace the pages of this magazine, while its DAW stable mate Cubase is a regular, but

why? Firstly, it commands the highest license-only price for a DAW, taking it out of the reach of many home studio or even semi-pro budgets.

Secondly, it's tailored for audio-to-picture work in TV/film/video game post-production and soundtrack composition, as well as surround sound mixing and sound design.

Nuendo has always been uniquely feature rich, presenting a massive audio workstation environment that I for one have found impossible to match. This richness makes it hard to cover all the aspects of Nuendo, so I shall

concentrate on the new features of version five.

**Code pokery**

As Steinberg have increased the audio-to-picture focus of Nuendo so the emphasis has been placed on associated 'production workflow', and the version five updates clearly reflect this. There are also many additions and enhancements for the benefit of the non-AV user over and above the rewritten program substructure. I have not been able to pinpoint what this latter rewrite may consist of, but multi-core CPU optimisation, improved 64-bit support and extra low latency operation under Windows 7/OS X Snow Leopard point to some serious code

poking. From my time with Nuendo 5, I can say that projects created in version three have opened without any problems and have run reliably trouble-free with no discernible change in CPU usage or latency performance. Installing Nuendo 5 is quick and simple, and for those upgrading from a previous version, there are very few settings transfer issues – all I had to do was point it to my non-native plug-ins folder and reset two key commands and I was back at work within minutes.

The most obvious change is visual with the interface colour scheme and styling given a much needed makeover. The overall layout has remained so there is nothing to wrong-foot the regular user, but subtle changes throughout enhance the user experience and incrementally improve the all important workflow. The high level of user configurability is still at Nuendo's core and has, to a larger degree, been improved upon.

The emphasis on post-production usage means many features are geared towards specific tasks and the repeatability thereof. To this end many setup processes, from track creation to plug-in selection, produce a (user configurable) preset menu. Though there are a plethora of factory presets that can overwhelm it is easy to filter out the ones you don't use or favour your own via a simple rating system. It is also quick to reduce the preset or

setup choice dialogues to the bare essentials. For those working with repeated tasks, such as dialogue dubbing (ADR) or Foley recording, these presets can speed up and hone processes, which in a deadline based industry, is a worthy enhancement.

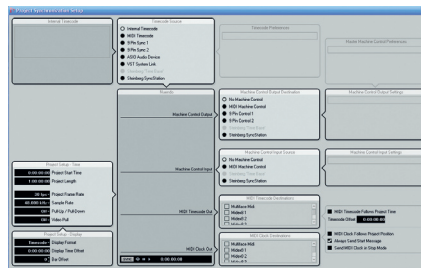
Another workflow winner included in version five is Clip Package import/export, a function aimed at Foley/SFX artists, though it has many more uses. Essentially it is a simple way to 'bag up' arrangements of audio events/clips spread across multiple tracks and export them as a single file. Thus sounds made from multiple layers can be quickly accessed, previewed and dropped into a new project.

### MediaBay

The most significant workflow development in this update is that of the MediaBay database system, which has been significantly improved visually and functionally. MediaBay allows the user to scan, access and index hard drives for all related media, from audio and video files to plug-in settings and

## Nuendo Video & Sync

For a DAW Nuendo 5 possesses a full set of video playback and synchronisation functions. The embedded video player and associated project window video track can handle a wide variety of digital formats (MOV, QT, MPEG-1/2/4, VOB, AVI, DV and WMV) with the project automatically adopting the frame rate of the video. Speed changes due to film and video transfers can be compensated for all the possible pull-up and pull-down rates due to format interchanges. The video playback can output to a window in Nuendo, but it also recognises multi-head and dedicated video cards



The Project Synchronization setup window with more options than you can shake a BetaMax at

and can even use FireWire to output DV video streams to camcorders/converters. External synchronisation and timecoding is also comprehensively catered for within the Project Synchronisation Setup page. This allows for timecode synchronisation via MIDI Timecode, two separate 9-pin Sync I/O (RS422), ASIO device,

the VST SystemLink (i.e. on a Nuendo multi workstation network), or Steinberg's own SyncStation and Timebase units. The main project window grid allows for any number of ruler tracks that can display position by timecode, 16mm and 35mm film and the video fps, as well as the usual time or bars/beats.

# MediaBay allows the user to scan, access and index all related media, from audio files to plug-in settings

track presets, with the resulting catalogue library being available to any Nuendo workstation accessing the scanned drive. Comprehensive metadata-based searching, editing and filtering can seem daunting, especially with multiple hard drives, but I have found the MediaBay a powerful and intuitive tool which has already started to revolutionise my work practice. The metadata fields available for editing and

searching can be tailored to a wide range of tasks, especially those in AV post-production. The previewing even has an 'Align Beats to Project' function so audio can be heard at the destination tempo, which really helps with rhythm track creation.

Other post production oriented additions include EDL (Edit Decision List – the timecode/reel data for film edits) import in the CMX3600 format

and import/export of CSV formatted markers. The latter function makes good use of Nuendo's multiple marker tracks with data field options

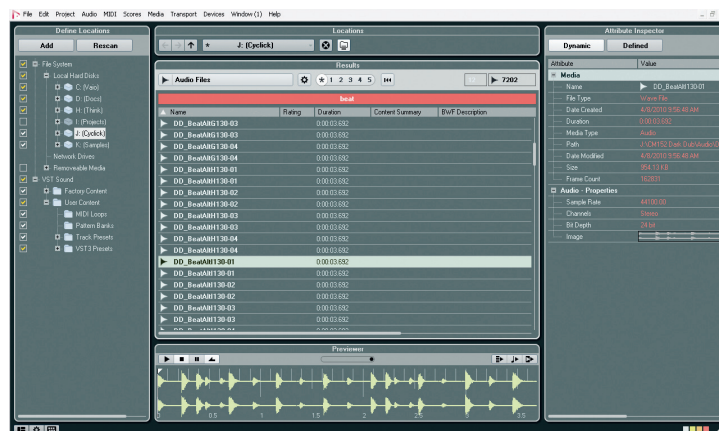
for ADR, Foley, dialogue spotting and SFX as well as standard audio editing.

Steinberg have also added a live recording spin to their marketing of Nuendo by including a large Remaining Recording Time display, global track record arming/disarming and, most importantly, a Lock Record function to prevent accidental interruption of the recording. Nuendo also supports the Wave64 file format which has no file size limit, unlike WAV, BWF and AIFF (2GB max).

### Plug in, warp out

There are a few additions to the native VST3 plug-ins, though two are updates from the VST2 format (Surround Matrix Encoder & Decoder). Adding to the substantial surround capabilities of this program is the Surround Panner V5 which expands the track based panner into a comprehensive placement tool, which with automation can add some powerful effects and movement to the surround mix.

The PitchDriver and PitchCorrect (pitch shifter and pitch correction



The new look MediaBay with waveform display previewer and file attributes

### SPECS

#### System Requirements:

**PC:** Windows XP SP2, Vista (32-bit & 64-bit), Windows 7 (32-bit & 64-bit), 2GHz CPU (Dual Core recommended), 1GB RAM, display resolution 1280 x 800 pixels or higher, ASIO or DirectX audio hardware, QuickTime 7.1, Video Card supporting OpenGL 2.2 (2.0 recommended), DVD ROM drive for installation, USB slot for eLicenser

**Mac:** OS X 10.5.8 or higher, Intel Core CPU (Duo recommended), 1GB RAM, CoreAudio audio hardware, display resolution 1280 x 800 pixels or higher, QuickTime 7.1, Video Card supporting OpenGL 2.2 (2.0 recommended), DVD ROM drive for installation, USB slot for eLicenser

**ALTERNATIVES**



**Digidesign Pro Tools 8 HD1 Core System**

from £4000

The equivalent PT system does involve buying into the (Mac only) PCIe Accel hardware, and you'll need to buy a Pro Tools HD audio interface too, but then this is arguably the biggest player in the AV world.

[digidesign.com](http://digidesign.com)



**Logic Studio**

£408

This popular and highly-regarded DAW is a fraction of the price and ships with Soundtrack 3 Pro for AV work, though in a less integrated/in depth manner. Simpler but less expansive.

[apple.com](http://apple.com)



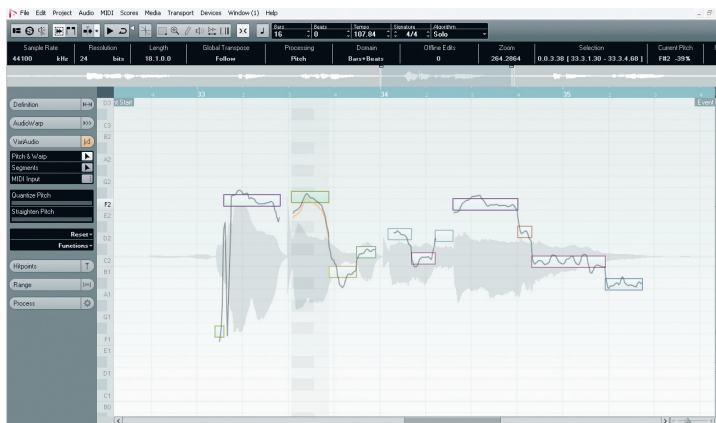
**Cubase 5**

£510

For those who just want the audio/composition functions then Cubase shares many of the innovations in Nuendo for a more manageable price tag, with a cheaper 'Studio' version coming in at £340.

[steinberg.net](http://steinberg.net)

respectively) add simple but effective elements that have been conspicuously absent from Nuendo in plug-in form. For real pitch adjustment, the new VariAudio function in the Sample Editor provides full pitch analysis and manipulation via an interface not dissimilar to Melodyne et al. This is no half-baked nod to this now ubiquitous process, but rather a powerful and highly editable tool. Alongside the Hitpoint editing (for beat slicing) and AudioWarp tempo matching tool, VariAudio turns the Sample Editor into a powerhouse of audio manipulation that I had previously underestimated and underused. Not so from now on...



The new VariAudio function in the Sample Editor window

**REVerence**

The new REVerence convolution reverb plug-in instantly impressed me. This is a well laid out plug-in with a quality set of impulse presets and all the right parameters to tailor the effect, plus a set of 36 'program' slots that can be crossfaded between, which is useful in both post and music production. REVerence can also import any

expanded to the point where almost any setup is possible, particularly with the enhanced Control Room Mixer and new Direct Routing (see the *Audio Routing* box below). With the onus on large multi-channel projects, it's good to see the Export Audio Mixdown function expanded to encompass complex multi-channel mixdowns. The output of any combination of channels can be exported simultaneously, and using the

mixes, creating parallel fold-down mixes or exporting a selection of dialogue mixes directly to a new project.

**Deep pockets**

Nuendo is an inimitably 'deep' program that is aimed at streamlining many complex audio jobs and as such could easily slide into a quagmire of menus and tick boxes. To its credit, I have found this latest version very well

**Nuendo 5 really does have the best overall feature set, which explains its reputation in post production**

balanced between choice and efficiency, rarely necessitating manual referencing or option searching.

Of course, the question of value

WAV/AIFF impulses from mono to 5.0 surround, so the potential impulse library is limitless.

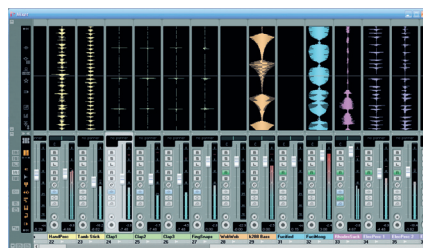
As Nuendo has evolved the possibilities for audio routing have

range selections from the Marker track list the audio can come from any number of points within the project. This is a powerful time saving means for creating stem mixes alongside final

must be posed, as an upgrade will cost £212 or more (version dependent). This is not cheap but for the regular Nuendo user this is a quality upgrade which justifies the outlay. With regards to an AV oriented audio production platform, Nuendo 5 really does have the best overall feature set, which explains its growing reputation in post production. I highly recommend Nuendo 5 to anyone already working in this arena, as well as surround mixing, sound design and soundtrack composition. **FM**

**Audio Routing**

Nuendo 5 has a track count limited only by the host computer while the channels can take any format from mono to 10.2 surround. Since Nuendo 4, the routing of these channels has become extremely flexible so that audio tracks can draw their record input from Group busses or FX busses, Group and FX busses can be routed directly into each other or via Sends, and even Output busses can be routed back to Group busses. Nuendo 5 has introduced an extra

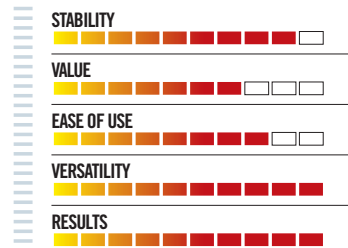


One of the mixer windows with the new waveform meter display

function that allows the monitor source to be drawn from any Output or Group Bus, thus allowing monitoring of separate stems without soloing. Nuendo 5 also includes another layer of routing called Direct Routing,

which allows any channel seven additional output destinations. On a large post production system this means that separate destinations for its stems (dialogue/ADR, SFX, Foley and music) can be output simultaneously.

**FutureMusic VERDICT**



A worthwhile update for a seriously well equipped audio production platform at an equally serious price.