



WHAT IS IT?

Version two of this fast-growing DAW from established and respected hardware providers PreSonus

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Built-in Melodyne editing
- 2 Proper comping and editing
- 3 OpenAIR IR reverb

PRICING

Studio One 2 Professional
£330 (£30 extra for physical box).
Studio One 2 Producer
£165
Studio One 2 Artist
£82
Upgrade v1 Pro to v2 Professional
£123



PreSonus Studio One 2 Professional

£330

Over the last two years Studio One has been gaining support among producers looking for a clean and efficient DAW. **Bruce Aisher** wonders if the latest incarnation can muster as much praise

Nearly two years ago I took the PreSonus Studio One DAW for a test drive and was suitably impressed.

Despite some shortcomings about the depth of features, it was clear that Studio One had the potential to become a top flight piece of software with a little more development.

This brings us to the new, and even more numerically potent Studio One 2. As before, the single screen focus remains – the designers’ intention

being that you should be able to access most features from the main window. On first glance I still had the feeling, visually at least, of viewing a Logic/Cubase hybrid, though perhaps now with an added dose of Reason 6 – incidentally none of these is meant in a bad way! The headline news regarding Studio One 2 (for the sake of sanity lets call it SO2 from now on) is the inclusion of ‘Integrated Melodyne Pitch Correction’ processing – which we will explore shortly – though there are a

quite a large number of other significant feature additions (and many minor ones). The daddy of this range remains SO2 Professional, though the ‘Artist’ version has been joined by the intermediate SO2 Producer.

It should be noted that SO2 has come down in price a little since version 1, but ‘Artist’ has plummeted from £199 to £82.

Fresh install

This time round I received my Studio One license online, and as such had to download it from the internet (as well as all additional content). Installation was quick and easy, with a simple online registration process, and no dongles in sight. Adding content is very straightforward, as SO2 asks what you wish to download and install automatically on first running the program. As well as wide selection presets for the built-in SO2 instruments, you may install a number of loop collections and third-party samples, including some new V2 additions since.

The extras this time also feature Native Instruments Komplete Elements 7 (replacing the NI Kore Player from before), but there is no EZ Drummer Lite or Guitar Rig LE this time. The other important component is Melodyne Essential, that needs to be installed in order to enable the integrated Melodyne

features in SO2. Incidentally, Studio One didn't come with a manual even in its earlier incarnations, so the only thing missing from the downloaded product is the physical installation media. It's up to you to decide if they are worth the additional cost (£30).

Making tracks

Having got stuck into SO2, I recalled how easy the original Studio One was to use, and there is nothing radically different on the visual front to change this. Recording audio and MIDI is easy to setup, and logical in use. Incidentally, SO2 is one of only a few DAWs that allow you to make edits to existing tracks while recording new ones. The new Comping features using Layers makes assembling takes very easy. Folders allow you to bundle tracks together for convenience.

Much like Cubase 6, Folders can also be used to group tracks together for editing, making multi-track comping a piece of cake. A quick key press away is Melodyne time and pitch editing, and unlike many other similar solutions, no pre-processing audio transfer is required. The Melodyne window opens within SO2 and updates any audio tweaking instantaneously. While Steinberg may have got here first with VariAudio (integrated into Cubase 5),

OpenAIR, Impulse Responses and IR Maker

The new OpenAIR reverb effect in Studio One 2 uses convolution technology. This is a form of processing that utilises 'captured' impulse responses (IRs).

IRs are usually created by playing a short noise burst or full-range sine wave sweep into the space to be captured. This is then recorded and processed so that it may be loaded into OpenAIR or other similar convolution-based effect.

This process is a great way of distilling the reverberation characteristics of a real space into a digital plug-in, but can also be used to steal the sonics of hardware processors (as PreSonus



have done with some of their OpenAIR presets). In fact Studio One 2 comes with its own utility for generating and capturing your own impulse responses that makes the process very easy.

Not only can this be used for generating OpenAIR ambience presets, but also for capturing the sound of

guitar cabinets for use with Ampire XT.

It should also be noted that OpenAIR, in common with other IR-based reverbs, only allows for limited tweaking.

If you want lots of parameters to play with, then you will need to turn to an algorithmic reverb such as SO2's 'MixVerb' or 'Room Reverb'.

access to its polyphonic 'DNA' algorithm. Another addition in the audio editing stakes are event-based effects. Each event is given its own insert rack for adding effects.

This is a great feature and allows you to create some incredibly detailed,

can be edited at the audio level – unlike some DAWs.

Bend me, shape me

I tested the new transient detection features, by attempting to quantise an imported drum loop. In fact, this was only a few simple mouse-clicks away. The Audio Bend features, expand on this, and allow you to stretch and squeeze your audio to fit all

manner of scenarios, much like the 'Flex' features of Logic or 'Warping' in Cubase (in fact the same superb zplane algorithms are used here). I also really liked the Groove Extraction tools on offer, that simplify the process to such a degree – 'drag', 'drop' and 'click' – that they make experimentation quite painless and a lot of fun

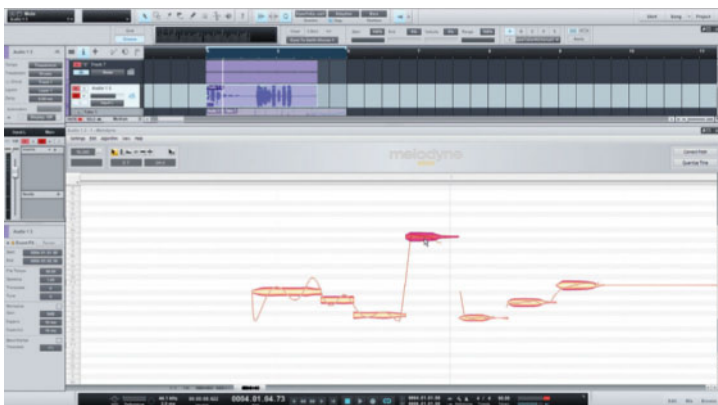
Navigating a project has been made even easier, with the addition of the Track List, though even without this Studio One was clear and easily navigable DAW. This is especially noticeable when it comes to the way in which the Mastering facilities are integrated into a Project – the Project in this instance being a collection of Songs. Studio One automatically manages revised Song mixes and updates them in any Project which use them. SO2 includes some new

Melodyne opens within Studio One 2 and updates instantaneously... this is a marriage made in heaven

this is a marriage made in heaven, and will surely be the envy of many other DAW users – in fact, if you own the full version of Melodyne Editor (not the cut-down 'Essential' version included here) you will even have integrated

or even downright crazy, effects treatments. The new Track Transform option – a form of freezing/rendering – extends to the Instruments Tracks and even these new Event Effects.

Incidentally, these newly 'frozen' tracks



A version of Celemony's Melodyne is built in to Studio One 2

SPECS

System requirements

PC: Windows XP, VISTA, 7 (32- or 64-bit), Intel Core Duo or AMD Athlon X2 processor and 2GB RAM
Mac: OS X 10.6.8, Intel Core Duo processor and 2GB RAM

All systems require an active internet connection, DVD-ROM drive and monitor resolution greater than 1280x768 pixels and 20GB hard-drive space

ALTERNATIVES



Apple Logic 9
£140

One of the big boys, and now available at an absurdly low price via the Apple App Store.

www.apple.com



Propellerhead Reason 6
£340

Reason is now a fully fledged DAW and comes with a solid complement of instruments and effects.

www.propellerheads.se



Cubase Artist 6
£253

A trimmed-down version of Cubase, but that sadly doesn't include the great VariAudio features. Sorry Steinberg, this feels pricey in comparison SO2.

www.steinberg.net

mastering options, including DDP Export support, PQ editing and better sample-rate conversion. Add the expanded SoundCloud features (now integrated directly into the Browser) and you have some serious post-production delivery functions.

In the air tonight

Alongside a number of smaller effect tweaks and additions, we also have OpenAIR, a convolution reverb (see box on previous page). A convolution reverb is only as good as its impulse responses (captured reverb settings), and OpenAIR comes with some fantastic examples. They extend from great-sounding rooms to some classic hardware presets as well as special effects. This is a strong addition to SO2's effect stable.

If this weren't enough the new IR Maker utility allows you to capture your own ambient spaces. Incidentally, the



The OpenAIR plug is based on Impulse Responses from great-sounding rooms to classic hardware

progress'), this time around it's a real killer. Coming as it does from the hands of ex-Steinberg programmers, as a Cubase user it didn't quite offer all the functionality that one would expect to see in a well-rounded DAW at this price

management and integration features going, and the mastering and CD preparation facilities are very strong.

The additional content provided with SO2 allows you to get up-and-running straight out of the box, and

Having been impressed by Studio One in its original form, this time around it's a real killer

makes the DAW relatively self-contained, though it is perhaps weakest in the area of sophisticated home-grown synthesis – I

Ampire guitar-amp modeller has a convolution-based cab section.

point. The holes in its audio editing functionality have been plugged (the pitch and time manipulation features are now very strong, and comping generally works a treat). SO2 offers some of the most powerful project

would like to have seen a built-in polyphonic subtractive synth to complement that simple-but-effective Mojito. I also feel that a little more use could have been made of colour variation throughout the interface, though there is a general trend away from overuse of colour these days (of which I remain sceptical).

PreSonus have, so far, been able to expand this DAW's feature set without distilling the design and usability ethos established early on. All things considered, SO2 now feels like it can take on the 'giant killer' role to which it aspires. Give it a go, you could well be very impressed. **FM**

Conclusion

I was impressed with Studio One in its original form (but more as a 'work in

Ampire XT

Ampire XT is Studio One 2's update to the Ampire guitar amp modelling and effects plug-in processor. The XT version brings with it new amp models and a convolution-based cabinet-modelling section. Ampire is intended as an all-in-one guitar tone solution, and as such now

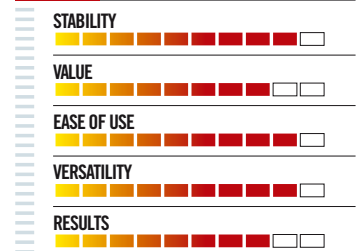
includes eight stomp-box effects (with the usual range of modulation, delay and distortion treatments). Although these are most welcome, I would like to have been able to reorder them – a pre/post switch allows you to place them before or after the amp though their relative

positions in the processing chain remain somewhat fixed. The microphone placement options allow you to do some more subtle tonal tweaking, but the real treat is the ability to create your own cab models using the IR Maker mentioned elsewhere – though this isn't really for the faint hearted, and does assume that you have a cab that's worth modelling!

Although Ampire XT is a worthy addition to Studio One's sonic armoury – and every DAW needs an amp modeller these days – I wouldn't be confident in using it as my only source of electric guitar and bass tones.



FutureMusic VERDICT



A few niggles remain, but overall version 2 turns Studio One into a formidable DAW.