



The Learning Curve

In this issue we bring you upgrade and update information on some major audio production programs. As I look through these articles, I wonder what they read like to somebody who is brand new to audio production? Is it a bit too intimidating to see terms like comp layers, automation lanes, channel zones, fx chains...?

Some of these programs have been around for so long, they have evolved into a state of complexity that could be bewildering for a novice. Take SONAR X2, for example. Back in 1987 a company called Twelve Tone Systems put out a MIDI sequencer program called Cakewalk, for MS-DOS at first, then Windows. Soon it gained digital audio capabilities, evolved through lots of upgrades, became SONAR, again being constantly upgraded right up to the latest version, SONAR X2 (see page 46). Can you imagine the number of man-hours that have gone into this evolution? What such a deep program can do now could not even be dreamed of some twenty years ago.

DAWs like Apple Logic, Steinberg Cubase (page 30), and MOTU Digital Performer (page 28) also have long histories, with levels of maturity and complexity that enchant habitual long-term users and can be daunting to newbies. Compared to that longevity, Ableton Live (page 20) is just a youngster, but since its coming onto the market in 2001, it too has evolved into a very rich and capable piece of software. Studio One from PreSonus (page 44), having first appeared in 2009, is now the precocious pre-schooler among DAWs, and yet, at "only" version 2.5, it continues to impress with its maturity.

There are a number of other DAWs out there that are maybe more approachable to the newcomer, Acoustica Mixcraft (reviewed March 2013) being one of them and Apple's GarageBand being another, for which we published a step-by-step guide with a CD back in 2005. Which brings me to the point—where do you go for help if you're not one who has grown with a particular DAW over the years of its evolution?

Luckily, there are books (hey—who said books are dead?) that now come with DVDs, so you have the best of both worlds: reading at your own pace, and watching/hearing tutorials on screen that can say more than the words on the printed page. On page 64 of this issue we review just three such books, and you'll find many more if you research on your own.

But beyond just that need for speedy mastering of one particular piece of production software, where do you go to learn the entire kit and kaboodle of audio production, not just for records, but audio for all kinds of end-uses, from games to television to movies to you-name-it, including the business end of it?

If you're new to audio production, learning it all on your own, while not entirely impossible, won't be quick or productive at first. If you don't have the time to wait around for it to happen, and you are serious enough to invest in your audio future, then a school can make it happen for you.

As one who used to teach in just such a school before taking on this magazine gig, I was delighted to visit CRAS in the Phoenix, AZ area, a school that takes its stated mission seriously. The school has been around for just about as long as this magazine has been published, and it now operates out of two separate but interlinked campuses. Their curriculum impressed me mightily—30 weeks of classes, structured in a tier system of three weeks per "cycle", with 24/7 access to the facilities outside class time. That's a lot of opportunities to put into practice what the class time offered!

But here's the kicker: Each student gets placed in a 12-week internship after school ends, with real-life companies and studios and organizations, selected according to the student's personal aptitudes for the best match. Recording labels and commercial studios may be dwindling, but audio is not, so it's good to see that youngsters are being prepared for the present and future in segments of the industry where their skills will be needed.

Happy Recording,

LRL

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