



PreSonus PC MAC Studio One 5 £344

The latest version of this well-established DAW introduces an extensive list of improvements, many of them user requests. How does it stack up?

> As with previous iterations, Studio One 5 comes in two versions: the top-tier Professional edition and the far cheaper, lower-spec Artist edition; but for this review, we're only looking at Studio One 5 Professional - see the PreSonus website for more on Artist.

We should also point out that you can buy Studio One 5 outright or as part of the new PreSonus Sphere subscription service. This gets you all the company's software (Studio One Professional and all its plugins, Notion, and a ton of sample-based instruments and loops), and various collaborative and networking tools, for a monthly (£12.05) or annual (£132.97) fee.

One Performance

For us, the new Studio One 5 feature we're likely to get the most use out of is actually one of the more modest. Clip Gain Envelopes facilitate sample-accurate volume automation directly within individual audio regions, providing a far more targeted alternative to compression or regular volume fader automation. Tick the Gain Envelope box in any audio clip's right-click

menu, then use breakpoints or the Paint tool to shape your gain changes on the clip itself, which are reflected in its waveform in real time. It's a brilliantly neat solution for making precise corrective and creative level adjustments over time, and we'd love to see an equivalent system for modulating pitch. One for v6 perhaps.

Moving on, Mixer Scenes enable snapshots of the entire Studio One mixer to be saved and recalled - including mutes, effects inserts and sends, and routing - which is obviously hugely helpful when setting up channel groups for auditioning, and experimenting with mix variations. A collection of filters let you decide which mix parameters you want to recall, so you can opt for the whole setup, or any combination of Visibility, Volume, Pan, Mute, Inserts, Sends, Cue Mix and Input Controls; and recall can even be restricted to selected channels only. It's a solid, intuitive arrangement, and our only issues with it are that an 'Activate all' button and 'Deactivate all but this filter' modifier key are called for, plus the list of captured Scenes can't be reordered.

The new Aux mixer channel type streamlines the integration of external instruments into Studio One projects. Essentially, it's an audio input channel without an associated track, through which a connected synth, drum machine, etc, is fed into the mix and treated like an internal audio signal, complete with effects, automation, and - assuming the source is also being triggered from a MIDI track - inclusion in bounces and exports. Related to this, External Instrument setups can now be dragged in from the browser and automatically routed to the default Aux channel. Very convenient.

The Independent Listen Bus is a separate 'control room' output that sits parallel to the main output and houses most of the same controls - level fader, insert effects, etc. Individual mixer channels assigned to the Listen Bus (pre- or post-fader) can be soloed without affecting what you hear on the main output, and although that might not be particularly useful for the average bedroom producer, those working in studios with separate control and live rooms will certainly appreciate it.

“The Show Page could have been an awkward fit, but is a natural extension of the DAW”

Studio One has offered very capable bidirectional communication with PreSonus' Notion scoring application since version 3, but v5 sees it fully integrated as an onboard editor. The Score editor appears in the Editor panel (or window when detached) as a new tab alongside the Piano Roll and Drum editors, and is as fully featured a notation editor as you could hope to find built into a DAW. Drawing and editing notes, symbols, articulations and dynamics is straightforward; live note and enharmonic input analysis is impressively accurate; multiple tracks can be displayed at once; and the detached window can be pinned for viewing the Score and Piano Roll or Drum editors together. You can't print your score out, mind - for that, you'll still need to export to the full Notion - but that aside, the Score editor is a triumph, giving orchestral composers (and anyone else with at least basic understanding of music theory) all the tools required to get 'trad' with their MIDI editing.

Another very handy new feature for composers working with complex sample-based orchestral libraries is the Keyswitch automation lane. This is simply a lane below the Piano Roll or Drum editor in which keyswitching notes are represented as a continuous series of bars on the timeline, bearing the names of their triggered articulations. Click to add a bar and assign an articulation to it from a menu of all those available in the loaded instrument - PreSonus' own Presence ROMpler reports its keyswitches automatically, and keyswitch maps are quick and easy to build for other samplers. The keyswitching notes still also appear in the Piano Roll, but having them abstracted to a dedicated space for easy viewing as a data stream in their own right is an ingenious idea.

Although there are no new plugins added to the roster this time round, all of Studio One's bundled effects have been redesigned, and some have been blessed with PreSonus' State Space Modelling algorithm, which serves up highly authentic analogue-style saturation. The dynamics plugins all now boast sidechain inputs too, and Pro EQ and Limiter have both been upgraded to v2, with a 12th Octave metering option and linear-phase low-cut filter for Pro EQ2, and three Attack speed settings and two response/distortion modes for Limiter2. The lack of any new instruments is notable but not



The Score editor is a fully-featured new addition



The Show Page is an excellent way of organising live sets

Go live with your Studio

We've saved what for some will be Studio One 5's best new feature, and for others a complete irrelevance, for its own box. The Show Page - and its reductive full-screen Performance mode - comprises a completely new and refocused environment within Studio One in which your studio projects can be reconfigured into, and performed as, complete, sequentially organised live sets, incorporating backing tracks, virtual instruments, live audio input and effects processing, mixing and comprehensive MIDI control. We'll confess to not having put the Show Page on an *actual stage* yet, but its flexibility and power are readily apparent, and it could prove game-

changing for bands looking to take their tracks to the stage without the hassle of running multiple laptops, mixers and all the rest of it - assuming you have the stones to stake your artistic reputation on the whims and foibles of your laptop, that is.

There are also many more 'secondary' additions and enhancements in this latest version of Studio One that warrant mention, including poly pressure and MPE support, 64-bit WAV recording, external MIDI Timecode and MIDI Machine Control sync, a groovy tape-style timestretching/pitchshifting mode, and the inclusion of Melodyne Essential 5.

something we think should cause any upset - it's not like anyone's short on third-party synths, samplers and drum machines these days.

Verdict

Studio One 5 is without doubt the biggest single update to PreSonus' DAW yet, in terms of both the sheer quantity of new features and systems added, and their significance. The Show page, Score Editor, Mixer Scenes and Clip Gain Envelopes are all individually transformative, and collectively broaden the software's remit; while the likes of the Aux channel, Independent Listen Bus and Keyswitch lane are less profound but still clear in their purposes and genuinely useful. And all of this comes together beautifully within the overall Studio One framework and workflow - the Show page in particular could have been an awkward fit, but PreSonus have succeeded in making it feel like a natural extension of the DAW.

It all adds up to make version 5 an unreserved upgrade/recommendation for existing Studio One users and newcomers to recording and production alike, not to mention old hands perhaps dissatisfied with their current DAW of choice. With its responsive, modernist interface, smooth workflow and innovative-but-relevant feature set, Studio One 5 truly represents the state of the art in virtual studio design. **cm**

Web presonus.com

Alternatively

Steinberg Cubase Pro 10.5
cm266 » 9/10 » £499

Another DAW stalwart, Cubase is also Mac and PC compatible with cut-down, cheaper versions

Tracktion Waveform Pro 11
cm284 » 10/10 » \$119

Something a little different - and cheaper - Waveform is as fully-featured a DAW as there is

Verdict

For Fully developed Score editor
Bands will have a ball with Show Page
Clip Gain Envelopes deliver surgical region-based volume automation
Mixer Scenes, Aux channel and Independent Listen Bus are fantastic

Against Mixer Scene filter selection could be slicker
Busy interface can be overwhelming

It's incredible how far Studio One has come since launch, and v5 is mature, stable and an awesome update to a superb DAW

10/10