

Acoustica Mixcraft Pro Studio 7

By Paul Lau

Acoustica's motto says "software should be easy to use," and their products have adhered to that throughout the company's 17 years in business. I've used previous editions of Mixcraft and found it to be a gem of a powerful DAW.

With Mixcraft Pro Studio 7, the latest edition of this longstanding audio and MIDI-based multitrack offering with both 32- and 64-bit compatibility, the first item I'd like to discuss and make note of is its visual layout and flow. This new layout allows users to easily navigate to the most commonly used features. The in-the-box recording experience can be daunting at times, but with Mixcraft's uncluttered look and functional navigation,



I found the user experience to be very enjoyable and my workflow rather speedy. Suffice it to say, the design and layout gets acers from me.

As for some of the highlights in terms of the program's updated feature set, I totally enjoyed and spent a lot of time in the Performance Panel view with my Novation Launchpad, which allowed me to trigger live audio samples and MIDI loops. Pro Studio 7 comes with thousands of usable musical loops, including a library specifically for film scoring. So if you want instant gratification and a bunch of sounds to get your musical ideas flowing, start here. I found it to be a lot of fun.

The program comes with a host of new virtual instruments and plug-ins, rounding out those that have been on offer in previous versions. One of my favourites on the synth side is the Memorymoon Vintage Analog Synthesizer, which is based on the famous Memory Moog – a piece that I actually used to own. This instrument allows you to sculpt your sound and get

that analog bass sounding nice and unique with a sound quality that I found true to the original Moog.

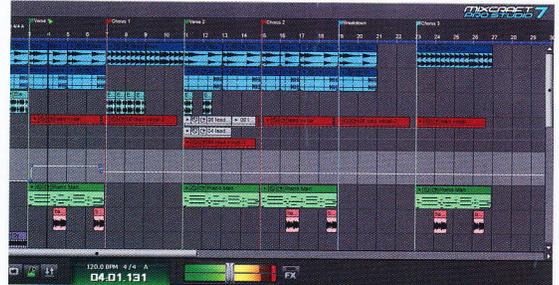
Something somewhat coincidental: I recently I played on a \$600,000 Steinway D piano, and to my surprise, I was quite taken by the fidelity and sonic resonance of Mixcraft's Pianissimo Virtual Grand Piano and its sample version of the Steinway D. Put simply, it sounded awesome.

There are so many new plug-ins and digital effects to draw upon during recording, mixing, and mastering. I was definitely impressed and pleased by the inclusion of iZotope mastering tools, as I'm rather fond of their plug-ins and use them quite frequently. The iZotope Mastering Essentials definitely add that professional sheen to your tracks.

I also enjoyed the number of vacuum tube-related plug-ins on offer that deliver that original warm and smooth sound of tubes. These include the Pentode Audio series, consisting of a compressor, warmer, passive EQ, and tube bass enhancer – which gives that nice, fat sound – just to mention a few.

Some of the other cool things about Pro Studio 7 include the TimeMachine Bit Crusher, which can recreate various bit rates and qualities to give unique fidelities to your material. And the Fusion Field's convolution reverb technology allows you to create three-dimensional sonic spaces. The Dubshox Multi-Band Distortion, which has over 40 types of distortion and shapers, can be placed on any track, any mix, or any master to totally twist your sound upside down.

Considering the prominent genres in pop music today, namely dubstep and other forms of EDM and hip-hop, or even the popularity of mashups, Pro Studio 7's audio warping and audio quantization features allow for endless creative options in creating and exploring any type of compositional endeavors, or on a simpler level,



correcting any minor or major timing errors via the improved time-stretching and pitch-shifting technologies.

Some other new features worth mentioning are the Step Editor for beat pattern creation and the ability to record and edit an unlimited number of automation parameters.

With all I have highlighted, I can't get away from repeating how much fun I had working my way around Mixcraft Pro Studio 7. It can be as simple as using it like a drum machine and just jamming to it (which I just did the other night with the goal of coming up with a new groove for a song) but it is also a powerful tool ready for composing and scoring or detailed audio recording. This is a great program, and I've really just scratched the surface on explaining what it does and what you can do with it.

Paul Lau B.Sc.
 Musician/Producer/Film Composer
 MIDI/Digital Audio Specialist
 (www.docaudiotechs.com)
 Managing Director of PowerMusic5Records
 (www.powermusic5.com)
 Member of the Cool Christian Pop Band
 Scatter17 (www.scatter17.com)