

Product Tests

Acoustica Mixcraft Pro Studio 6

By Paul Lau

I've been using sequencers and DAWs for many years. Of those I've encountered recently, Acoustica's Mixcraft Pro Studio 6 is, in my opinion, an unsung hero. I do agree with and appreciate the company's tag line: "Software should be easy to use," and it certainly applies to the latest version of Pro Studio.

I must admit, when I first loaded Pro Studio 6 onto my machine, I was a bit biased thanks to all of the other, more common sequencers and DAWs I work with and personally own. When you're going through the manual and looking at the tutorial videos, they really don't give you a true sense of the software; you need to get hands-on and put it to use. So...

I started a remix that I'd been asked to do of a song by the band Hollywood Heroes. What was a musical block for a number of weeks is also what started my conversion towards an appreciation of Pro Studio 6. What makes it so intuitive and easy to use is that it comes with a ton of musical samples, beats, loops, virtual instruments, and a very simple user interface.

I dropped a beat and sequence into a few tracks, and presto—the program starts asking me if I'd like to beat match, change keys, etc. These are some cool pop-up windows. This reminds me of my collection of existing loops (over 20,000), which I was able to import in minutes and was then off to the races, playing with some of the content I'd long forgotten about.

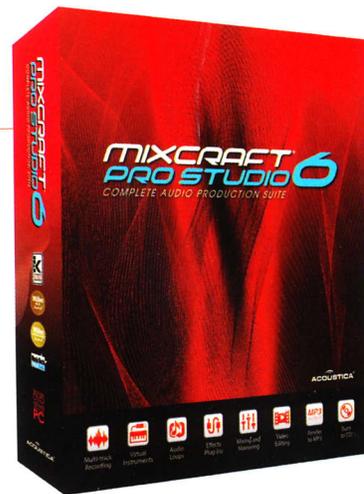
The next question that came to mind was, "How does it handle vocal tracks?"

I dropped one in, beat matched it, key matched tracks to it, and started chopping the track. It sounded really good and had me intrigued. The software reminds me of ACID crossed with Logic, but it's even more than that. I like the way it deals with loops; the idea of having a single measure loop and then just dragging it and making it a larger loop of any size is a good one. I also noticed when moving/shifting the loops/samples, the motion and control are smooth and precise.

So the drag-and-drop workflow for samples and loops is fun and easy to manipulate and edit; how are the virtual instruments? Well, three parts here. The first is the number of virtual instruments that come pre-loaded. There are your typical acoustic and electric instruments and a great collection of synth type instruments.

Secondly, I went through all of them and found synth keyboard emulations of the Moog and Prophet synths as well as the Yamaha CS80 to be extremely realistic in sound. Being a keyboardist trained in classical music myself, I found the piano and organ emulations to be very true to life in their reproduction of the sampled sounds and they're very easy to tweak.

Thirdly, in the MIDI application, especially in the piano roll, I loved that each "block" (note) was individually labeled with its pitch. At a glance, all the vertical control (via drawing) of the MIDI notes was also available at my fingertips. The most important thing to note here is how Mixcraft integrates all of the



mentioned features seamlessly, easily, and creatively.

That leads us to the sugar and spice part of the program. Here, we have two parts I want to mention; the first is the effect processors that you would use on particular tracks (whether they're loops/samples or live recorded audio takes) or virtual instruments. Pro Studio 6 comes with some extra effects processors that really shine, such as the Pro Studio Verb, 31-band EQ, and the tape emulation effect. Secondly, the program comes with many mastering tools like some from iZotope, which is known for its mastering software, multi-band compression, and vintage and modern parametric equalization, just to name a few.

What more can I say? Mixcraft's Pro Studio 6 is an easy sequencer to set up and use, great for making beats and bed tracks instantaneously and producing, editing, and processing effects to manipulate their sonic characteristics. It really helped get my creative juices flowing thanks to its very friendly interface. Oh, and it's a video editor with a plethora of editing tools, too, so now I'm going to go and produce a music video for my track.

All in all, Mixcraft Pro Studio 6 is like the Swiss Army Knife of the audio software world. Check it out; it's made me a believer.



Manufacturer's Comment

Mixcraft Pro Studio 6 is available in 12 languages, including French and Spanish, and a free 14-day trial is available at www.acoustica.com.

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