



# MusicTech Reviews



PreSonus

## STUDIO ONE PRO

FOR PC & MAC

PreSonus is renowned for its studio hardware, so it was something of a surprise when the company announced a new DAW. Keith Gemmell takes a trip around Studio One.

### KEY FEATURES

- Elegant single-window interface
- Integrated mastering suite
- Powerful drag-and-drop functionality
- Convenient content browser
- Automatic delay compensation
- Advanced automation
- 64-bit audio processing
- 64-bit effects library
- Real-time audio time stretching

### STUDIO ONE PRO

Manufacturer **PreSonus**

Price **Studio One Pro £349. Studio One Artist £199. Upgrade from Artist to Pro £199**

Contact **Source Distribution 020 8962 5080**

Web **www.prenonus.com**

Minimum system requirements

**PC 1.6GHz processor, Windows XP, 1GB RAM**

**Mac G4 1.25GHz, Mac OSX 10.4.11, 1GB RAM**

When PreSonus decided to develop a new DAW, one primary objective was clear from the outset: to design an alternative to the well-known big-hitters, which the company considered to be intimidating, bloated and cluttered with features that only a few people actually use. A collaboration with former Steinberg coders KristallLabs was arranged, aiming to provide customers with an easy-to-use alternative.

The result is Studio One, which boasts drag-and-drop MIDI mapping and plug-in management, auto-configuration with PreSonus hardware, high-quality audio, unlimited track counts and unlimited plug-ins per track. Two versions are currently available: Artist – included free with PreSonus

products – and Pro, which has additional features that include a mastering page.

### Studio tour

Studio One comprises three main pages, one for each stage of a production: Start, Song and Project (Pro version only). As well as file management and device-configuration controls, the Start page contains an artist profile, PreSonus news feed and demo/tutorial links.

Although ex-Steinberg personnel were responsible for the coding, Studio One's Song page will be immediately

tempo information they'll be time-stretched automatically to match the song tempo. Fixed transport controls are located at the bottom of the page and the mixing console and editing views open immediately above it. There's no Score Editor (notation), but both the Music Editor (piano roll) and the rather basic Audio Editor are very well designed. Each has its own inspector and relevant tools.

A glance at the toolkit in any DAW gives an indication of what it might or might not be capable of. PreSonus has adopted a no-frills approach to Studio

**WITH THE THREE MAIN AREAS OF MUSIC PRODUCTION UNDER ONE ROOF, STUDIO ONE LOOKS SET TO WIN MANY FRIENDS.**

intuitive to those who've used Logic Pro's Arrange page. Unlimited numbers of audio and instrument tracks can be created (there are no MIDI tracks as such; hardware synthesizers and the like are addressed via the instrument tracks) and virtual instruments and plug-ins are conveniently dragged from a browser and dropped onto a track or the mixing console. You can drag and drop audio files, too, and if they contain

One's tools – Arrow, Range, Split, Eraser, Paint and Mute. They're functional enough for everyday editing, but a few extra tools for shaping automation in the Music Editor would be useful.

The usual tempo and marker tracks are present and inserting time signatures is a simple matter of clicking in the timeline – no signature track needed. Beat-mapping tools and video tracks, though, are not available.

Without a Sample Editor, audio editing is somewhat restricted, although there are plenty of useful features such as audio event slipping (moving audio clips within events), group editing across multiple tracks and handy event volume envelopes for creating fades and adjusting individual event volumes. MIDI implementation, too, is rather basic, with only minimal quantizing options and fixed on/off humanization, although there is a Swing slider.

### Master faster

Some DAWs have a sister program for mastering – Cubase and WaveLab, for example – but Studio One has an integrated solution within its Project page, from where you can burn Red Book audio CDs and create mp3 albums. This is standard fare, but Studio One goes a step further: both the Song and Project pages are intelligently linked. When songs are added to a project for mastering, any changes made in one page are updated in the other. The consequences of this are enormous because you can tweak your mixes and update the mastering project simultaneously, a huge time-saver.

All the necessary production tools are present and correct, including a phase meter and spectrum/peak/RMS level meters with K-System options. Hardware inserts are accessible by way of a plug-in (Pipeline) that can also be used in the Song page (this feature is in the Pro version only).

As expected, integration with PreSonus gear is seamless. If you already own a PreSonus interface, Studio One will recognise it and automatically create and configure your software inputs. However, whether

you're using PreSonus gear or not, I/O configurations are stored with each song. This means that you can take a song to another studio, use a different interface, and when you return to your own studio, the original I/O configuration is recalled for the song.

As a thoroughly modern DAW, Studio One, of course, is powered by a 64-bit, double-precision, floating-point audio engine. It's CPU-efficient and, in the Pro edition only, you can switch between the 64- and 32-bit versions on-the-fly, depending on the capability of any inserted plug-ins. However, if you restrict yourself to using just the built-in PreSonus effects for processing, you can take advantage of a full 64-bit end-to-end signal path.

As mentioned already, imported audio files with tempo information will stretch or contract to match a song's existing tempo. Files without tempo can also be defined, either by edge-dragging with the Arrow tool or simply by entering a value in a tempo mode box, included in the track inspector.

### Top DAW

Obviously, as a brand-new DAW, Studio One is feature-packed and we can't possibly cover everything in these two pages. You'll find a feature list on the PreSonus website, though, and explanations in the manual that is supplied with the demo.

Other features worth noting include Control Link, a simple-to-operate MIDI mapping feature, four instruments (drums, synth, sampler and sample player) alongside a generous helping of plug-ins. EZdrummer Lite and Native Instruments' Kore Player and Guitar Rig LE are also included.

## MEASURING UP

Studio One is state-of-the-art software with a 64-bit floating-point audio engine that performs beautifully, but it does lack some features that other, cheaper, DAWs include. Pro Tools M-Powered 8 (£169), for example, has a Score Editor based on Sibelius and good MIDI implementation plus audio track tempo, time- and pitch-manipulation features. Sonar Home Studio 7 (£90) has a video track – as does Logic Express 9 (£159), Cubase Studio 5 (£332) and Cubase Essential 5 (£109). Both Logic Express and Cubase Studio 5 have beat-mapping features. However, Studio One is the only DAW with an integrated mastering suite, and for ease of use and a streamlined workflow, arguably trumps them all.

With the three main areas of music production all under one roof – namely, recording, MIDI sequencing and mastering – Studio One looks set to win many friends, especially among PreSonus hardware users. Designed from the ground up by experienced music software programmers who fully understand the needs of their target audience, this DAW is incredibly easy to use. They've carefully evaluated the competition and determined exactly which features they needed to implement, in many cases improving on them. However, by describing the major DAWs as intimidating and bloated and presenting Studio One as the obvious alternative, it could be argued that PreSonus is being slightly ambitious in its description of its new DAW. After all, production tools and capabilities such as video tracks, surround sound and beat-mapping are far from irrelevant to an ever-growing number of musicians.

We therefore asked the company about any plans to implement such features. The reply was that with the exception of surround sound, all of the features we mentioned will be implemented in future versions. And that's great news, because once they are included, Studio One really will represent a serious rival to Logic Pro, Cubase, Pro Tools and others. **MTM**

### METHOD SPOT

In a typical DAW, when you move a virtual instrument part from one place in a song to another, musical data such as velocity and pitch bend is moved with it. However, automation envelopes specific to the virtual instrument are not necessarily moved and a tedious cut-and-paste procedure ensues. In Studio One, part automation is integrated into instrument parts, so irrespective of where an instrument part is moved to or how it is edited, the automation remains in place. In this way, virtual instrument automation can be kept with the instrument parts in a song, providing an excellent degree of flexibility.



## SUMMARY

### WHY BUY

- 64-bit audio engine/effects
- Fast workflow
- Integrated mastering
- Control Link

### WALK ON BY

- Currently lacks Sample Editor, a video track and beat-mapping tools
- Basic MIDI editing
- No Score Editor

## VERDICT

An excellent new DAW with an integrated mastering section that's built from the ground up to be easy to use while offering many innovative features.

