

Serato Pitch 'n Time Pro and LE

New Zealand-based Serato has revamped its Pitch 'n Time AudioSuite plug-in, renaming the flagship (Pro Tools only) version as 'Pro', and introducing an LE version with slimmed down Pro Tools features, plus compatibility with Apple Logic. **GEORGE SHILLING** slips and slides.



BOTH THESE VERSIONS of Pitch 'n Time are iLok authorised, and owners of the previous version can crossgrade or add LE at a discount. A major difference between the two versions is that the LE version will only pitch up or down 12 semitones and timestretch from 50% to 200% in Pro Tools, whereas Pro (UK£518.50 + VAT) will go up and down 36 semitones with time stretching from 12.5% to 800%. However, the cheaper LE version will provide the full Pro range of manipulation from within Logic. Rather than using the Serato plug-in window, Logic simply adds the Pitch 'n Time algorithm to the list in the (rather long-in-the-tooth) Time And Pitch Machine window. You will need Logic 7.2 for this. The ever-expanding list of algorithms in Logic now includes one named Complex, and this is probably the closest to the Pitch 'n Time algorithm. In fact, on much programme material there is only a relatively small difference between the two — some of the Logic algorithms are really rather good — so although Pitch 'n Time is certainly better, the difference is sometimes small, so it would be worth the Logic user demoing Pitch 'n Time for a listening comparison.

Back in Pro Tools, the two versions both inexplicably nestle in the AudioSuite 'Other' folder rather than the 'Pitch' folder. They look quite different from each

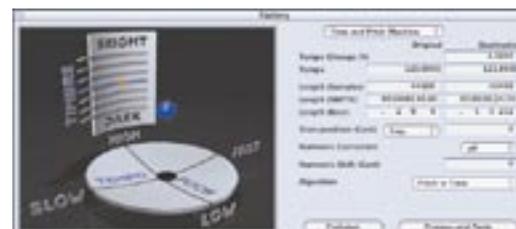
other — LE appears with a white panel with light blue fields, while Pro has the more serious looking dark blue-grey appearance. Both feature horizontal sliding faders for the two main functions. At the top of the LE window is an input BPM calculator. Opening the window the setting defaults to 120BPM (the session Conductor setting would be more useful), and shows the duration of selected audio as bars and beats and as time — Pro Tools can do that for you, of course. However, target tempo can then be entered numerically or set using the slider, there is also a percentage field available.

The Pitch is set using the other slider, or a numeric semitone and cents value, or again as a percentage. For musical users, note names can be used to set a shift up or down. And there is also a target output length setting for the time stretch. A button links Pitch and Time parameters for varispeed-type settings. A knob lets you lower the level if your Preview causes the clip light to come on. And that's it, it really is that simple, and it sounds, well, rather good! Previewing the audio you can move sliders or change settings on the fly, and the plug-in is extremely tolerant of this, responding quickly to changes, even on a fairly humble G4-processor Mac.

As well as expanded range, the Pro version includes many more tools and functions, resulting in a more complex collection of graphics and parameters, even though the layout has been redesigned. Away from the plug-in window, the Time Trimmer tool can make use of the algorithm when manipulating audio regions. It is also now 192kHz compatible. In the plug-in, the extra range is made manageable by offering three useful ranges of 2x, 4x and 8x. Another big advantage with Pro is the provision of

graphic editing screens for both pitch and tempo. By clicking Mode nudge buttons, three different pages are available in the Pitch and Tempo sections. The horizontal sliders feature on the default page, but by nudging the modes you can see and manipulate waveform displays of selected audio. An extra Update Waveform button appears with the usual AudioSuite functions at the bottom of the window. Clicking this captures the selection.

The first Tempo graph page enables any number of linear changes to be made by inserting and dragging handles around the display. Horizontal and Vertical Zoom sliders allow zoning in for precise adjustments. A diagonal line results in a gradual speed increase or decrease, and seeing the waveform superimposed enables exact placement of handles and lines relative to the audio. A second graph mode page shows separate Guide and Source waveforms, where any number of sections of audio can be identified and markers dragged left or right for elongating or shortening parts of the audio. Called the Morphing Time-stretch panel, this page enables inserting different constant-speed sections within the selected audio, rather than gradual time shifts. This can be used to make words, syllables or notes last particular lengths. In all Tempo modes a Length Panel shows relevant numerical values and includes a Capture button for matching lengths. This memorises the current selection length and matches a subsequent selection to that length.



The Pitch section has a graph similar to the first Tempo one with a line manipulated for gradual increases or decreases in pitch, and the third Pitch mode simply engages Varispeed where pitch is controlled by tempo settings. In addition to the Logarithmic scales, Linear mode can be switched in which makes graphs look perhaps more sensible, but sliders initially seem weirdly warped. Another helpful feature is the provision of separate Bypass buttons for Pitch and Tempo — these also operate during Preview — and a tone generator is included for matching pitch by ear.

Pro offers two algorithms, one for tonal sounds and one for percussive material. This seems a touch frugal as both Apple Logic and Waves SoundShifter offer several more. Furthermore, on many sources there seems only a fairly subtle difference between the two, but these algorithms are possibly the best available for manipulating all types of audio with minimal artefacts. The most serious competition to Pitch 'n Time Pro comes from Waves SoundShifter; both have their fans, so demoing is undoubtedly worthwhile. ■

PROS

LE Integrates with Logic 7.2 and Pro Tools 6 onwards; excellent sounding stretching and shifting; stereo and multichannel phase coherence.

CONS

Logic's own algorithms are remarkably close in quality.

Contact

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