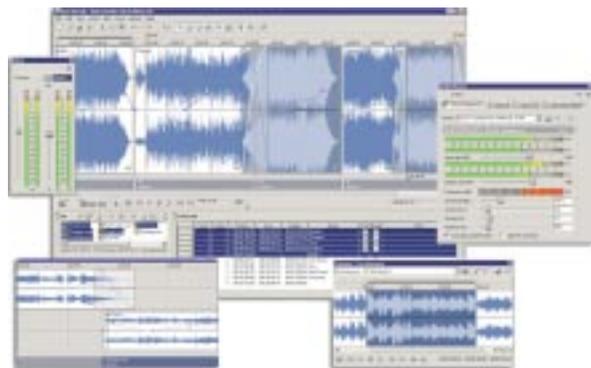# Sonic Foundary CD Architect 5.0

CD-R drives may have grown in sophistication and decreased in price but they still require slick software to make them sing. ZENON SCHOEPE heralds the return of an old favourite.

EVER SINCE THE ARRIVAL of the standalone CD-R machine, CD-R burning has been trying to get back to the pro audio desktop from whence it came. There are a number of reasons for this, the most important of which is that the standalone machines allow you to burn the blanks and take advantage of the medium but they don't provide an elegant interface for the sort of in-depth manipulation that you might need. At the other end of the scale, every PC CD-R/RW drive comes with software that approximates foolproof operation but most are not what you would describe as truly audio oriented.

Add to this the fact that most DAW packages now include, or integrate, CD burner software of some type, and you'll understand why Sonic Foundry has released an updated and separate version of it's well-known CD Architect package for US$209.

Once integrated in the popular Sound Forge package, CD Architect was dropped from the tools list with the arrival of Sound Forge V6.0 (Resolution, V1.3) although the capability has been developed in Sonic Foundry's Vegas flagship product. CD Architect 5.0 is something of a rebirth and it will have appeal to those who look for a little more from a CD mastering package.

It'll burn Red Book DAOs to a variety of drives and perform PQ code editing including Universal Product Codes (UPC) or Media Catalog Numbers (MCN) and per-track ISRC. You can apply over 20 real-time DirectX effects to events, sections or the master bus and import track markers and indices. It'll do real-time pitch changes and time stretching and layer audio for cross fades and allow you to adjust track volumes, add fade-ins and fade-outs, crossfade, and create volume envelopes for each track.

There's a normalise function and nondestructive editing with zoom to sample level complete with history-based undo/redo. It supports 32-bit, 192kHz source audio with resampling and dithering. Adequate audio scrubbing is a welcome addition together with track auditioning options and you can print out track and project listing information.

Operationally it's really not difficult software to get your head around, particularly if you are acquainted with the Sonic Foundry way. There are generally a number of different ways of performing the same task and the chances are that one of these will suit you.

The layout is clear – a large monitor is important – and sectioned off logically. You can either slap in your completed tracks, let CD Architect sort them out for you and then hit the burn button or you can try to get clever. Manual fades and crossfades are very easy to apply as indeed are the Direct X plug-ins although some might feel happier performing this sort of stuff in other editors they might have. The volume envelope function is however surprisingly useful due to how visual the process is.

I particularly liked the variety of 'playlist' style information available as it contains enough data to convince you that all is in order and that you can go for the burn. CD Architect is the sort of programme that permits you to assemble and create a CD without having to constantly audition your progress. Once you are confident in the package you'll be able to bang a project together without the speakers on.

The single massive omission is the lack of CD-Text support. I couldn't believe this to begin with and searched long and hard, but it's true. This will disappoint those who have got used to this invaluable extra in other CD-R encounters. Those who have lived without it probably won't be bothered.

This is undoubtedly a package for those who really can't let a project go and want to fiddle with it to the very last stage. If you are frequently at the end of other people's productions and need a tool to sort and sweeten as well as nip and tuck with, then CD Architect is powerful stuff. If, however, you work on your own projects and get things in to shape before the final burn and are looking for a means of committing the results to disc elegantly and simply, then CD Architect will also appeal to you – but you're likely to underuse much of its capability.

The omission of CD-Text remains downright strange in an otherwise extremely complete solution. ■

PROS Almost a complete solution; good editing and processing options; lots of info.

CONS No CD Text (incredible).

EXTRAS Vegas+DVD provides all the features of Vegas 4.0, but also includes DVD Architect, Sonic Foundry's new DVD authoring application and Dolby Digital AC-3 encoder. It is described as a complete, integrated solution for editing, surround mixing and DVD production. DVD Architect provides a set of tools for developing menu-based DVDs, music compilations, movies and slideshow presentations.

New audio introductions with Vegas 4.0 include 5.1 surround mixing tools, DirectX plug-in effects automation, ASIO driver support, master, aux, and effects bus tracks, and enhanced audio timestretching. Video improvements include primary and secondary colour correction filters, new transitions, FX and generators, smart resampling, and copy/paste event attributes to other events.

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