REAPER - The multitrack recording solution you've been looking for

Contributed by Brett Brewer
Monday, 24 September 2012
Last Updated Monday, 24 September 2012

I feel compelled to write a little blub today about REAPER . If you haven't heard of it, it's an amazing multitrack recording program with an insanely great price. I've been playing with various multitrack recording programs over the years, including, Acid, FruityLoops, Reason, ProTools, Cubase, various trackers (MadTracker), and a random selection of other tools, but due to the ridiculous pricing and bloated codebase of most of them, I've never really found anything I wanted to pay for, or use as my permanent multitrack recording solution. That is, until recently when I discovered Reaper. I've now replaced most of the aforementioned programs with Reaper. Why do I love Reaper so much?

 - First and foremost, their software has a 100% fully functional unlimited free trial. There's no difference between the free and paid versions, just a nag screen that comes up every time you start the program until you buy a license. The free version never expires and has no features disabled whatsoever.
 - Second, the full paid license is extremely reasonable. For individual non-commercial users, the price is $60 for the full license which give you free updates for two major version numbers worth of updates. So a license for the current version, 4.261 will give you free updates through version 5.99. This is an awesome deal!
 - Reaper is coded by masters. They have native binaries for Win XP/Win7 both 32 and 64-bit, as well as MacOSX 32/64bit/PPC. What's more, they somehow manage to pack all the features of their software into an installer that is less than 10MB on Windows and less than 13MB for OSX. Do they sacrifice any features in the process? Not that I've seen, there is simply zero bloat in their software. The program runs fast as hell and is rock solid stable on the two Windows7/64bit machines I've used it on. Compare that to most other commercial multitrack recording programs, which offer basically the same functionality, but take up hundreds of megabytes just to install them, sometimes even several gigabytes worth of disk space. Compared to Reaper, most other programs I've tried are bloated and slow and often crash my computers by the time I get everything set up to record. Compare that to Reaper, which takes a couple of minutes to get set up, loads in under 10 seconds, never seems to crash, and uses system resources sparingly. No track limits, no limits on VST effects, this software will let you record right up to the limits of your hardware. I have a 3 year old MacBook Pro with 8GB of ram running Win7-64bit. I'll sometimes be running several browsers with doezens of open tabs, my PHP IDE for programming, and Reaper, without any problems.
 - Reaper's UI rocks. They took a lot of the best ideas from the software you might already be used to and implemented them in a fast and stable UI.
 - Tons of documentation and tutorials online. Reaper has one of the best community documentation efforts I've ever seen for audio software. So far, there has been nothing that I've wanted to do in Reaper that I couldn't figure out via free video-based tutorials on Youtube.

What does't Reaper do?

I'm not actually sure what Reaper won't do. Every time I think I've run into something that it won't do, I do a Google search and discover that there IS a way to do whatever I'm trying to do. So, in summary, it's rare that I find a piece of software I'd recommend as highly as Reaper. Don't hesitate to give it a try if you're looking for an alternative to the high-priced bloatware offered by the old standard recording tools.