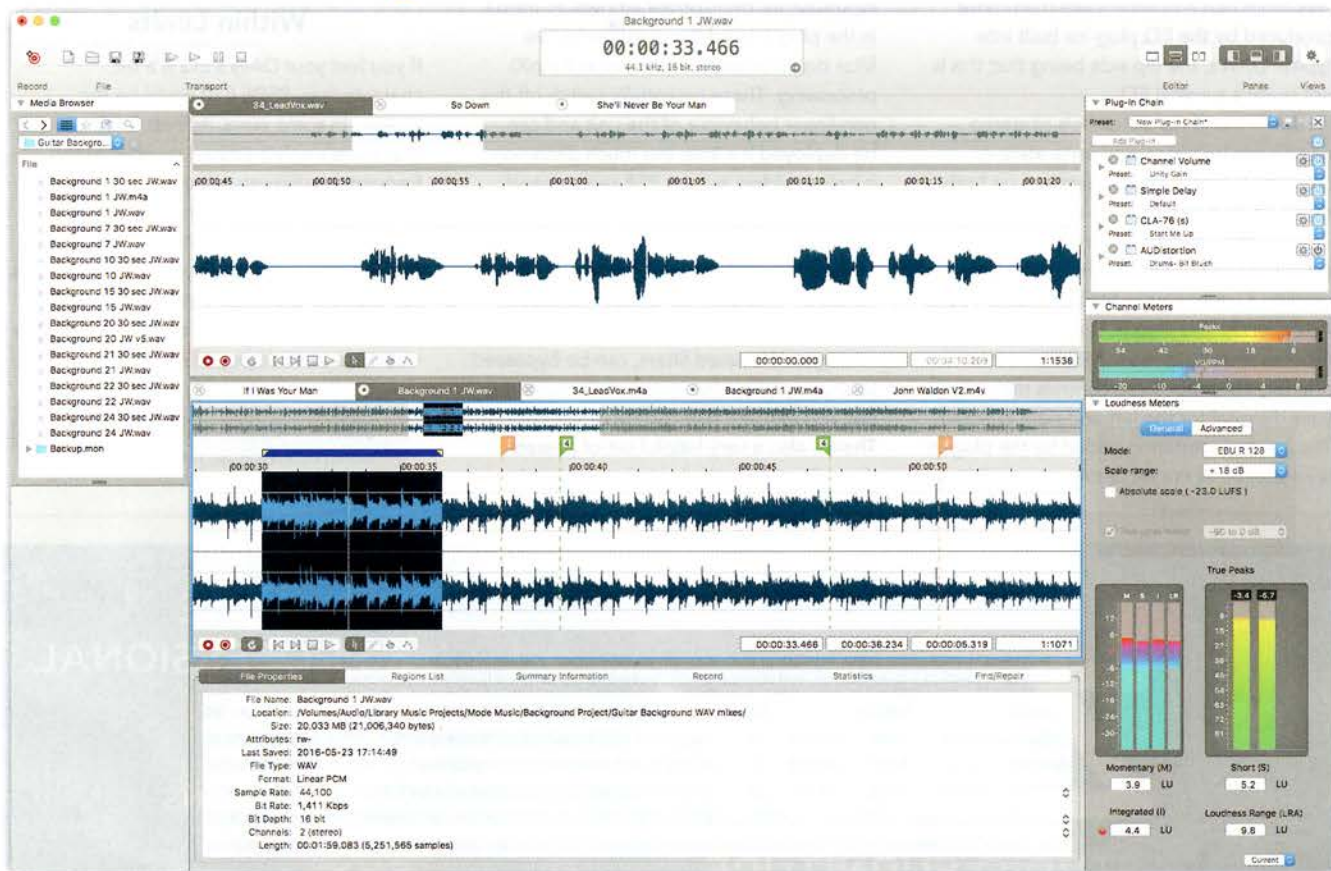


# Magix Sound Forge Pro Mac 3

## Audio Editing Software For Mac OS



### JOHN WALDEN

Originally developed by Sonic Foundry for Windows computers, Acid Pro, Vegas Video and Sound Forge are long-established platforms for music production, video editing and audio editing respectively. In 2003, Sony acquired the Sonic Foundry desktop product line and set up their Creative Software division; and over the next 13 years, the three programs enjoyed mixed fortunes. The most recent major update to Acid Pro was back in 2008; considering it was a pioneering piece of software in its time, and laid the ground for products such as Ableton Live, this is a considerable shame. Vegas fared somewhat better under Sony's ownership, and not only did

Its first makeover under new ownership sees Magix's Mac editing package team up with some powerful partners.

Sony release a major update to Sound Forge for Windows as recently as 2013, but they also launched an OS X version.

Sound Forge Pro Mac 1, which I reviewed in the February 2013 issue of *SOS*, was a somewhat tentative introduction to the platform, lacking many of the features of the more mature Windows version, but some of these were added in version 2 a year later. Sony's foray into OS X raised hopes that they might attempt similar ports of Vegas and Acid Pro, but these hopes were not realised, and development activity

seemed pretty thin from 2014 onwards. Then, in May 2016, the former Sonic Foundry product line, along with spectral editor SpectraLayers, underwent another change of ownership, with German company Magix, well known both for professional tools such as Amplitude and for their consumer-level music, audio and video software products, taking over.

Such a change of ownership is always an anxious time for long-term fans, who want to ensure that manufacturers invest in continuing development rather than asset-stripping the software to embed the



technology in their own products. So far, however, things are looking promising. Vegas underwent a well-received relaunch in a new version last year, and now Magix have unveiled their road map for the future of Sound Forge. A major new Windows version is promised for later this year, but the first update to reach the market is version 3 of Sound Forge Pro Mac.

## Freshly Forged

By way of a reminder, it's worth recapping what SFPM already offered, as that core functionality remains very much intact in Magix's first update. We are, therefore, still getting a pretty sophisticated audio editor built around a slick and attractive user interface, which is split into four 'panes'. Waveform displays are located top/centre, where multiple audio files can be arranged and displayed in various ways. Additional panels at either side and below the waveform display can be toggled on and off, and are used to display additional features such as meters, file browsers, plug-in chains, file properties and recording information. Plug-in windows float above this otherwise single-window interface.

Hardware permitting, you can record audio files of up to 32 channels at resolutions up to 24-bit/192kHz, with options for defining markers and regions within a file. A full range of routine audio editing functions are included in both destructive and non-destructive editing modes. There is a range of built-in plug-ins, and 64-bit AU and VST plug-ins

Sound Forge Pro Mac 3 is built around a single-window concept, but offers plenty of options for the user to customise the layout.

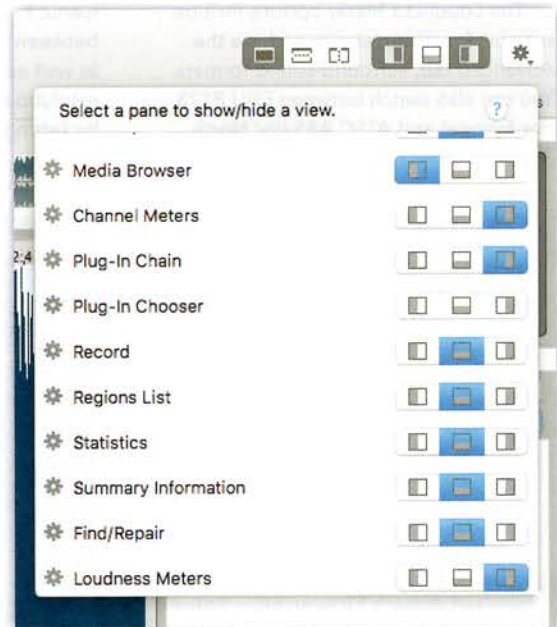
can be hosted as well. Users of SpectraLayers Pro also get the option to open a Sound Forge file for editing within that environment. The bottom line here is that, for the majority of routine audio editing tasks and CD production, SFPM, while still not quite duplicating the feature set of the Windows version, is a very elegant, powerful and easy-to-use platform.

So what's new? Well, there are some very useful and attractive new additions to the overall package but I think it's fair to say that this update is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Given the change of ownership, that's perhaps understandable, but perhaps also sensible. As we will see in a minute, Magix have made worthwhile improvements without reinventing the Sound Forge wheel.

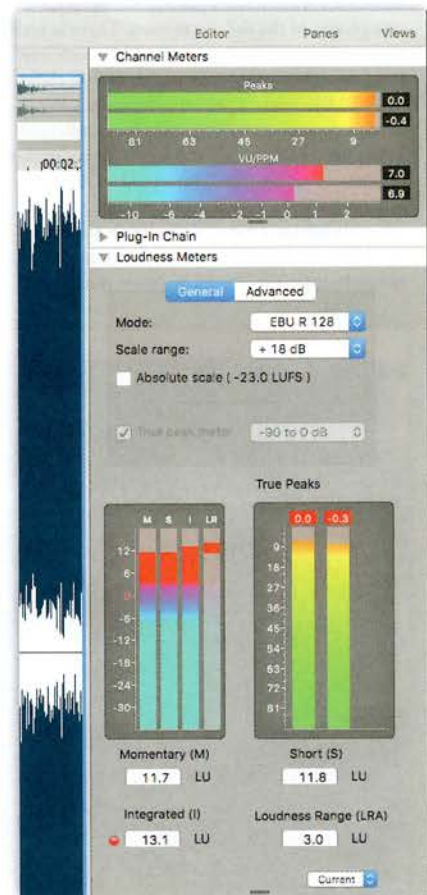
## Level Heads

When it comes to the core SFPM feature set, 'useful but modest' is a good way to summarise the improvements in version 3. For example, there are some new — if somewhat basic — own-brand audio plug-ins, including reverb, delay, noise gate and modulation effects. These would be useful if SFPM3 is your first foray into audio work on your Mac but, otherwise, I suspect most users will already have plug-ins that cover these sorts of routine tasks and that perhaps offer more sophisticated options.

Perhaps more interesting to the professional audio editor are the new Loudness Meters (the standard Channel Meters displays are retained) and the Automatic Loudness Levelling feature. These should help those looking to create audio masters that are compliant with AES-EBU loudness standards. The Loudness Meter panel can be added to any of the three additional panes, and its meters show momentary loudness based upon a 400ms window, short-term loudness with a 3 second window, integrated loudness across all channels, and the 'loudness range', which is a useful gauge of how dynamic a recording or



mix will be perceived to be. There is also true-peak metering, which will detect inter-sample peaks that don't show up on a conventional digital peak meter but can cause clipping when the signal is reconstructed. »



The new Loudness Meters will be welcomed by those preparing audio for broadcast or streaming.

## Magix Sound Forge Pro Mac 3 \$299

### PROS

- The program's elegant user interface and workflow has been retained and enhanced.
- Refined plug-in support is very welcome.
- Good value, if Ozone Elements and RX Elements are useful to you.

### CONS

- No video window.
- It's not clear what the integration with RX means for Magix's own spectral editing package, SpectraLayers.

### SUMMARY

Magix's first update to Sound Forge Pro Mac under their ownership is a good, if somewhat evolutionary, step forward. The OS X version retains its polish but now has a feature set to interest potential users at all levels.



» The Loudness Meter options include support for mono, stereo and, via the Advanced tab, surround-sound formats. You can also switch between EBU R128 (for Europe) and ATSC A85 (for North America) using the Mode drop-down

menu. In addition, you get a choice between +18 and +9 dB scale ranges as well as selecting different meter resolutions to meter lower-level signals by setting the base of the meters between -12 and -138 dB to suit your

specific audio material.

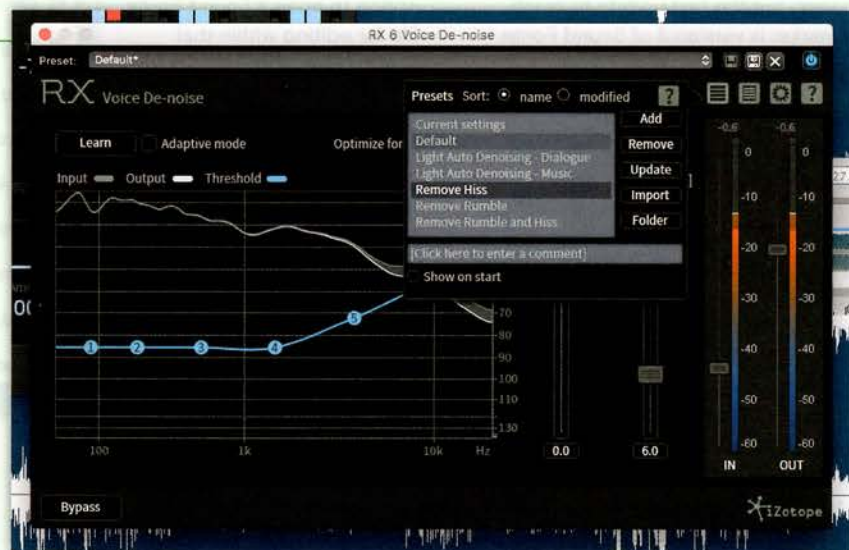
The new Loudness Levelling function, available from the Tools menu, analyses the selected audio file and adjusts its loudness to conform to the standards chosen using the Mode selector. If your

## Ozone & RX

While all of these core additions to Sound Forge Pro Mac described in the main text are both welcome and effective, perhaps the most exciting new features stem from deals Magix have done with iZotope, which see both Ozone 7 Elements and RX6 Elements with SFPM3. Purchased separately, both of these are priced at \$129 and, as these are 'proper' versions of both products with their own serial numbers, they also provide upgrade paths via your iZotope account should you wish to move up the Ozone or RX food chain.

I use the full version of Ozone 7 on a regular basis, and although Elements offers limited control in comparison, it still sounds rather good. In essence, what is supplied here is an impressive collection of mastering presets where the user can fine-tune up to three parameters related to EQ, dynamics and the maximiser's threshold, with more complex processing going on under the hood. As an easy-to-use mastering plug-in, it is perhaps going to appeal most to those who want results quickly and without the complexity of the full-fat version. There is little to go wrong and you can easily add punch and level to your track with just a few mouse clicks.

RX6 Elements is perhaps the more intriguing inclusion. This adds four dedicated audio repair plug-ins to the Find/Repair option mentioned above. De-Clip and De-Click cover similar duties to the default processing, but in what is perhaps a more controllable fashion. De-Hum can be used to remove things like mains hum, while Voice De-Noise is designed



The four audio repair plug-ins from iZotope's RX6 Elements, including Voice De-noise, shown here, bring some pretty sophisticated 'rescue me' tools to SFPM3's audio editing feature set.

to reduce background noise in vocal or dialogue recording. Of course, nobody really wants to record audio that needs a salvage job to make it usable, but there are contexts, particularly in live or location recording, where that's a fact of life — and, having fed this combination of plug-ins something deliberately messy, I was able to improve things considerably. Yes, if you push too hard, then the artifacts of processing become as problematic as the original noise, but it's pretty easy to move things gently in the right

direction providing you accept that things are more likely to get 'better' than 'perfect'.

As this is a full copy of RX6, you also get to use it as an application in its own right — and, while the Elements version only provides a limited feature set, it provides an impressive introduction to the power that spectral editing can offer. Editing options include time-based selection, frequency-based selection, lasso and brush tools, a magic wand and the option to add harmonics to a selection. Zooming in and out of the spectral display is easy and you can also blend the standard waveform display with the spectral display, making it easier to understand the relationship between your Sound Forge waveform and the spectral details.

The intriguing bit here is that Magix have chosen to bundle a product that overlaps considerably in terms of functionality with their own spectral editor SpectraLayers. Indeed, if you happen to have a version of SpectraLayers installed (I had access to version 3, the last release under Sony ownership), SFPM3's Tools menu includes options for opening your audio file within SpectraLayers Pro, and you can toggle files back and forth between the two editing environments. I'm not quite sure of the logic or underlying plan behind offering your customers an introduction to the direct competition here, nor what we might read into it in terms of any future development of SpectraLayers. However, as Magix have already released their first update to SpectraLayers Pro — version 4 appeared earlier this year — one can only presume they are comfortable with the arrangement.



iZotope's Ozone 7 Elements provides an easy-to-use mastering option within SFPM3.



03 Start a Band Loud (1).txt

Log updated: 06-10-2017 14:58:08  
 Media: /Volumes/Audio/MP3 files for Players/Brad Paisley - Play/03 Start a Band.mp3  
 Log file: /Volumes/Audio/MP3 files for Players/Brad Paisley - Play/03 Start a Band Loud (1).txt  
 Format: 32-bit IEEE data, 2 channels @ 44100 Hz  
 Algorithm: Surround processing turned: OFF

Loudness calculations:

Pos.	Time	Mon.(LUFS)	Short(LUFS)	Integ.(LUFS)	Dyn.(LU)
8192	00:00:00.186	-99.12	-Inf.	-Inf.	0.00
16396	00:00:00.372	-34.21	-42.96	-34.20	19.90
24576	00:00:00.557	-29.68	-38.43	-30.88	21.10
32768	00:00:00.743	-26.03	-34.58	-28.41	8.40
40960	00:00:00.929	-25.76	-33.03	-27.79	10.00
49152	00:00:01.115	-28.67	-32.88	-28.00	10.10
57344	00:00:01.300	-29.36	-32.43	-28.38	10.20
65536	00:00:01.486	-31.21	-32.11	-28.75	10.70
73728	00:00:01.672	-30.84	-31.94	-28.87	10.90
81920	00:00:01.858	-32.49	-31.90	-29.23	6.90
90112	00:00:02.043	-36.01	-31.84	-29.56	6.90
98304	00:00:02.229	-38.94	-31.78	-30.06	7.00
106496	00:00:02.415	-28.68	-30.78	-30.11	7.30
114688	00:00:02.601	-26.91	-30.29	-29.74	8.40
122880	00:00:02.786	-27.25	-30.05	-29.60	8.20
131072	00:00:02.972	-31.46	-29.93	-29.66	8.40
139264	00:00:03.158	-31.42	-29.87	-29.78	8.50
147456	00:00:03.344	-34.99	-29.87	-30.01	8.50
155648	00:00:03.529	-64.27	-30.47	-30.01	8.50
163840	00:00:03.715	-62.53	-31.56	-30.01	4.90
172032	00:00:03.901	-34.74	-31.83	-30.10	4.90
180224	00:00:04.087	-29.99	-31.87	-30.14	4.90
188416	00:00:04.272	-27.57	-31.34	-30.04	4.90
196608	00:00:04.458	-22.95	-29.22	-29.50	4.90
204800	00:00:04.644	-20.42	-27.36	-27.84	5.60
212992	00:00:04.830	-20.20	-27.10	-27.04	7.20
221184	00:00:05.016	-24.67	-27.00	-27.00	7.50
229376	00:00:05.201	-29.01	-26.77	-27.11	7.60
237568	00:00:05.387	-27.72	-26.78	-27.14	7.60
245760	00:00:05.573	-28.35	-27.11	-27.17	7.60
253952	00:00:05.759	-31.80	-27.08	-27.29	7.30
262144	00:00:05.944	-30.77	-27.07	-27.41	7.30
270336	00:00:06.130	-27.81	-26.78	-27.43	7.40
278528	00:00:06.316	-27.12	-26.56	-27.43	7.50
286720	00:00:06.502	-27.59	-26.43	-27.45	7.60
294912	00:00:06.687	-29.50	-26.38	-27.53	6.60
303104	00:00:06.873	-36.32	-26.38	-27.60	6.60
311296	00:00:07.059	-36.84	-26.47	-27.66	6.60
319488	00:00:07.245	-52.69	-26.64	-27.66	6.60
327680	00:00:07.430	-27.18	-26.66	-27.68	6.60

## Test Spec

- Sound Forge Pro Mac 3.0.0 (build 97).
- Apple iMac with 3.5GHz Intel Core i7 CPU and 32GB RAM, running Mac OS 10.12.2; Soundcraft Signature 12MTK.

client requires it, the Tools menu also offers the option to generate a Loudness Log for an audio file, which summarises its various loudness properties. This text file can then be used to document the file's compliance.

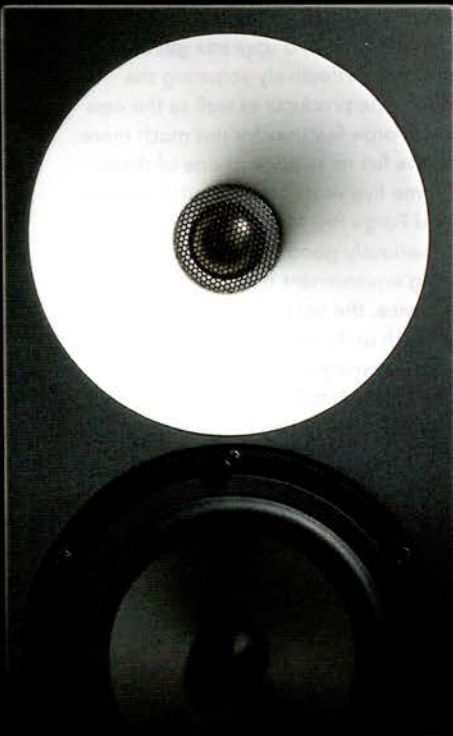
## Plug & Preview

One feature of earlier versions of Sound Forge that was perhaps unusual for those used to DAW programs was that audio effects and processing tended to be destructive in nature, albeit with the usual undo options, and the ways of previewing how these processes might sound were a bit clunky. Options for previewing »

If you need to demonstrate loudness compliance, the new Loudness Log feature allows you to do so for any audio file.

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