



Bias Inc  
**PEAK PRO XT 5**

FOR  
MAC

**MusicTech**  
**RECOMMENDED**  
★★★★★★★★★

**Bias' Peak Pro XT 5 bundle looks set to be the most promising release in its lineage. JoE Silva finds out if it does indeed reach new heights.**

**KEY FEATURES**

- Bundle includes SoundSoap 2 and SoundSoap Pro along with the new Master Perfection Suite
- Revamped playlist window with graphical interface
- Full Red Book CD compliance
- Vbox 2.0 effects routing interface now supports Audio Unit plug-ins as well as Audio Unit/VST instruments
- Edit History and File Recover functions
- New ImpulseVerb user interface

**PEAK PRO XT 5**

Manufacturer **Bias Inc**  
 Price **£825**  
 Contact **SCV London 020 8418 1470**  
 Web **www.bias-inc.com**  
 Minimum system requirements  
**Mac G4 500MHz, Mac OSX 10.3.9, 256MB RAM, QuickTime 6.0**

**W**orking a sustained Mac-only client base, Bias' Peak software has been the chief editing platform for sound designers, broadcast pros and mastering engineers for some time. Version 4, which included additional features such as Audio Units support and convolving reverb, officially departed from the realm of OS9 with seemingly little impact to its user base. Now, a little more than two years later, the Peak Pro XT 5 bundle is hitting the shelves.

Fortunately, given its not inconsequential price, XT (the acronym for the Xtended Technology edition) is a portly bundle to be sure. Included in this version is Bias' newly released Master Perfection Suite, which includes six heavyweight plug-ins (pitch correction, signal analysis, gate, compressor/limiter, multi-band paragraphic EQ and EQ matching)

designed to get your finished product up to pro standards. XT also includes not one, but two versions of Bias' SoundSoap audio-restoration software (SoundSoap 2 and SoundSoap Pro). Add to that multi-format conversion and CD burning with 100% Red Book compatibility, and XT aims to be as comprehensive an audio suite as you can imagine.

**Reaching the Peak**

The XT installers are spread across four CDs, each one geared to a specific product within the bundle. Installation terminates with a routine requiring the unlocking of your product's tiny USB software key. If you're performing an upgrade, your previous version of Peak is not removed from your system (even if the newer version is laid into the same folder as the last). Unfortunately, Peak 5 doesn't appear to absorb any of the custom keyboard shortcuts you may have written into your previous version's Preferences (renaming the older file in your user Library directory to match that of the newer Preferences file won't work, either).

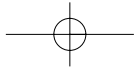
Visually, Peak's principal interface hasn't changed much since version 4 (although new toolbar icons are used), with the exception of a three-octave MIDI keyboard window that appears at startup. This brings us to the first of many new features built-in to Peak 5 –

namely, support for Audio Unit plug-ins and VST/Audio Unit instruments. By ticking the Record Through Plug-ins box in the Record Settings dialog you can record your VST/Audio Unit instrument performances with ease. Be aware, though (it's not readily evident), that you'll have to bypass the instrument to play back your audio file one it's been created.

As far as productivity is concerned, Peak 5 has some handy new features that will greatly improve workflow. For example, the program now retains your project's history and details any edits that you make to it. This enables you to revert to a specific point should you choose to. Simply double-click on a previous point in your file's Edit History and any changes you made after that point are removed (providing you haven't physically saved the project).

Along similar lines, Peak now enables you to recover a damaged audio file. Once you supply the Recover Audio dialog (located under the Edit menu) with information such as channels (mono or stereo), bit depth, sample rate, byte order and the location of the audio data within a file, Peak will attempt to resurrect your information. Metadata such as loop points and so on will not be recovered.

In the area of DSP, tracks within a file can now be automatically defined. By establishing the minimum amount of silence between songs, setting a



Peak Pro's Hum and Rumble filter can isolate and remove turntable noise.

minimum for track duration (the default is ten seconds) and specifying what dB range equates to silence, Peak XT 5 will define your tracks. Silence can also be stripped from your audio via a DSP dialog comprising a four-parameter noise gate and a two-parameter Stripper function that controls the noise floor and the required duration of silence before a strip occurs.

## PEAK PRO XT 5 OFFERS COMPREHENSIVE AUDIO-EDITING, MASTERING AND CD-PREPARATION FEATURES.

### Mastering perfection

As both SoundSoap Pro and SoundSoap 2 have been tackled in previous issues (19 and 25

respectively), we'll turn instead to the brand-new Master Perfection Suite. Installation for these six plug-ins mirrors the Peak setup, so you'll find no surprises there.

Peak's GateEx gate/expander tool boasts a comfortable and easy-to-use interface. The waveform display gives users a real-time view of audio as it enters the GateEx. Two horizontal lines act as gate threshold indicators and are controlled by the Threshold slider. Even those who have never used a gate before should have little trouble getting accustomed to deploying GateEx after a little experimentation.

Next up are the two signal and EQ analysis tools. The Reveal plug-in's kitchen sink-type interface has amazing potential. We don't understand, though, why you can view any of the tools on an individual tab, but deselecting any one of them from the View All Displays tab doesn't physically remove it from the tab, thus enabling you to create a customised combination of views.

Repli-Q's graphical representation of the spectral content of your audio enables you to not only match your audio to the graphical representation



Getting to grips with the noise gate is easy, but it may involve a little experimentation. The two horizontal lines act as gate threshold indicators, controlled via the Threshold slider.

## Measuring Up

Unless you've warmed to free open source solutions like Audacity, Peak is largely alone in its class as far as Mac audio editors are concerned. There are several shareware solutions (Amadeus, Cacophony and so on), but outside of what's bundled with your DAW, Peak remains the powerhouse in its field.

of a track you might be trying to emulate, but also helps you bring a number of tracks in line with certain parameters to achieve a more consistent overall sound.

The Pitchcraft plug-in – as you might imagine – involves pitch correction and transposition and has one of the most elegant interfaces you'll come across. Combining an X/Y Tuning History Graph, Keyboard Display and handy sliders to manage pitch and formant changes, Pitchcraft also enables you to create custom scales. You can even use separate channels (left and right) as a reference source, as well as use multiple pitch ranges (male, female, upper or lower register) to account for different sources.

Last up are the SuperFreq, Sqweez-3 and Sqweez-5. SuperFreq is an easy-to-use 4-, 6-, 8- and 10-band equalizer plug-in featuring five parametric filters per channel. Sqweez-3 and Sqweez-5 are multi-band compressor plug-ins that have been updated from Sqweez 1.03. In either version, each band of compression offers threshold and gain sliders along with five band-specific pop-up controls (ratio, max reduction, attack, release and knee). The six default settings are good starting points, but the large graphical display makes further tweaking easy.

With all the improvements that smarten up its mastering abilities and pro CD preparation, coupled with the fact that it's already an excellent tool for transferring precious vinyl to the digital domain, Mac users would be crazy not to keep Peak close to hand. **MTM**

### METHOD SPOT

The Vbox 2.0 integrated effects routing window is a superb way of handling multiple insert points using a visual 4 x 4 matrix. Combined with the new plug-in suite included in this bundle, some of the complexities of mastering chains are far easier to sort out. Plug-ins can be connected in either series or parallel, and the ability to save multiple plug-in changes under the umbrella of a single Vbox preset is beyond convenient. Equally convenient is the CPU meter that's included as a feature of the matrix.

## SUMMARY

### WHY BUY

- Wonderfully well-rounded solution to common audio-editing tasks
- 100% Red Book compatibility
- New AU and VST instrument support

### WALK ON BY

- Dongle protection
- Relatively expensive
- Main Reveal plug-in interface a bit cluttered

## VERDICT

For Mac users, the Peak Pro XT 5 bundle offers comprehensive audio-editing, mastering and CD-preparation features, making this a virtually ideal one-stop solution.



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