
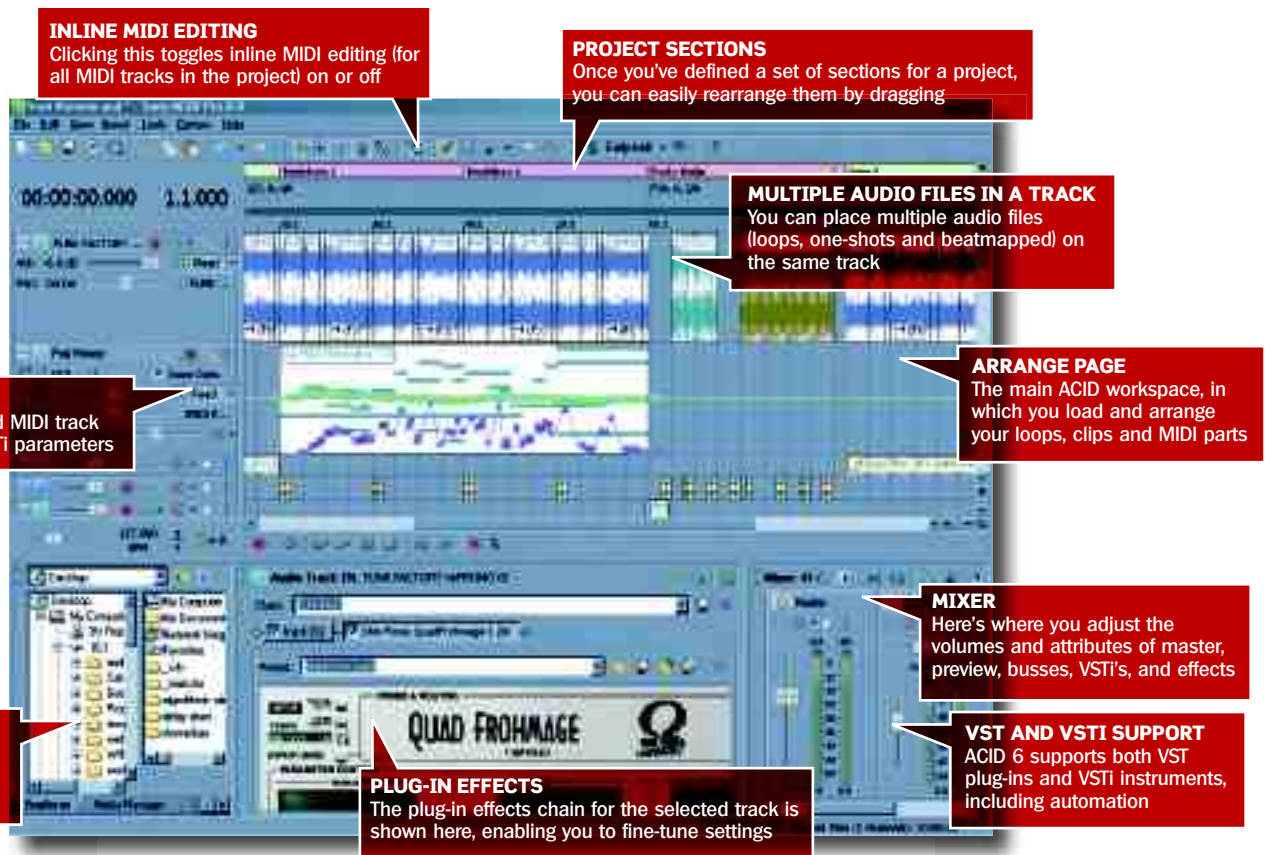


PC  What is it? The latest version of Sony's traditionally loop-based DAW PRICE: £299

CONTACT: SCV London, 020 8418 1470 WWW.sonymediasoftware.com INFO: Upgrade prices from \$130



INLINE MIDI EDITING
Clicking this toggles inline MIDI editing (for all MIDI tracks in the project) on or off

PROJECT SECTIONS
Once you've defined a set of sections for a project, you can easily rearrange them by dragging

MULTIPLE AUDIO FILES IN A TRACK
You can place multiple audio files (loops, one-shots and beatmapped) on the same track

ARRANGE PAGE
The main ACID workspace, in which you load and arrange your loops, clips and MIDI parts

MIXER
Here's where you adjust the volumes and attributes of master, preview, busses, VSTi's, and effects

VST AND VSTI SUPPORT
ACID 6 supports both VST plug-ins and VSTi instruments, including automation


PLUG-IN EFFECTS
The plug-in effects chain for the selected track is shown here, enabling you to fine-tune settings

AUTOMATION
You can automate audio and MIDI track parameters and VST and VSTi parameters

EXPLORER
Here you can find, preview and load (by dragging onto the Arrange page) your audio files

SONY MEDIA SOFTWARE ACID Pro 6



 **On the DVD**

AUDIO DEMOS
See what you think of ACID: check out the demo on the DVD

The new and improved ACID Pro 6 wants to compete with the big-boy DAWs, but will anyone but diehard ACID users buy into it?

► **SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

PC: 1GHz processor (1.2GHz if using video), Microsoft Windows XP/2000 (SP4), 256MB RAM, 150MB hard disk space

► **TEST MACHINE**

PC: Pentium 4 2.3GHz, 512MB RAM, Windows XP

ACID has a rich history. Back in 1998 when it was introduced, it had few competitors in the loop-based beatmatching domain, and was clearly the best among its peers. These were ACID's glory years. But it didn't take very long for other products to catch up, and ACID now has many competitors, including Ableton Live, FL Studio, Sonar, and Cubase, to name just a few. For a while, around v4, it seemed that ACID would fade quietly into the DSP sunset, but v5 gave it a breath of new life. And now, with version 6, ACID has positioned itself to

compete with other fully-fledged (rather than just loop-based) DAWs.

What's new?

Plenty! ACID 6 is much more of a revolutionary release than ACID 5, in keeping with its attempt to emerge from the looping shadows into full DAWhood. Firstly, it can do audio and MIDI multitrack recording. Record input monitoring is also supported – something that will keep singers happy as they can now monitor with reverb. It also introduces inline MIDI editing directly on the ACID timeline.

Version 6 enables you to place multiple audio files (loops, one-shots and beatmapped) on the same track, which is a huge space-saver for those 20+ track projects. Unfortunately, you can't drag audio from track to track; you've got to cut/copy and paste it. Project tracks, audio and MIDI can be organised into sections, and rearranging sections is as simple as selecting and dragging.

You can now automate VSTi instrument parameters along with VST effect parameters. The built-in Drum Map Editor can be used to create

custom Drum Map templates, and external hardware control surfaces can be employed to control the transport, envelopes, faders, mutes, solos, pans and effects automation. It also handles 5.1 surround mixing, which is great news for sound designers.

What's good?

The ACID programming team got a lot of things right with this release. They resisted the seduction of feature bloat and kept ACID's usability, layout and workflow simple. For many users, this is what makes ACID such a great product – it's one of the easiest audio workstations out there; just drag a set of audio files (in almost any format) into the workspace, paint in your clips, and your piece is underway. Clear and concise popups help you remember what all the controls do, and the mouse-wheel zoom is so good that we could see it becoming a standard GUI feature among all DAWs eventually.

ACID's looping capabilities remain top-notch. Its timestretching and beatmatching more than hold their own against Live 5, Cubase and Sonar – particularly if the loops are properly ACIDized. The program's pitchshifting, meanwhile, is as good as or better than most of its competitors.

The most appealing new features, however, are support for multitrack recording, inline MIDI editing and external control surfaces. These are must-haves for a DAW of this kind.

What needs work?

By far the biggest complaint among ACID 6 early adopters is its less than

The ACID 6 family of products

The ACID 6 product family has three members: ACID XMC, ACID Music Studio, and ACID Pro.

ACID XMC (eXtreme Music Creation) is the entry-level version of the program, suitable for beginners. Its toolset is minimal, but manages to include pretty much everything a newbie needs to create, record, mix, burn, and share tracks. It costs \$40.

ACID Music Studio is a step up from ACID XMC; it's a good choice for intermediate-level producers who either don't have the budget for ACID Pro 6 or don't need all the Pro goodies. In addition to all of XMC's features, ACID Music Studio has track bouncing, the Chopper loop editor, MIDI recording and piano roll editing, VST/VSTi and DirectX support, and effects including EQ, reverb, delay and chorus. It costs £49.

ACID Pro 6 is the patriarch of the ACID family, a pro-strength DAW suitable for all manner of production, recording,



▲ Sony have catered for everyone with their array of ACID 6 versions – ACID XMC, ACID Music Studio and ACID Pro

mixing, and arranging of audio and MIDI. It has everything ACID Music Studio has plus external control surface support, 24-bit/192kHz compatibility, inline MIDI editing, 1000+ Sony Sound Series loops, and a custom edition of Native Instruments' Kompakt sampler with over 120 instruments.

rock-solid VST and VSTi functionality. VST effect and instrument support was added with version 5, and not surprisingly, it was a bit wonky. Things are better in ACID 6, but still not 100% there. Several users have reported VST crashes or malfunctions, VST automation is not yet supported for all parameters, and routing is less than ideal. For example, there are no FX sends for VST instruments.

Another shortcoming is the lack of a freeze function. Freezing a track with effects plug-ins bounces it down to an audio track without destroying the original track and plug-in setup. This dramatically reduces the amount of CPU usage. There is, however, an ACID 6 workaround: use the **Render to New Track** command (**Tools** menu) to bounce one or more tracks down to a single audio track; right-click on the each of the original tracks' FX icons

and choose **Bypass All**, then mute each of the original tracks.

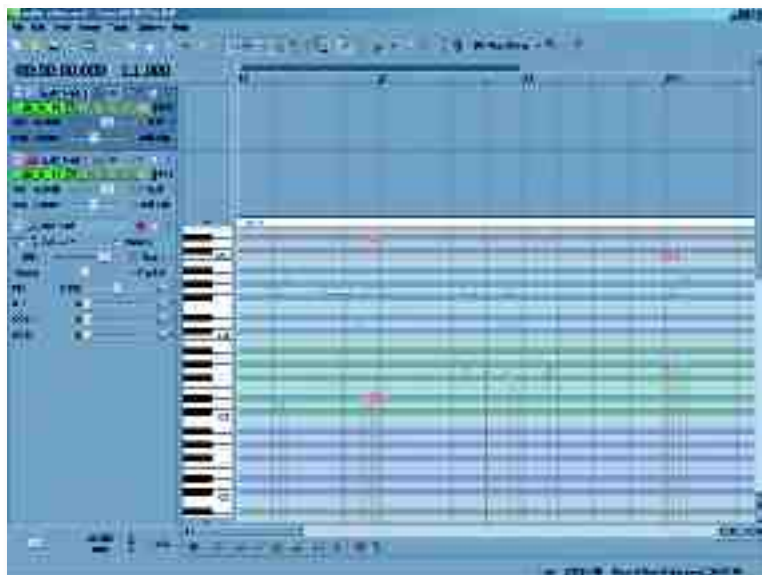
ACID 6 comes with a set of over 20 standard effects (delay, EQ, reverb, etc). They're OK, but certainly nothing to write home about. We'd love to see them include pro-quality effects and mastering tools, like Sonar 5 does with the Sonitus:fx Suite.

The ACID Media Manager is a hotly debated topic among users. Some like it, many don't. It enables you to build and arrange media libraries, simplifying the task of finding loops. But many see it as excess baggage, a mere CPU hog. Again, there's a workaround. You can prevent the Media Manager from being installed by clicking on **Cancel** during the ACID installation procedure. Or, if it's already installed, you can get rid of it by opening the Control Panel, double-clicking **Add or Remove Programs**, removing the Media Manager from the list, and then unchecking **Enable Media Manager** in ACID (**Options**»**Preferences**).

Thumbs up?

Oh yes, way up. Doubters who didn't believe Sony was up to the task of nurturing ACID to a mature DAW will be pleasantly surprised. All the parts are there now and all but a few work flawlessly. Support for multitrack recording and inline MIDI editing alone justify the not unreasonable \$130 upgrade price. Workflow improvements like multiple audio files per track and project sections are the icing on the cake, and the VST problems and other shortcomings will hopefully get fixed – ACID users are very vocal, and Sony usually listen.

ACID Pro 6 is a workhorse, and an elegant one at that. ACID lovers should place their orders right away. **cm**



▲ Despite a few quirks, ACID 6 is a must-have for existing users

▶ ALTERNATIVELY

Ableton Live 5

cm90 » 9/10 » \$499

The ultimate sequencer and timestretcher for live performance

Sonar 5 Producer Edition

cm93 » 9/10 » \$799

A mature, sophisticated sequencer with great Sonitus:fx and Roland effects

VERDICT

FOR

- + Refreshing ease of use
- + Near-unmatched usability/layout/workflow
- + Good timestretching and beatmatching
- + Multitrack recording
- + Inline MIDI editing
- + Includes 1000+ loops and Kompakt sampler with 120 instruments

AGAINST

- VST and VSTi support and automation are not 100%
- No built-in freeze
- Lack of pro-quality effects and mastering tools
- Annoying Media Manager

ACID Pro 6 is really close to being a top-notch DAW, but it still has a few kinks to iron out

RATING

