

# Synchro Arts VocAlign Ultra Plug-In

By Adam Gallant

VocAlign by Synchro Arts has recently been overhauled and in this issue, we are testing out VocAlign Ultra to explore all of its new features and utilities. While the company's flagship product, Revoice Pro 4, represents a tremendous amount of power and value, VocAlign takes some of the most time-saving aspects of that suite and condenses them for users who may be using other tools for primary pitch correction. In its early days, VocAlign was the go-to tool for automating the arduous task of editing ADR dialogue to match production dialogue in audio post-production. After a short time, the software was adopted by the music community to speed up lengthy edit jobs on sung vocal doubles, harmonies, and other layered music sources. This latest version has been optimized for implementation in music production.

With this latest release, we find the interface to be completely overhauled with a modern looking and fully resizable GUI. The UI clearly displays the audio waveforms you are looking to match (referred to as the "Guide"), the audio that will be reshaped (referred to as the "Dub"), and also the final render that the software will output. Views can be expanded to show details about both time and pitch changes that will take place, as well as how aggressive the software will work in specific areas. The UI has been designed in a way that makes it easy to hunt down any potential areas susceptible to artifacts. In the upper right corner, there is a toggle to switch between the Basic and Advanced views. In the Advanced view, we see detailed controls such as a Transpose option, alternate pitch algorithms, and settings for pitch ranges on the Guide and Dub tracks.

VocAlign Ultra brings in algorithms built for Revoice Pro, and one such feature is SmartAlign. This process looks both at the track to be corrected and the guide track and it makes intelligent decisions about what edit paths to take when matching those clips. With SmartAlign enabled, users may find some "loosening" of the time matching capabilities is warranted as the software can do an exceptional job of lining things up. The Max Difference control parameter comes into play here. Users can dial in the amount of correction quickly and independently for time corrections and pitch corrections. Also, the SmartAlign algorithm can be disabled with a single click. Broadly speaking, the software is much more flexible and transparent sounding than I recall it feeling in previous versions.



Perhaps the most exciting new feature is the Match Pitch tool. Previous versions of VocAlign simply focused on matching the timing between clips, but now we have the ability to also match the pitch in very controlled and versatile ways. The time-saving capabilities here are phenomenal. For example, are you tired of tuning each layer of background vocals? Try tuning one layer of background vocals and simply match that tuned file to all the doubles that follow.

For complicated matching, VocAlign Ultra has Sync Points and Protected Areas. These are user-defined target points on your Guide and Dub tracks that VocAlign will ensure remain in sync or are left untouched when processing.

There are also well described and well-organized presets that are great for exploring the full features of the plug-in. There are presets for instruments, dialogue, rap, and of course, sung vocals. For dialogue, we see the ability to match inflection via the Match Pitch algorithm — a great level up for handling ADR when the dubbed performances aren't as desirable as the sometimes-unusable production dialogue.

With the ability to futz with pitch, users will find there is more room for creative exploration in this latest version. For example, shifting the formant on doubled vocals in music can create width and depth by adjusting the timbre of a source without affecting its pitch. The Transpose knob in the Advanced view can be used to add subtle pitch shifts up and down to hard panned BGs or Doubles to create a classic "microshift" sound. For sound designers looking to add unique effects to dialogue, the Formant shift can be really unique sounding when abused. Use it to match alternate takes and create a

thick-sounding villain or a voice with ghostly computerized characteristics.

Also, VocAlign has been ARA2 enabled. ARA (Audio Random Access) increases the amount of communication between a DAW and a plug-in with information such as audio data, tempo, and pitch for an entire song rather than just at the moment of playback. The ARA version of VocAlign can capture and process multiple clips in one pass, whereas the Pro Tools AudioSuite version is restricted to a single Guide and Dub print at a time. For the VST3 or AU formats, VocAlign can be instantiated on an insert slot on the track whose timing you want to correct. Simply side-chain a feed from the Guide track and capture the audio in real time before aligning it. Synchro Arts are keeping up with the demands of their users by adapting these formats.

Without a doubt the most valuable aspect of VocAlign Ultra is its ability to save vast amounts of time on editing. If you're working in Dialogue, matching ADR, or flying in alternate takes, this tool is an absolute must. Also, it does a much more transparent sounding job than editing "by hand" in Pro Tools. In the world of music production, the instant results one can achieve are mind-boggling. Clean up doubled vocals in a track in a few seconds, and tune all your background vocals in a massive session in a few minutes. This is the kind of plug-in users look back and think, "how did I ever work without this?"

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