



Real People Reviews

by Daniel M. East

Product: Peak 4

Manufacturer/Vendor/Developer: Bias

MSRP: 299.00

Street price: same

Review date: February 8, 2004

DESCRIPTION (What's it do? What's it got?): Audio recording, editing, mastering and sound processing for the advanced amateur to professional studios with a lot of bang for the buck. While this may not be quite enough for the “serious professional,” this newest release gives the big dogs a good run for their money.

MIN. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: The vendor lists “any G3/G4,” but I’d recommend a minimum 400 Mhz G4 or better; OS 10.2x or later; 256 Mb RAM; hard drive with minimum access time of 18ns; color monitor with min. resolution of 640 X 480 (Bias recommends setting your colors to “thousands” or less).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: As a longtime music professional, I wanted to review this product for “real people” in everyday use situations even though this is clearly a more professional application. I decided to use this application to do something slightly different that wasn’t as familiar to me in order to be effective in the perspective. Bias has made some impressive strides in making Peak an application to fill a real need for a cost - effective professional audio tool that is familiar from interface to output for pros, while allowing for a learning curve that doesn’t require a degree in engineering to conquer. I used Peak 4 to master some live concert board mixes I’d recorded as the front-of-house engineer as well as remastering some older recordings from vinyl to CD. I was not disappointed.

LIKES : This is a fluid looking, feeling and operating application, but the reality is that sound is the first and foremost concern. Peak is fast and the features become instinctual the more you use it. With the incredible addition of unlimited undo’s and redo’s, I was able to experiment with my sounds, adjust pitch, change effects and more on the fly. I really like the very natural support of VST and other major plug-ins along with easy disk burning from within the application. Bias also includes a huge assortment of effects, plug-ins and capabilities right out of the box. Peak allows your input to come from USB, FireWire or even the standard mini-plug inputs and outputs already on most Macs. On top of all of that, Bias has integrated more QuickTime functionality for working on soundtracks as well as AAC format support so you can send your output to your friends, family, producer, record label executive or your web site. With all of the attention surrounding the release of GarageBand, those ready for the next step will love Bias for fine-tuning their masterpieces.

DISLIKES : As pro-audio people are aware, you really need your hardware to be dedicated and Peak is no exception. While it runs nicely on your internal hard disk, I really recommend an external firewire hard drive at 7200 RPM or better and as much RAM as your Mac can handle. While features like Bias' own VBox SE allows for easy combinations of plug-ins, you really need to find your way around the many pull downs to find your way through this feature-rich application. Peak has a very specific audience that needs to be both ready for this level of advanced editing and processing, while one that isn't simply missing out on the "next level" from eMagic or DigiDesign.

HOW DOES THIS PRODUCT COMPARE? : The reality is that, for everyday users, the key difference is in the pricing. Bias Peak 4 is available for 299.00 complete and can grow easily to match nearly any competitor. ProTools 6.2.3 is the granddaddy of them all, but now more hardware dependent than ever - clearly for the industry pros only. It remains to be seen what Apple's eMagic Express 6 has to offer (not released as of this writing) at the same price; however, Logic 6 has a price point of about \$1,000.00. I was biased against Bias and really pleasantly surprised by the results.

WHO MIGHT ENJOY THIS PRODUCT? Peak 4 is great for musicians, producers and engineers looking for a lot of great sound and features for a really, relatively speaking, modest price. A great learning tool, mastering tool and two-track processor that will serve anyone looking to meet that list of criteria well.

TEST SYSTEM: Apple Titanium PowerBook G4 500 - 1Gb RAM - 10.3.2

FINAL THOUGHTS: So, how did the final tracks sound? I sent the AAC files to my clients to listen to and their question to me was "why did we let you leave us, again?" A nice compliment indeed, but the secret is Peak. I used the industry standard plug-ins and techniques along with my trusty Future Sonics Ears to get big sounding output that wasn't boomy and that was showing off tons of headroom and it is all thanks to Bias Peak 4. Again, a major leap forward in sound, ease and function for Peak that deserves a second...listen.

OVERALL RATING: 4.5 out of 5 EXCELLENT

For more information, visit: <http://www.bias-inc.com>

Daniel East is the founder and president of The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs) - a division of The Apple Groups Team; a member of The Apple Consultants Network (ACN); a member of The Apple Developer Connection (ACN); a panelist on "PC Talk Radio;" a live speaker/presenter and a freelance columnist for several Mac publications.

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info@mamugs.com - www.mamugs.org