

FASoft n-Track Studio 4.05 (Win, \$49 or \$75 with 24-bit file support)

n-Track Studio is a versatile program that would be a good choice for basic and complex audio and MIDI projects. It has a highly modular interface — the various windows can be easily resized and moved around the screen — and it supports a large number of configurable options. The program's audio-editing features are extensive, and its support for common protocols, such as ReWire and DX and VST instruments and effects, allow it to be the centerpiece of a modern music-production studio.

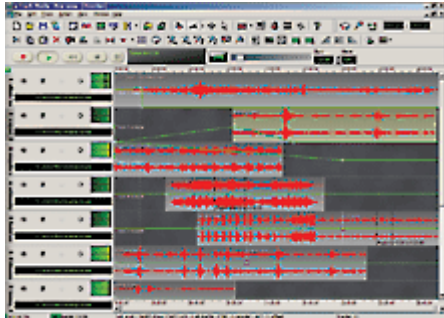


FIG. 7: n-Track Studio is a modern program that includes good-sounding audio effects, extensive MIDI features, and a highly customizable interface.

n-Track opens to a blank slate onto which you can insert any number of audio or MIDI tracks (see **Fig. 7**). The program uses the standard arrangement of vertically arranged tracks, with data shown along a horizontal timeline to the right. You can toggle the display of configurable level meters on a per-track basis directly in the tracks area, which is also where you enable the Freeze function. (Freeze renders a track and its effects to disk, and then reloads it onto the same track.)

To begin a mixing or mastering project, you might use the file Import option, which lets you choose one or more WAV or OGG files and pick a time offset to place them anywhere in the project. Like Home Studio, n-Track supports clips, which are chunks of data that you can move around on the timeline. Its auto-fade feature supports logarithmic and linear curves, and it can apply effects on a clip-by-clip basis. Be careful when removing a track from a project, because the first option you'll see when prompted is to delete the actual file off your hard drive.

n-Track's included effects aren't numerous, but they sound very good and have parameters that you can update while a track is playing. The reverb, for example, has ten parameters (predelay, length, room size, damping, and others), and as with the other effects, you can apply reverb to only the left or right channel of a stereo file. Input and output meters appear on the effects' dialog boxes, and you can save as many of your own presets as needed.

MIDI features are ample. n-Track's Piano Roll view has an option to display only the type of events you want, and you can select what type of event will be entered when you click on the Place icon. By Control + clicking on that icon, you can designate the note properties (Velocity and length) for new notes that you enter. In the Events List, you can alter multiple notes at once — transposing all notes in a measure, for example — and filter out types of events that you don't want displayed.

Get Smart

n-Track has a number of smart and helpful features that make common tasks easier. For example, you can snap the cursor to the beginning or end of a clip (as opposed to simply snapping the clip to the cursor position), and you can toggle the display of audio tracks as waveforms or as simple text listings. n-Track also lets you choose whether many of its audio-editing functions result in nondestructive or destructive changes. In some cases (time stretching, for example), you can create a new file reflecting the changes or make changes to an existing file. It also has a handy option that displays a list of all WAV files used in a project, and its built-in CD burning feature is well integrated.

n-Track is available only as a download, and its documentation exists only as online help. (A PDF manual is available as a separate download.) A short, getting-started tutorial is included in the help file, and the indexing is thorough. The users forum appears to be very active, with many thousands of replies to nearly 2,000 individual topics, and the program is updated and enhanced on a regular basis. You'll certainly be in good company if you choose n-Track for your studio.