

Bitwig Studio 5.2

€399

The DAW's two latest 'point' updates have further enhanced Bitwig's effect offering. **Si Truss** finds added flexibility and subtle vintage flavour...

CONTACT WHO: Bitwig **WEB**: bitwig.com **KEY FEATURES** **FORMATS**: Mac, PC, Linux. Purchase includes 12-month update plan



Until relatively recently, Bitwig Studio was playing catch-up when it came to audio effects. For all of the inspiring brilliance of its modular synth environment The Grid and the power of its flexible system of LFOs and modulators, the DAW's effect offering felt somewhat vanilla – limited largely to functional tools that got the job done, but lacked the range of creative effects found in rivals DAWs. Recent updates have done a lot to address this, though.

Bitwig sells its DAW on a subscription plan model, the main implication of which is that the 'point' updates are often as noteworthy as the main iterations. Between versions 4 and 5, Bitwig began its effects expansion, adding characterful Flanger+, Chorus+ and Phaser+ effects along with fresh Convolution and Delay+ devices. In the two updates released since Bitwig Studio 5 arrived last year, Bitwig has doubled its dedication to creative processing.

With v5.1, released back in at the tail end of 2023, Bitwig added what it described as '10 new characters' for the DAW. What this actually amounts to is a range of modules that encompass a variety of filters and waveshapers. On the filter front are four new tools named Fizz, Rasp, Ripple and Vowels. Rather than offer standard multi-mode filtering – which is already well covered elsewhere in Bitwig's toolset – the emphasis here is on creative filtering, touching on extreme resonance, comb-filter-like effects and formant filtering. The waveshapers, meanwhile, are essentially six different flavours of gritty analogue-style distortion.

Each of these tools is available as a module in Bitwig's Grid modular environment, or semi-modular Polymer synth. However, the real highlight of 5.1 lies in the two new container devices designed to house



Bitwig finally has a suite of unique, flexible effect tools

these 'flavours' – Filter+, a semi-modular distortion/filter device, and Sweep, a dual-slot filterbank that allows any of the DAW's filters and waveshapers to be routed in serial or parallel configurations.

Bitwig's latest v5.2 update – available in Beta at the time of writing – turns its focus towards compression and EQ. Compressor+ is a significantly upgraded stock compressor that operates across four frequency bands. As with other Bitwig devices, this strikes a winning balance between depth and accessibility. For each band we get access to just two controls – timing and intensity – but these make it pleasantly easy to bring the right level of squash and punch to a multiband treatment. The device also comes

with a range of vintage-inspired character modes.

The hardware influence carries across to the new EQs, two of which – despite a thoroughly modern look – take influence from vintage Pultec hardware. Focus channels the mid-range shaping MEQ-5 and Sculpt the EQP-1, with adjustable saturation types and the ability to capture the bass-boosting 'low-end trick'.

Arguably, these two intermediary updates add more to enhance the DAW than the initial v5 launch, so it feels like Bitwig finally has a suite of unique, flexible effect tools to match its creative ambitions. **FM**

FM VERDICT

9.1

Bitwig's 'point' updates continue to pay dividends, adding inspiring and slickly-designed new effects

THE PROS & CONS



Sweep modular filter bank is a must-try

Pultec-inspired EQs add a pleasant vintage feel

Compressor+ balances depth and ease-of-use brilliantly



Modular approach won't suit those looking for straightforward vintage-style effects

