

Avid Pro Tools: A Quick Summary

by Kevin Carthy - edited by your instructor

- Pro Tools is widely considered the industry standard
- It has advanced networking capabilities for large projects
- It has available HDX hardware for extra power

1. Integration Across Large Projects

While most modern DAW software can produce high-quality audio, no DAW title can compete when it comes to software integration across large projects involving multiple producers.

Pro Tools sessions can be networked across drives to allow users to work on projects from different control surfaces or even remotely. This becomes a major benefit as more and more audio professionals are collaborating online and relying on cloud services to get things done.

Using Pro Tools' networking and cloud capabilities, you can share sessions with others and work more efficiently. These features to be a lifesaver when up against tight deadlines with no the time to drive to a far-off studio to finish a mix.

2. Pro Tools Scales With Skill Level

While Pro Tools may be the go-to solution for large studios with big budgets, Avid also publishes different versions of Pro Tools for varying needs in the audio industry. Avid has adjusted pricing for the different versions to offer affordability while still giving the full Pro Tools experience.

Through Avid's subscription-based model, you can always be sure you're up to date with the latest version of the software.

Key Technical Differences Between Pro Tools and Pro Tools Ultimate: Pro Tools' standard version provides the ability to have 256 mono/stereo tracks, 64 I/O, 128 aux input tracks, and a video track.

Pro Tools | Ultimate expands on the standard version to offer up to 2,048 tracks, surround sound mixing, support for up to 192 I/O when using HDX hardware, 512 aux input tracks, and the ability to utilize up to 64 video tracks in a session.

3. Avid HDX Hardware Delivers a Seamless Experience

One of the biggest challenges in the recording industry is ensuring compatibility between hardware and software. Even though today's standardized hardware and software integration is more uniform than in the past, you can still run into compatibility issues.

Avid has addressed this through the use of the brand's HDX hardware. HDX hardware units, cards, and the HDX system allow for digital signal processing (DSP) and complex I/O applications with virtually no latency, even when facing huge load demand from hundreds and even thousands of voices at once.

You don't have to guess whether a piece of hardware is going to work as intended, and you also won't have to spend time trying to figure out if a particular driver is needed to get things working.

Bedroom producers and those who are starting out in small project studios probably won't gain as much from the cost of investing in HDX hardware. If, however, you plan on working with large projects, soundstage production, edit-heavy film and television media, or other processor-intensive audio, HDX is going to be a blessing.

4. Industry Standard Benefits Carry Over

Because Pro Tools is and has been the industry standard, knowing Pro Tools UI and workflow comes in handy for expanding opportunities. For example, the other week, I got a call to sit in on a Pro Tools mixing session for a quartet at a regional studio nearby. I got this call because I work with Pro Tools, and the engineer knows my background.

Had I not known Pro Tools, I probably wouldn't have gotten that call. All of this is to say that learning how Pro Tools operates can expand your earning potential if you plan to pursue recording and producing as a career.

There are plenty of great DAWs out there, and I recommend learning as many as possible, but knowing Pro Tools is going to open a lot of doors for you. This becomes particularly true if you're interested in coming on board at a major studio where Pro Tools will undoubtedly be used in some capacity.

5. It's in the Mix

Finally, I think Pro Tools is the right DAW for any engineer or producer who has a passion for mixing in addition to recording and producing. Pro Tools offers a wealth of mixing tools "in the box", so even if you don't want to rely on hardware, you can still have fine control over mixing functions like automation.

This is also important to note because Pro Tools works well with a variety of genres. Some DAW software is designed to suit the needs of specific producers, while others tend to be geared more for simple vocal recording.

With Pro Tools, Avid has you covered no matter what type of genre you record. This is perfect for personal projects that you're passionate about, but it's also good news for professional audio engineers who work with a variety of clients across a wide range of musical genres.

Avid Pro Tools For Rock Music

While I don't run into as many rock projects these days, I still have plenty of clients approach me about laying down guitar, drums, and bass. I already have a session template created just for these types of projects, making it easy and fast to get things moving. I'm also able to tame dynamics easily using Avid's built-in compression, limiting, EQ, and other effects.

Avid Pro Tools For Hip Hop Music

Hip hop artists approach me all the time to work on a variety of projects, and I find that Pro Tools is often my top choice for DAW when working with this genre.

Whether I'm mixing tracks that a producer brings to the studio or I'm recording audio from a digital sampler or even analog input from classic turntables, the process is easy and fast. Once I get the audio into the track window, I can make edits, time-stretch audio, and use native plugins to get the right sub-harmonics.

From there, Pro Tools makes it simple to track vocals from multiple artists at once, focus on a specific vocal, or overdub multiple takes for big sound.

Avid Pro Tools For EDM Music

EDM is another common type of project I find myself working with on a regular basis. These projects don't have me recording as much as they have me focusing on the mix.

Once again, Pro Tools excels at this because I can run dozens of tracks without worrying about clutter or being bogged down. I simply import tracks provided by a producer, create arrangements and edits when required, and then get to mixing. Many times, I do this "in the box" without any need for hardware because Pro Tools' virtual mix controls are easy to access and intuitively designed.

Final Thoughts

The bottom line is that there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to, "what's the right DAW for me?" Modern digital audio software includes plenty of features that were once only available to big-name studios, and Pro Tools is no exception. Keep in mind, however, that Pro Tools has been the choice for these same big-name studios since its inception.