

AUDIO PRODUCTION

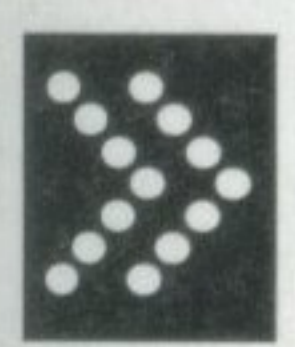
Ardour 1.0

Graham Morrison becomes imbued with revolutionary ardour while attempting to record his latest protest song...

BUYER INFO

Multi-track audio recording software featuring a virtual mixer and Jack integration. Others to try: *Muse* or *Rosegarden*.

- **DEVELOPER** Paul Davis et al
- **WEB** www.ardour.org
- **PRICE** Free under GPL

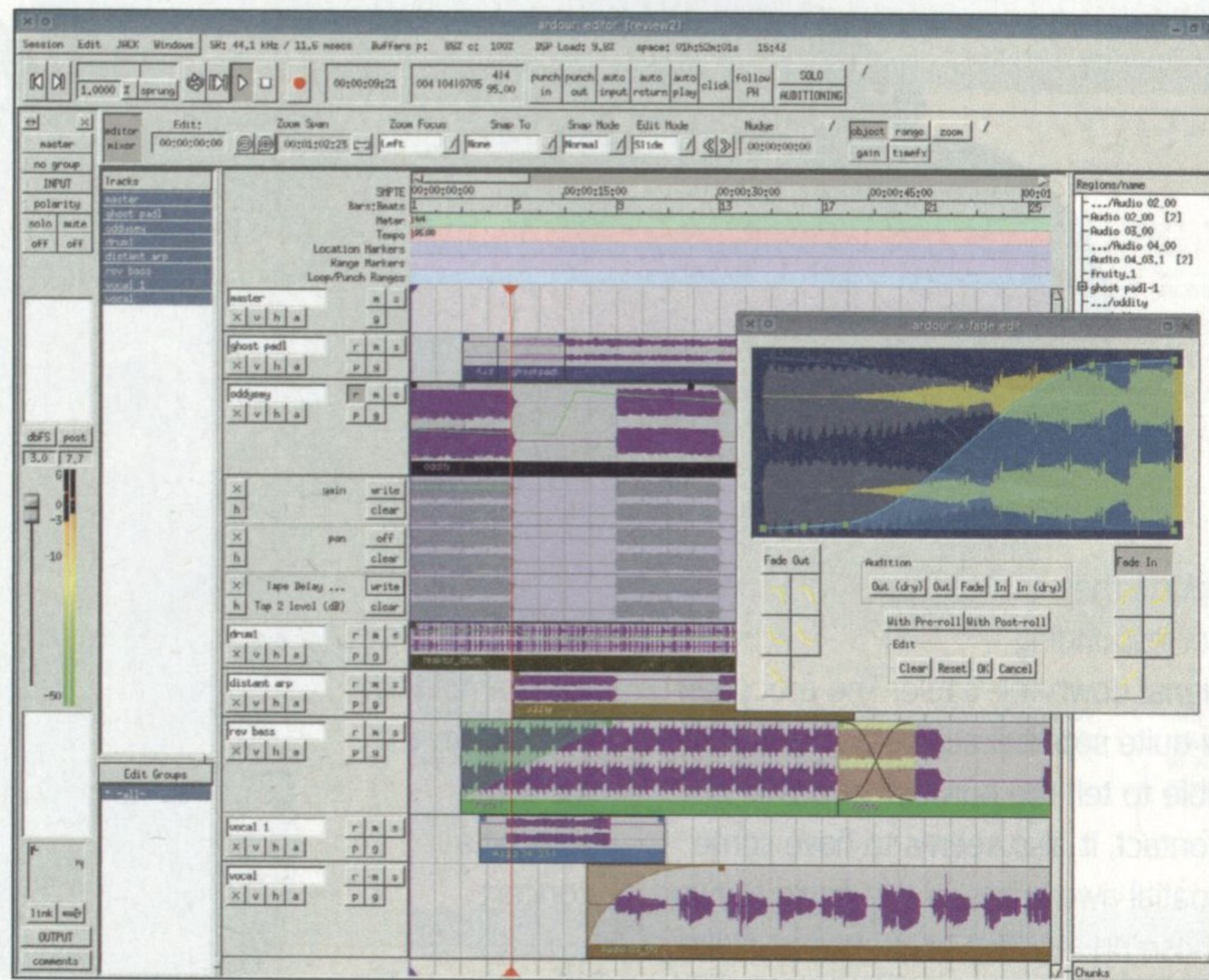


There must be something of the romantic in the average Linux audio programmer.

Why else would they choose names such as *Rosegarden*, *Muse* and *Ardour* for their work? *Ardour* is an application designed to provide a multi-track audio and mastering environment. It's a mature product that's been in development for over three years and the one dot zero release is a major achievement.

Ardour has been perfectly useable for some time, but recent surges in development have seen hundreds of bugs squashed and the emergence of what could become the dominant Linux audio package. While *Rosegarden* can only just be considered safe to handle modest home-studio audio projects, *Ardour* offers a complete feature set with plenty of users who can attest to its professional aspirations.

Though *Ardour* isn't a direct competitor to *Rosegarden*, many of their features overlap – after all, they're both audio compositional tools. The biggest difference is that *Ardour* makes no attempt to handle MIDI compositional data and instead focuses entirely on audio. Among proprietary apps this makes *Ardour* closer in spirit to earlier versions of *Pro Tools* than to Steinberg's *Cubase*.



Though the design of the main Editor window is a little overwhelming, it's possible to perform nearly every operation from here.

This seems to have worked in its favour, as development is built around tried and tested APIs rather than some of the frontiers explored by *Rosegarden*.

When you start up *Ardour*, you're presented with the typically austere interface of a Linux application. *Ardour* is still using GTK 1.2, which gives the screen that late nineties feel beloved of most audio applications users. The layout is also typical of audio apps, based on a single editing and arranging page. This consists of an overgrown timeline stretched from left to right, under which audio tracks can be added and removed.

Jack is given an unprecedented level of support. Right from the start, adding audio tracks to the Arrange page creates the same tracks with Jack – something it does with mono as well as multi-channel tracks. *Ardour* is one of the few audio applications that can boast multi-channel surround integration right down to track level. This sort of thing is often developed as a bolt-on – with *Ardour* it's right at the heart of the audio system.

Don't be scared

The development team have obviously put a lot of thought into the design of the *Ardour* system. To those without prior experience of similar software

the user interface can appear a little intimidating, but the working process is quite straightforward. Tracks are added to the main editor window, after which the source material can be either recorded or imported from an external file. *Ardour* handles 24-bit files natively and uses industry standard 32-bit floating-point arithmetic for all internal processing.

The blocks of audio within a track can then be split, duplicated, time-shifted, reversed and put through any of a number of other processes, all with unlimited Undo/Redo.

There are as many buses as your system can handle. Effects can be inserted at various stages of the audio chain, including pre- and post-fader, and audio can be sent to external Jack ports from any point.

Ardour provides its own window for creating these connections, and eases the ordeal of wiring in external Jack applications. While nearly all of this functionality is available from the main Editor/Arrangement window, a Mixer view provides a more familiar paradigm for users more used to a studio environment.

Nearly every function can be performed in real time while playing back through a project. This is a great way to work, and enables you to make

edits in place. Blocks of audio can be dragged over one another, with the track display showing a blended version of both waveforms. Non-destructive crossfades are edited from their own b-spline editing window, with the resulting curve also shown on the track. Further curves can be generated for fading volume in and out of blocks of audio.

All about parameters

Another first for *Ardour* is its automation. Nearly every parameter can be automated, either by recording fader movement or by drawing the envelopes directly on to a parameter's automation track. This even includes LADSPA plug-in effect parameters.

An external MIDI controller can also be used for controlling parameters – from an external fader box for example – and another great addition is that parameter feedback now sends the same data back to the device when the user interface is modified. This should allow the MIDI device to update its own controls in synchronisation with *Ardour's* display.

This is a slick and polished application. The user interface looks a little tired, but it works brilliantly and draws you into the program.

Ardour's greatest asset is its watertight integration with Jack, making this the application to beat when it comes to making the most of Jack's potential. As a result, not only does *Ardour* work as an excellent audio production tool, its open architecture offers adventurous users all sorts of audio possibilities. **LXF**

LINUX FORMAT VERDICT

FEATURES	9/10
PERFORMANCE	9/10
EASE OF USE	8/10
DOCUMENTATION	7/10

Nothing can touch *Ardour* for multi-track audio recording in Linux. It really can turn a Linux PC into a digital audio workstation.

RATING **9/10**

