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## Quick Pick: Synaptricity Flashback 1.0 (Mac)

May 1, 2008 12:00 PM, By David E. Weiss



Synaptricity Flashback 1.0 (\$199) is a Digidesign Pro Tools plug-in (RTAS and AudioSuite) that runs in the background, recording everything you do into a RAM buffer. This allows you to retrieve and save to disk up to 15 minutes' worth of work without having to be in Record mode.



Flashback is an RTAS and AudioSuite plug-in that records everything you do into RAM for up to 15 minutes at a time.

As a result, Flashback opens up a new, more flexible way of working. You can experiment freely with overdubs, effects processing, or edits, knowing it will capture any happy accidents that may occur. For example, it finally provides a way to record the movements of the Scrubber tool (in Pro Tools 7.4).

Flashback is iLok protected and works in Pro Tools TDM, LE, and M-Powered systems. Synaptricity is finishing up a Windows version of the plug-in that will ship later this year.

### BLAST FROM THE PAST

To set up Flashback, insert the RTAS plug-in on the audio or instrument track you'd like to capture. To buffer all the audio in a session, including the sounds generated by MIDI instruments, simply insert it on a master fader track. Tracks you want to capture in Pro Tools LE and M-Powered need to be Record enabled; in TDM systems, disk tracks need to be either Record or Input enabled (auxiliary, instrument, or master fader tracks will pass audio directly through to Flashback).

Flashback makes use of two RAM buffers to ensure that it captures every sound — a streaming buffer to capture sound in real time, and a frozen buffer to hold selected sound before passing it to disk. Flashback's RTAS plug-in provides clear feedback on the status of both buffers, using graphic representations and digital clocks that measure to the tenth of a second. An input level meter with a clipping indicator shows that Flashback is receiving audio.

The default buffer size is 1 minute. When it's full, the Spilling light illuminates, indicating that sounds older than a minute will be lost to make way for new sounds. You can resize the buffer using the dial at the lower left of the window, and Flashback will immediately tell you how much RAM you'll need, accounting for both the streaming and frozen buffers. However, the buffer is resized only when you click on the Resize Buffer button: if you resize the buffer during recording, you'll lose everything in the old streaming buffer.

### FREEZE FRAME

To capture the audio, hit the Freeze button, which pours the contents of the streaming buffer into the frozen buffer. Using a slider control, you can choose how much of the frozen buffer you'd like to save to disk. That's very handy if you have a 15-minute buffer and your stroke of brilliance occurred just seconds ago. You can automate many of Flashback's features, including the Freeze button.

To bring the captured audio into your session, open the AudioSuite version of Flashback and click on the Process button, with the insertion point placed in your chosen audio track. The AudioSuite plug-in also provides a Preview button, so you can hear your captured audio before you commit to placing it in your session. The captured audio will not be time-stamped, because time-stamping is dependent on the transport, and Flashback captures audio whether the transport is running or not.

### KNOW YOUR LIMITS

To do its work, Flashback requires a lot of RAM, as you might expect, but never more than 1 GB. It can accurately capture audio in mono or stereo, at sampling rates up to 192 kHz, and it will always tell you how much you'll need based on your chosen settings. A 1-minute buffer of mono audio sampled at 44.1 kHz requires about 20 MB, whereas a 1-minute buffer of stereo audio sampled at 192 kHz requires nearly 176 MB. You can't use a 15-minute buffer to capture stereo audio at 192 kHz, because this would take the program over its 1 GB limit. That's unfortunate — pro systems with RAM to spare should be allowed to push the limits.

However, I never encountered a recording glitch, performance issue, or low-memory condition when running Flashback. Pro Tools, as well as all my other programs, behaved normally with Flashback running faithfully in the background. And I found the sound of the recordings to be indistinguishable from that of normally recorded material.

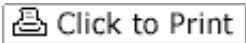
Overall, Flashback performs with remarkable ease and reliability. For Pro Tools users who don't want to miss those magic moments that happen when you least expect them, Flashback has got your back.

**Value (1 through 5): 4**

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