

Superscope Elevation: Audio Software For The Rest Of Us

Superscope Technologies, well known for its line of professional portable audio recorders, has recently released its first software product, Elevation. Available for Macintosh and Windows, Elevation provides a useful set of digital audio tools for musicians, educators and students. Designed to enhance the learning process and maximize practice time, Elevation allows you to manipulate, store and organize digital audio, as well record directly to disk.

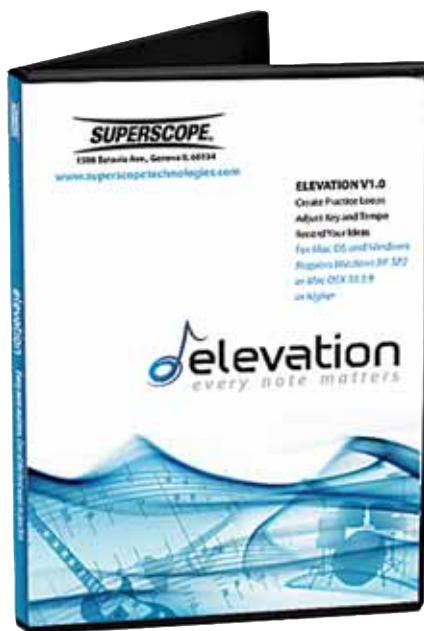
The Superscope name has been around since 1954, when the company introduced its first product, a cost-effective process for generating wide screen motion picture prints. Superscope achieved moderate success within the film industry until a visit to Japan led to a deal for the exclusive U.S. distribution rights for Sony's tape recorder line. In 1964, Superscope acquired a small hi-fi company called Marantz.

Superscope/Marantz has undergone many changes over the years, eventually selling off much of its assets to focus on the professional audio recording market. Their pro line of hand-held cassette recorders and later their portable CD recorders became standards in the broadcast and music industries. It is only natural that Superscope enter the software market in order to stay competitive with the current technology trends.

Elevation is a fairly straightforward package with a surprisingly simple interface. "The majority of our customers are educators and musicians who do not want complicated software but still need the productivity and quality that Elevation delivers," said Tim Smyth, product leader. "It looks simple because it is supposed to."

The program opens to a main library window that lists your audio files. From here you can easily play a file or import from CD or disk file. Elevation also reads your track info so that the album name, artist and genre are all brought in upon import to allow for efficient cataloging and retrieval of library files. Disk files can also be added by a simple drag and drop into the window.

Getting audio in was remarkably easy, and Elevation supports AIFF, WAV and MP3 formats. It does not support Apple's AAC encoding, so if your iTunes library is not in MP3, you will not be able to directly import your AAC files from iTunes. I did find it a little frustrating



that I could not simply access my previously stored audio files since Elevation must rewrite them into its own library. Once imported, the program allows you to organize your music by title, artist, album or genre. You can also alter any of these tags and add track notes with a mouse click. As with other music library programs, Elevation allows for the creation of custom playlists.

The real power of Elevation is in the program's DSP processing capabilities. Library files can be manipulated to play back with alterations in both tempo and pitch independently. In fact, audio can actually be slowed down to 25 percent or sped up to 200 percent with amazing clarity. "We wanted to make sure that the quality of our audio processing was the best possible," Smyth said. To accomplish this goal, Superscope turned to iZotope. I was quite impressed with how good

the quality of the slowed down audio was, particularly with uncompressed AIFF or WAV files. There is almost no degradation, even at 25 percent. Add in Elevation's 10-band equalizer and balance adjustment slider, and you have one of the best learning and transcription tools out there.

In addition to the tempo and pitch functions, Elevation also allows you to apply voice reduction to a track, which eliminates most of the vocal track from the mix. However, unlike other programs, Superscope allows you to play back with vocals eliminated or just with vocals isolated. This is a great learning tool for voice teachers and students. To further enhance productivity, Elevation offers the ability to set markers for creating loops for practicing or transcribing. Start and end points can be set in a timeline window or a wave form display for exact positioning. Snapshots provide the user with the ability to save a file's custom DSP settings including loops, tempo, pitch and EQ. These snapshot files can also be exported or added to a playlist and burned to CD, useful for sending practice files to students. Another interesting feature is the ability to attach digital sheet music from a scanned image or notation program to any library file.

Superscope has also built some basic recording capabilities into Elevation. Provided you have an audio interface, a track may be recorded in 16- or 24-bit. Interestingly, the track may be recorded individually or with an existing library file as accompaniment.

Overall, Elevation is an extremely useful package and one of the best software slow-downers I have seen. This feature alone is worth the \$179 price tag, but Elevation gives you a lot more. And best of all, you do not need to be an engineer to use it.

—Keith Baumann

» Ordering info: superscopetechnologies.com