

Installation

- Installation was as simple as you can imagine – just run the installer, accept the licence conditions, choose your target disk drive (great that it doesn't have to be the main system drive) and your preferred sample rate, press 'next' and grab a cup of tea (or an ice cool drink if you're in Australia like me) and when you come back it's done and ready to go in any of your DAWs or as a standalone application. (Enter Licence/Serial Number later obviously). Painless !
- The choice of sample rates is really great for home studio owners like me as it helps to keep CPU load low, but knowing that at any time you can load the uber-hi tech sample rates if you desire.
- I installed RealLPC on my MacMini Core2 Duo 2.66Ghz, 2Gb RAM, running Leopard and it worked like a charm in both Garageband '09 and Logic Pro 9 as an AudioUnit plugin. I also ran it without a hitch in Cubase 5 as a VSTi.

Interface

- The new RealLPC interface is a gorgeous combination of muted green and black befitting the black of the original LPC and I really like the high gloss black body finish and gold pickups and other hardware. Sure it's "eye candy", but it's really nice and helps to create a sense of something really special.
- At first glance and also after further detailed inspection, the functions and options are almost identical to RealStrat. But this is an asset not a disadvantage as I found out later when playing the instrument (see below).

Performance

- Stability was excellent. RealLPC never crashed or froze once when using it, even though I was going in and out of functions and modes and Pattern Manager and using Keyswitched Solo performances in rapid succession. It was simply a dream to play with (and reminisce on those big prog rock band lead solos from the 70's, 80's, and 90's !!!).
- Similarly I had no problems pumping the output through the included Amplitude 2 Duo. My friends were awe-struck at the sounds I could produce (particularly the ACDC/heavy distorted guitar sounds).
- I used to be a bit tentative showing my guitar Virtual Instruments to friends who are guitarists (e.g. those instruments built into my DAWs' Romplers, UVI Workstation, and even the few spacey examples in Spectrasonics Omnisphere !!) These guys could easily tell the difference between the real thing and a digital sampled instrument when listening to my projects. Now, they asked, who played the guitar for me on my recent tracks !!!!and I wasn't even playing anything special – just a few strummed chord sequences and couple of simple lead lines with and without Amplitude2 Duo (oooooh the satisfaction !!) ;0)

Bonus "Creativity Accelerator" included !

- The ability to play natural guitar chord inversions by having RealLPC derive them from my keyboard chords is an amazing asset to me – given I'm a ham-fisted guitar player!

- The real hidden benefit for me though is when I have writer's block (quite often!!) composing using piano chords with a piano or other 'keyboard' Virtual instrument. RealLPC creates really interesting guitar inversions of what I'm playing which has generated some great new chord sequences and also inspired melodies that I wouldn't have come up with if I were just noodling away in keyboard chord land !! Fantastic !
- The familiar set up including the keyswitching from RealStrat works well so I'm glad it's not changed in RealLPC – I can continue to use the techniques I previously learned.
- The added bonus of this is also that the sequences I originally recorded on my RealStrat can now be exactly assigned to RealLPC to achieve the sounds I originally wanted to be 'Les Paul sounding' with no tweaking at all !! - magic. The only thing I did was to tweak the inbuilt mixer's EQ and Pick Position to give me the final sound adjustments I wanted. The moveable pick position combined with Hi and Lo Eq pretty much allows any combination of tone you can dream up.
- The most interesting and 'hard to pin down' thing of all is that I felt even more inspired playing RealLPC than the RealStrat that I already had. But then the weird thing was that playing the LPC reawakened my interest in and ability to play the RealStrat more creatively. So now I've really ended up adding two instruments rather than one to my regular playing. Cool !
- This also led me on to experimenting more with the Pattern Manager. Again, playing some of the familiar patterns I had used or adapted from the original RealStrat interface, breathed new life into riffs that I'd used before. It was as if the LPC sound had created new patterns to play with. Weird and hardly scientifically based!.... but psycho-acoustically it was a 'renaissance' for me !

Some ideas for Future updates

There are a couple of minor wishes that I'd love to see in the next version/update. No show-stoppers here, just some little niceties that I think might be relatively easy to program but provide some great additional "tasty bits" :

- The value selection boxes are a little small when using high screen resolutions. If they could be made a little bigger and/or clickable to enter numeric values and/or drag up/down or side to side, this would make data entry a lot easier
- If the LPC screen were resizable it would be good as it can get in the way of other screen areas in your DAW, especially for those using single screen setups.
- On a similar note (excuse the awful pun) it would be great if in a future update the Mixer noises (Fret, Release and Pick) could be Key switched also rather than being always on or off at the amount dialled in to the control panel

Final thoughts and Conclusions

- At first I thought I should be able to just buy and play RealLPC as another guitar-type selectable in a selector panel like the one in RealGuitar. However the excellent crossgrade pricing means effectively all your paying for is the cost of the Virtual instrument as if it was available as a separate Virtual Instrument loadable into the original RG2L or RealStrat interface anyway. The sound of LPC is so good that it's well worth every cent of the asking price of the crossgrade.
- I had an absolutely fantastic time testing out the new RealLPC and could not find any bugs or unusual behaviour on my software/hardware setup. It performed flawlessly in every respect.

- The strangest and most exciting part of all (apart from the amazing sound of the Les Paul coming through my humble studio monitors) was that I found a new method of songwriting when using RealLPC! – the guitar chord inversions and gorgeous old-world sound of the Les Paul samples enabled me to write songs that I would never have written if I had only played the exact same chords on my digital sampled piano application. That alone has made the time playing with RealLPC worthwhile for me.
- Add to this, the truly satisfying experience of being able to play a Les Paul guitar convincingly even as a hardened keyboardist....and impress the hell out of your friends....and you've got a real winner! Thanks MusicLab for creating this new instrument which is "inspirational" in every sense of the word !! ;O)