

## **Manuals as a Source of Self-education**

With the rapid development of technology, it is becoming increasingly difficult to follow the news concerning computer hardware and software. The changes of the operating system, and the hardware and software, evident in the development of PC performance, also change the standards in the areas closely related to their development (audio, video, etc.). The speed of technological development hinders its agreement with the standard educational process. Thus, educational processes provide only basic information, without deeper elaboration. Consequently, self-education is one of the main forms of gaining knowledge and information. The process of self-education can take place through two media:

- the Internet, which involves modern technology;
- manuals.

This text focuses on the use of manuals as a source of self-education, i.e. for gaining knowledge and information. In the absence of additional literature, reading manuals provides opportunities for the individual solving of problems. Depending on the hardware or software, manuals contain various information, from the most basic, technical information, to entire textbooks addressing a particular problem. The appearance of new hardware or software implies more advanced technological development. In addition to the users' previous personal experience (if any) with the product in question, the manual is the basic means of learning about the new developments in hardware or software. Through gaining knowledge about them, the users in fact learn about the new standards in the field of their interest. This knowledge enhances their success and productivity in their profession.

The comparison of manuals for different software applications from one field, such as production and processing of audio signals, shows that their concepts are similar. The lack of difference in the global approach is a result of the same software model of work, i.e. the model of the audio sequencer. Nevertheless, each manufacturer provides independent solutions and ways of working for separate problems, which makes reading the manuscripts essential.

The scope of some manuals is a result of the complexity of software and the need to explain all the details of use, such as installing the program and elaborating on

all the opportunities the program provides. Such an example of the scope of a manual is that of an ordinary MIDI controller, keyboard TerraTec MIDI Master Pro. This manual at first lists the precaution measures, then the maintenance and the conditions of using the product. This is followed by a survey of the buttons on the operational panel and the rear panel, with a short description of their functions. The manual is six pages long.

As opposed to this example, the manuals for programs which make virtual studios, due to their complexity and many functions, have long manuals containing many chapters. We will take the manuals for the two renowned music production software systems for ProTools 5.0.1. and Logic Audio 3.5 as examples. As previously mentioned, the common area of this software is the audio sequencer, with possible differences in the terminology and steps of use. The comparison of these manuals will show the differences in their production.

Generally, the ProTools 5.0.1. manual consists of 25 chapters categorized in six parts: introduction, sessions, recording, editing, mixing, synchronization. In the Logic Audio 3.5 manual there are 18 chapters and several subdivisions for each of the chapters. As far as the further organization is concerned, Logic Audio, for instance, devotes an entire chapter to the arrange “window”, since it regards the “window” the core of Logic and believes the users will spend most of their time working in this “window”. In the ProTools manual, the same window is referred to as “edit window” and is explained in the introduction, in a chapter explaining the remaining windows used in the program. ProTools features five chapters on the process of recording, covering the necessary preparations, adjustments and ways of conducting the recording process. On the other hand, in the Logic Audio manual, the recording process is explained in the chapter concerning the arrange “window”. One of the largest chapters in the Logic Audio manual, containing 22 subdivisions, is the chapter on the Score Edit Window. Therefore, Logic Audio is in fact a kind of a software within a software, since the opportunities listed in the score editor in Logic Audio are almost identical to the ones offered by any other independent music notation software. In ProTools 5.0.1., a score editor for the preparation of scores from the recorded MIDI material does not exist, but ProTools 5.0.1. provides the opportunity of importing video documents for the adding of further sound effects, music, speech, etc. The ProTools 5.0.1. manual features four additional parts at the end, as well as an index of terms, whereas the Logic Audio manual has a glossary and index at the end. In a way,

the glossary is a textbook of its own, which emphasizes the importance of a glossary within the manual for beginners and those who do not understand the terminology of the program.

The comprehensibility of the manual depends on its writing style. The manufacturer's role in this area is crucial, since it shows how much attention was paid to the production of the manual. The manuals for the renowned trademarks are in fact not a short overview of what the product is like, but rather instructions with a concept of gradually overcoming the problems of using the product. For the users who know something about the product, some of the chapters may seem tedious because of the gradual steps of explaining. However, it is useful to always carefully read the instructions both for the beginners and for those who already have some knowledge of the product.

With the lack of textbooks and other materials that systematically present technological breakthroughs, manuals are becoming the basic means of studying technological developments and their manner of use. Together with the second source of study – the Internet, they seem to substitute standard education from the past and promote the new manner of self-education.