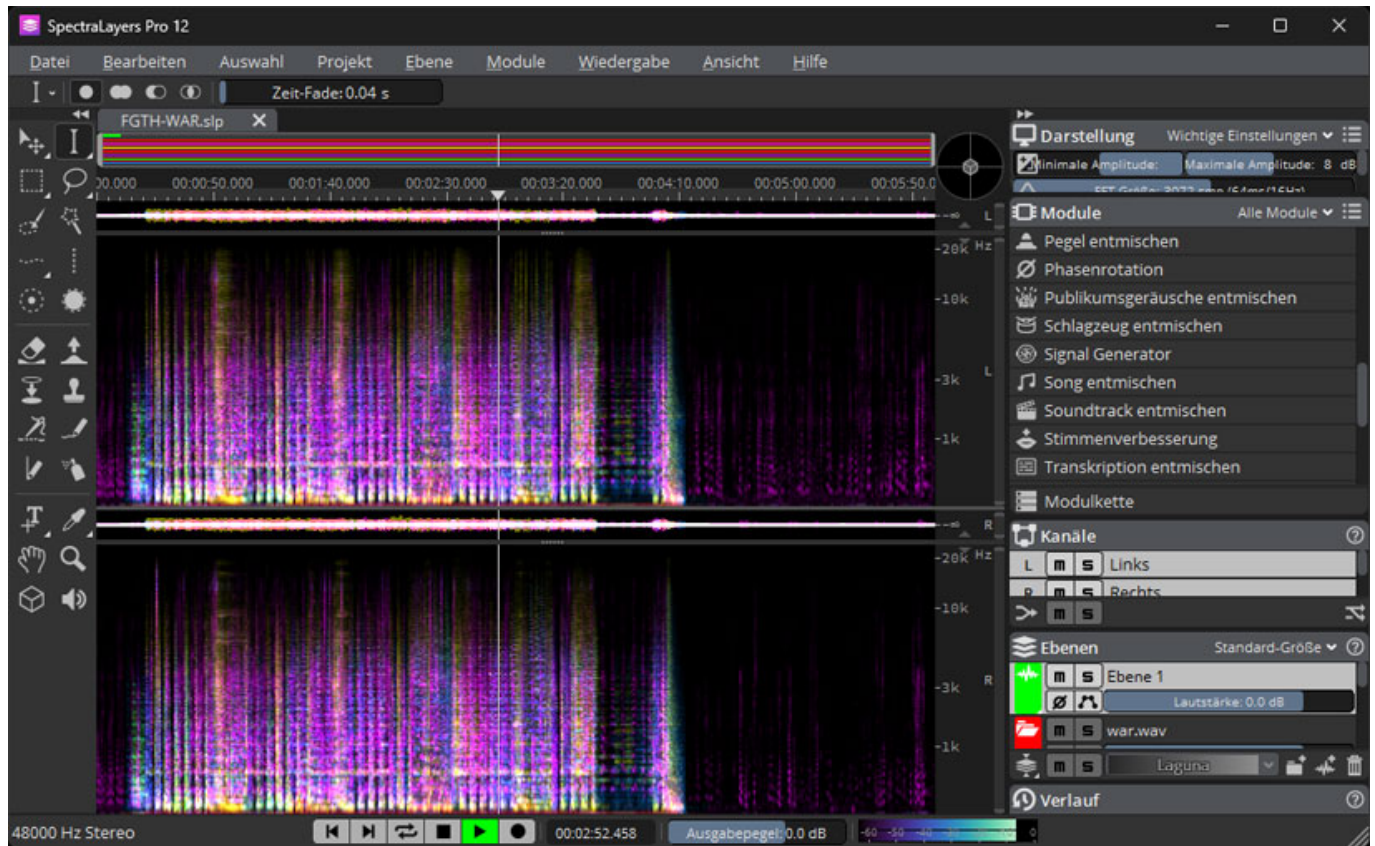


Steinberg SpectraLayers Pro 12

Spectral editor for a wide range of applications

Author: Peter Kaminski



At the beginning of July 2025, Steinberg introduced version 12 of its spectral audio editor "SpectraLayers." We have already tested earlier versions, such as [SpectraLayers 11](#). One thing can be said right away: The focus in version 12 is on remarkable and significant qualitative improvements to the editing functions.

Pro vs. Elements

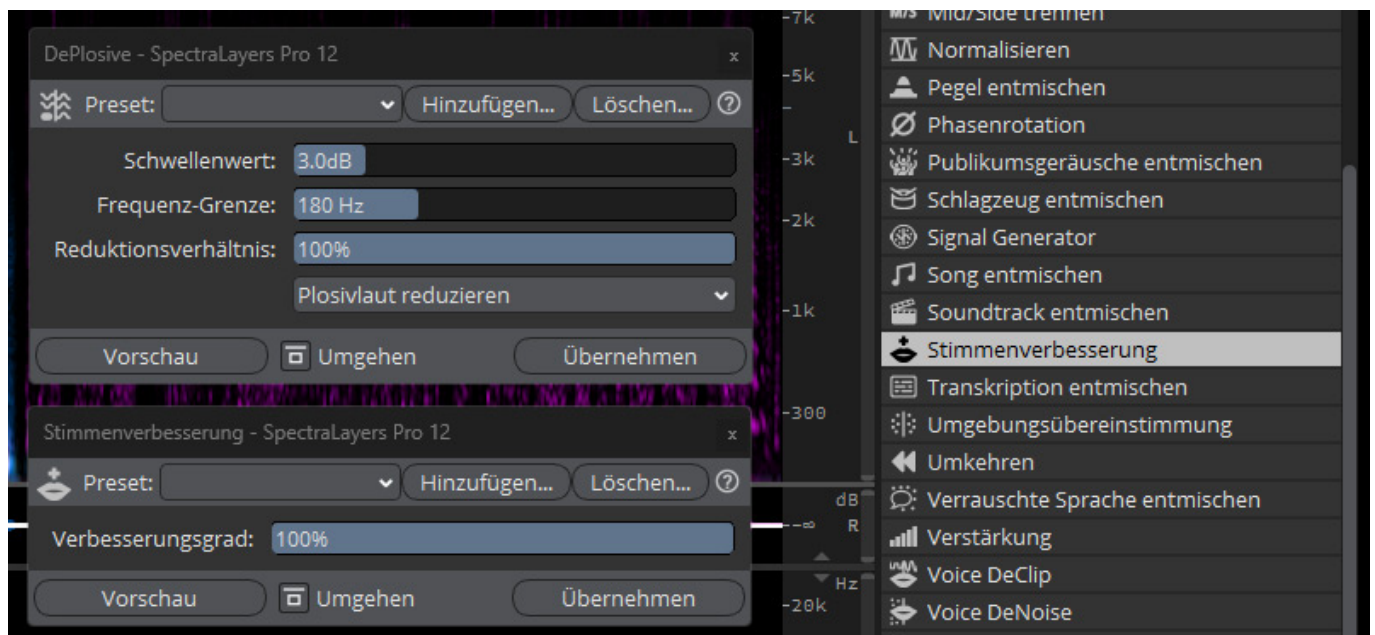
We would like to limit this review here to the SpectraLayer Pro 12 version. However, we would like to present a brief overview of the differences between the two versions. The Pro version supports sample rates up to 384kHz, while the Elements version supports up to 96kHz. The maximum number of channels is limited to eight in the Pro version and only to two in the Elements version, which limits it to editing stereo material. The biggest difference in functionality lies in the unmix functions. The Elements version only allows vocals to be extracted, while SpectraLayers Pro 12 offers a range of unmixing options. Furthermore, the Elements version does not offer Ambient Match and Reverb Match, and there are also restrictions in the restoration area, such as a lack of support for Reverb Reduction, DePlosive, and other special editing functions for voice and vocals. Batch processing is also not available in the Elements version. Further differences can be found in the display settings.

New features

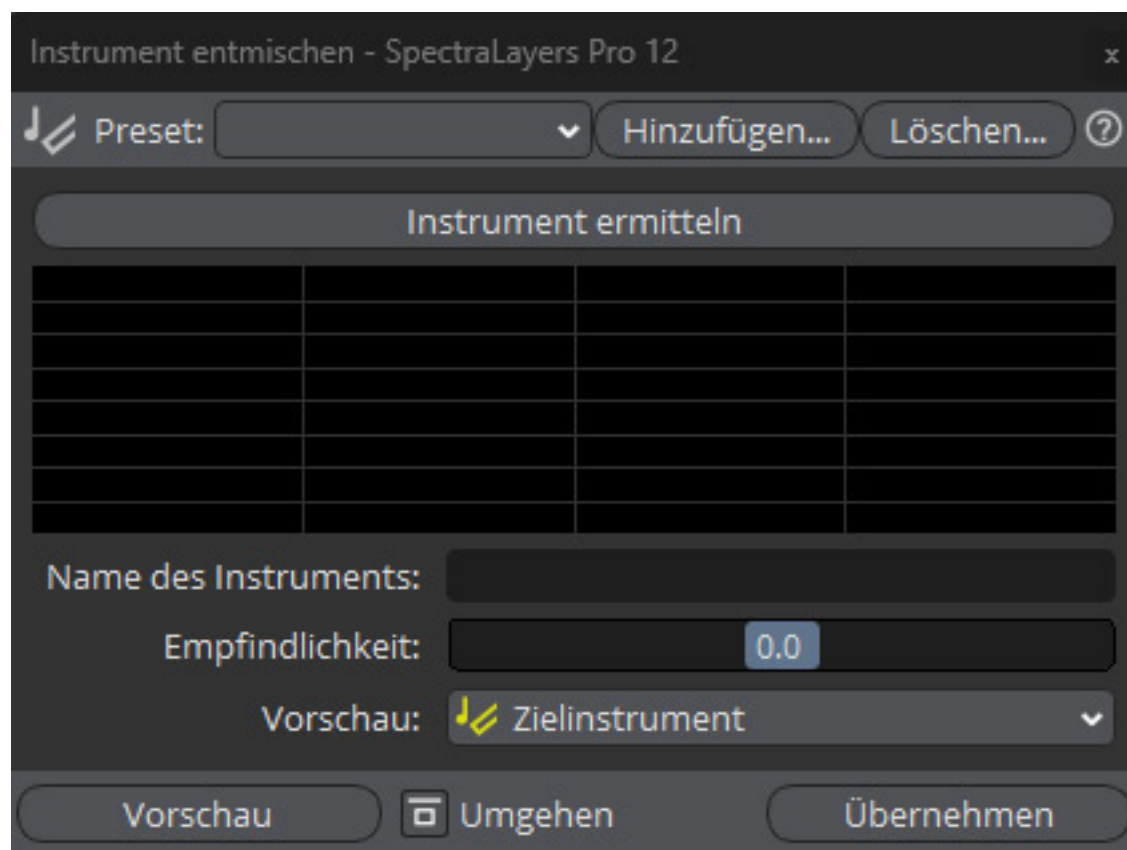
Even though the focus is not on the multitude of new features, there is so much new that we can only focus on some of it. The English manual has grown to almost 120 pages. There is also a 16-page document that specifically introduces all the new features.

Let's start with the general new features. Steinberg was one of the first to offer Windows Arm64 support. This is now also the case with SpectraLayers 12 and requires the installed Arm version of Steinberg's Activation Manager. We were unable to test this as we conducted all tests in our studio with the [AudioKern B14 DAW from Digital Audio Service](#) running on Windows 11. SpectraLayers can also be used as a VST3 effect plug-in. Multiple plug-in windows can now be displayed simultaneously.

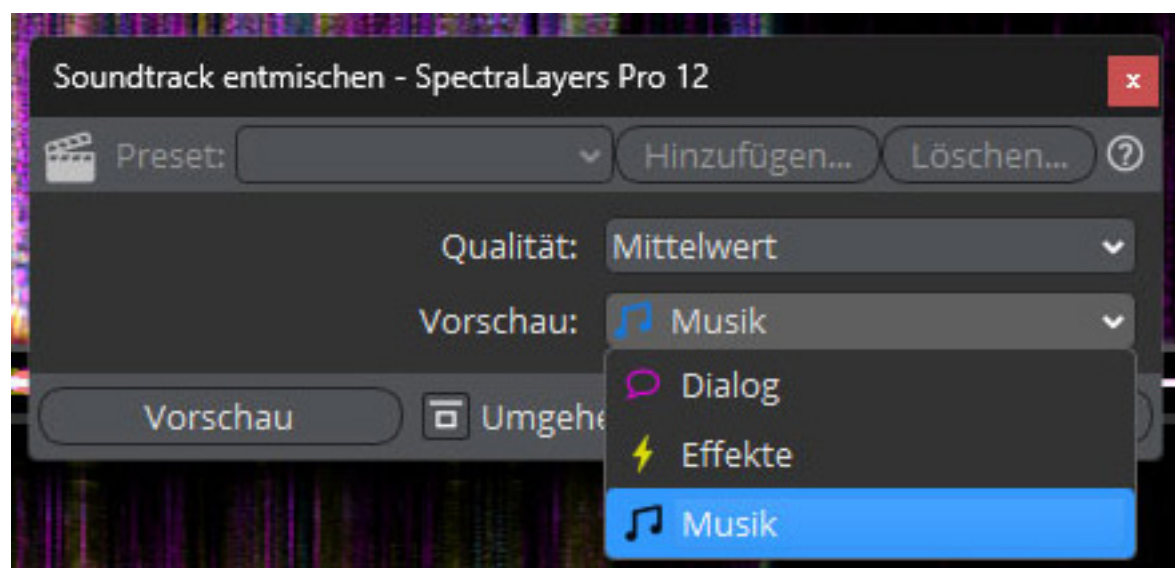
Together with the cut and copy functions, any layers within a project can now be selected. Starting with version 12, all audio processes and tools can now be applied to multiple layers simultaneously. This is particularly useful in the unmix functions when several separated stems need to be edited at the same time. There are also improvements to the various selection tools, such as the ability to select frequency components, overtones, and transients more easily. The selection of overtones in the spectrum has also been significantly simplified.



Another important feature of the SpectraLayers Pro 12 update is the voice editing functions. Two new editing modules have been added: “Voice Enhance” for optimizing the sound of voices and “DePlosive.” The former is designed to improve AI-generated voices. The DePlosive module reduces artifacts caused by sounds in which the airflow is briefly interrupted and then released explosively. This will be particularly welcome news for post-production users and music producers, as our tests have shown that the tool works very well not only on speech but also on vocals, where these sounds are particularly common. The DePlosive module offers various options for adjustment, such as a level threshold for detection, a frequency limit, and, of course, the reduction ratio to determine the degree of correction.



Now to what I consider the most important new features. These can be found in the Unmix section. The “Instrument Unmix” module provides an editing option for instruments not included in the workflow or for cases where the standard algorithms - or what has been learned do not work, and instrument detection fails or is not optimal. For this purpose, instruments can be defined in a preliminary analysis and then removed in a more targeted manner. This can be done individually or on unmixes that have already been performed and may not yet be optimal, in order to separate certain instruments even better.



An interesting new module is “Unmix Soundtrack.” This allows the sound of a film or video to be separated into music, dialogue, and effects. Depending on the material, this already works very well. It can be used, for example, to correct the volume ratios between these components when no other solution is possible. We found that this editing option is suitable for classic film and video post-production, as well as for advertising trailers.

However, I found the qualitative improvements in the existing modules to be the most exciting. Separation has improved, and artifacts have been reduced. This actually applies to all existing Unmix modules. I was most impressed by Song Unmix and Drum Unmix.

With Song Unmix, we tried to separate a very complex production into stems in one example. This worked surprisingly well. However, some parts were in the piano stem, even though there was no piano at all. The first problem can be solved by simply mixing it into the total sum so that no spectral components are missing. The second problem was that the synthesizer bass was not recognized as bass. The new Instrument Unmix module helped here, as the bass was almost audible solo at one point, and that was enough to detect the instrument. The results achieved with Drum Unmix are amazing. The separation of the instruments is really very good. You can do really creative things with it.

SpectraLayers is increasingly becoming a tool for mastering or immersive audio production because the stems used are of such high quality that you can separate tracks even more and more precisely from the stereo stems supplied for Dolby Atmos production. This leads to even more immersive sound results, as the individual instruments of a delivered stem can be distributed even further in the virtual 3D space. With SpectraLayers Pro 11, I have already concluded that SpectraLayers can be increasingly used for mastering. This impression is further reinforced by the massive improvement in the quality of the unmixing processes.

Conclusion

SpectraLayers 12 Pro is available from specialist retailers or from Steinberg's online shop and costs app. 350 euro. Special upgrade prices are, of course, available for previous Pro versions, starting at just over 200 euro. The SpectraLayers Elements version is available for around 90 euro, but its range of functions is very limited, making it only useful for stereo restoration. For everything else, it's better to go straight for the Pro version.

Steinberg deserves praise. For years, there was a “feature war” between similar products from different manufacturers. With SpectraLayers Pro 12, they have taken a different approach. That's why this review is much shorter than the previous ones. Here and there, useful improvements have been made that make work easier, and a few new features and modules have been implemented - but the clear added value of this version lies in the significant improvement in the quality of the

unmixing functions. I am already excited to see where SpectraLayers Pro will go from here. With each new version, I am becoming increasingly familiar with this product and its features, as the increasing quality of the unmixing features continues to expand its range of applications.

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