

Prosoniq *Morph*

Formats: Mac & PC VST

Meet the vocoder's bigger brother: the Audio Morpher. Those of you who remember the release of the Hartmann Neuron synthesizer (reviewed in *SOS* August 2003) will be interested to hear that Prosoniq have incorporated elements of its signal-processing power into a bite-sized VST plug-in. In short, this nifty little processor from Prosoniq analyses and resynthesises two input signals, before allowing you to 'morph' smoothly between them, in real time. The process is based on a 'discrete wavelet transform' — a method used to analyse the wavelet and scale functions of each input signal before its resynthesis and morphing — and the resulting sound is a crossbreed between the acoustic properties of each signal.

Installation and authorisation is a simple process, after which *Morph* can be opened inside your VST host as an insert or send effect. Routing signal to *Morph*, on the other hand, is not so intuitive. The manual suggests starting with a stereo file, where the left channel is signal 'A' and the right channel is signal 'B'. *Morph* is then loaded as an insert on the stereo channel. In most cases this stereo file would have to be prepared in an audio editor from two sources beforehand. The alternative is to route two channels, panned left and right, to a stereo buss, with *Morph* as an insert on the buss. Unfortunately this means that it's not possible to perform stereo-to-stereo morphs, which would be fantastic for DJ users. Prosoniq attribute this to the constraints of the VST system, and tell me that it will be improved upon in forthcoming revisions when the VST architecture can keep up.

The interface itself is simple to use, with a wet/dry level control for each channel, solo buttons, and a moveable 'ball' in the centre which defines the balance and characteristics of the morph. MIDI control data can be used to control this, but the plug-in is also fully automatable, making a gradual morph between two sounds easy to achieve. Sound designers' ears should also be pricking up, as *Morph* makes creating new instruments and soundscapes possible — how about a flute/piano/tropical disease hybrid, the fluano?

Morph also incorporates a basic reverb, which has been kept simple to avoid processor strain; the quality of the reverb is thus slightly lacking, but nonetheless useful for previewing sounds. Of course there is nothing to stop you loading up your favourite, processor-hungry reverb, after *Morph* in the signal path. That said, I tested *Morph* in *Cubase SX* with a G4 iBook, and found it to be reasonably economical with processing power.

Of course, what we really care about is how it sounds — and the good news is that it sounds great! *Morph*'s perceptual analysis technique creates an interestingly musical output in comparison with that of a traditional vocoder, and sounds vastly different to a simple crossfade. You can hear various example files on Prosoniq's web site, and in the course of my testing I found that even two discordant sources could produce a consistently musical product. Interestingly, this is achieved through the implementation of a neural network (a hierarchy of listener perceptions) within *Morph* — presumably based on the resynthesis technology developed for the Neuron, which also used neural networks to help achieve its sounds.

In conclusion, if you're looking for a way to spice up your composition, production, or sound-design work, *Morph* might be just the thing, and with a freely downloadable demo available, you really have no excuse not to check it out! *Duncan Williams*

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