

# KEYBOARD Reports

## Antares Auto-Tune 3

PITCH CORRECTION PLUG-IN

**Pros:** Graphic and auto editing modes. Source-specific algorithms. Realtime MIDI input. Supports most plug-in formats. Stylish user interface.  
**Cons:** More processor- and memory-intensive than most plug-ins.

**Contact:** Antares, 831-461-7800,  
[www.antarestech.com](http://www.antarestech.com)

\$299 (DirectX), \$399 (MAS, RTAS, VST),  
\$599 (TDM)

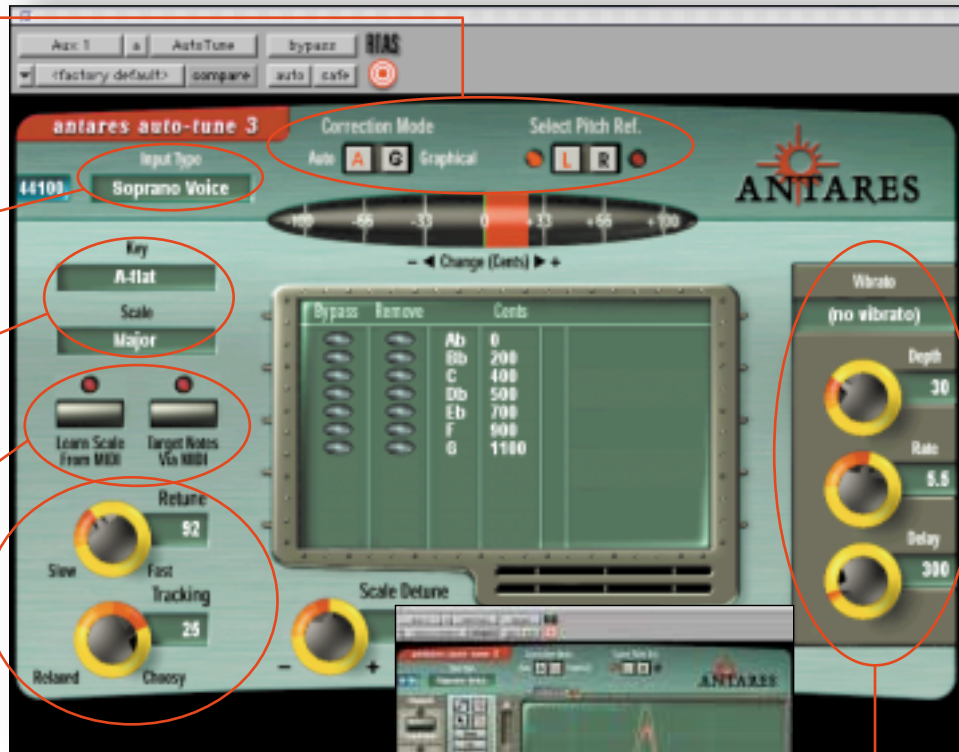
Choose automatic pitch correction mode (shown here) or the graphic window (see inset).

Choose from one of four source algorithms, in this case Soprano Voice.

Choose from one of 29 preset scales, or create your own by clicking in the note panel (middle of window).

New MIDI functions in version 3 let you input custom scales. You can also "play" the new target notes via MIDI in real time.

The Retune and Tracking knobs are essential tools for optimizing performance.



Auto-Tune 3's graphic editing mode allows you to manually draw new pitch paths.

Add or shape vibrato by selecting a waveform type and dialing in the depth, rate, and delay.



by Greg Rule

**T**outed as the worldwide standard in pitch correction, Auto-Tune has changed the face of modern recording. Whether being used for Cher-like pitch quantize effects or for invisible correction of notes that were played or sung off-key, Auto-Tune has indeed established itself as the heavyweight champ in its field. So how to improve upon an already great program? "With useful new features and enhancements to the core algorithms," says an Antares spokesperson, "and by bringing Auto-Tune's GUI into the modern age."

If you're unfamiliar with the basics of Auto-Tune, refer back to our July '97 review of the original version. The hardware version, Antares' ATR-1, was reviewed in Jan. '00. So no

beating around the bush — let's get right to the performance of this new version.

### In Use

I put Auto-Tune 3 through its paces in two pop recording sessions during this review. The first vocalist had a smooth, clear voice. Using the plug-in on her track was a breeze. All I had to do was select the appropriate key signature for the song, make minor adjustments to the Retune and Tracking settings, and that was it. I was essentially able to "set and forget." Other than one note in the first verse, Auto-Tune sounded completely invisible from beginning to end, correcting the sharp and flat notes spot on. Perfecto.

Using Auto-Tune 3 with another vocalist

proved much more challenging. She's a classically trained singer with thick vibrato. Right off the bat, I knew this would be tough; my first Auto-Tune experiments using Automatic mode yielded unusable results. Antares suggests increasing the Retune amount for cases such as this, which I did. The controls are sensitive, so I spent lots of time tweaking in an effort to find the sweet spot.

The good news is that I was able to find accurate settings for certain phrases and sections, but I was never able to get one setting for the whole song as I had before. This song required me to delve into Auto-Tune's graphic editing mode, which is a powerful tool for surgical editing. It takes time and patience to get inside a track and massage each note like this, but it's nice to have the option to do so. Antares makes no bones about this, saying: "Use Auto Mode for quick fixes and Graphical Mode for meticulous tweaking." ➔

## Vital Stats

Formats	TDM, RTAS, AudioSuite, MAS, VST, DirectX
System requirements:	Mac: PowerPC processor or better, host app that supports the appropriate plug-in format, OS version required by host app; TDM version compatible with PCI TDM systems running Pro Tools III or later. PC: Windows 98 or ME, host app that supports RTAS or DirectX 6.1 or later; DirectX Media Runtime recommended
Key features	automatic and graphic editing modes, phase-coherent pitch correction of stereo tracks, MIDI input of target pitches, 88.2 and 96kHz sample rate compatibility, enhanced Mix chip usage efficiency for more instantiations per Mix chip (TDM only), AudioSuite version (TDM and RTAS only)
Presets	29 selectable scales, 4 source-specific pitch detection/correction algorithms (soprano vocal, alto/tenor voice, low male voice, bass instrument)
Copy protection	challenge/response
Upgrade path	registered owners of Auto-Tune can upgrade to version 3 for \$99 (MAS, VST, RTAS, DirectX), \$149 (TDM), or \$229 (VST LE)
Downloadable demo?	Yes

What I ended up doing was bouncing several passes of the soloed track to disk, each with a different Auto-Tune setting. Then I re-imported the files back into my session, lined them up, comped the best pieces from each pass into a single track, and I had my perfect take. Admittedly this took a lot more time and effort than the first song, but it was worth it. Putting things in perspective, most of my work with Auto-Tune before and after the review has been handled successfully in Automatic mode. The example above was what I'd call a "worst case scenario."

## Conclusions

Auto-Tune is still at the top of the pitch-correcting pack. Building upon an already great foundation, version 3 raises the bar another notch with new features such as realtime MIDI control, source-specific algorithms, and a slick new user interface. It isn't alone in the field, however. There are other realtime pitch-correction plug-ins from Digidesign, TC Works, Waves, and Wave Mechanics, but none offers the type of graphic editing available in Auto-Tune 3.

Speaking of visual editing, some of you have been asking about Celemony's Melodyne software, which has a unique approach to pitch editing. We'll be reviewing it soon, but as far as we know, it won't be available as a plug-in — only as an offline app.

It comes as no surprise that Auto-Tune 3 is a bit of a processor and memory hog compared to many other plug-ins. It's a powerful plug-in, after all, and one that delivers on its promise. But if you've been getting by on a minimal system, be ready to invest in more memory and/or a faster computer. In my case, using native Pro Tools LE on a G3 with 256MB of RAM, Auto-Tune wouldn't operate properly if I had two other high-power plug-ins instantiated.

Bottom line: For plug-in users who record live monophonic instruments and vocals (including those recorded in stereo), Auto-Tune 3 is an essential tool for keeping tracks in tune. It's easy to use, powerful, and available in practically all of the popular plug-in formats. Chalk up another Key Buy for Antares. ■

*Greg Rule is the editor-in-chief of Keyboard. Visit him online at [www.gregrule.com](http://www.gregrule.com).*