

Why is it called "Ardour" and other questions

Why "Ardour" ?

The name "Ardour" came from considerations of how to pronounce the acronym *HDR*(Hard Disk Recorder). The most obvious attempt sounds like a vowelless "harder" and it then was then a short step to an unrelated but slightly homophonic word:

ardour “ n 1: a feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause); "they were imbued with a revolutionary ardor"; "he felt a kind of religious zeal" [syn: ardor, elan, zeal] 2: intense feeling of love [syn: ardor] 3: feelings of great warmth and intensity; "he spoke with great ardor" [syn: ardor, fervor, fervour, fervency, fire, fervidness] ”

Given the work required to develop Ardour, and the personality of its primary author, the name seemed appropriate even without the vague relationship to *HDR*.

Years later, another interpretation of "Ardour" appeared, this time based on listening to non-native English speakers attempt to pronounce the word. Rather than "Ardour", it became "Our DAW", which seemed poetically fitting for a *Digital Audio Workstation* whose source code and design belongs to a group of collaborators.

Why write another DAW?

There are already a number of excellent digital audio workstations. To mention just a few: ProTools, Nuendo, Samplitude, Digital Performer, Logic, Cubase (SX), Sonar, along with several less well known systems such as SADIE, SAWStudio and others. Each of these programs has its strengths and weaknesses, although over the last few years most of them have converged on a very similar set of core features. However, each of them suffers from two problems when seen from the perspective of Ardour's development group:

- they do not run natively on Linux
- they are not available in source code form, making modifications, improvements, bugfixes by technically inclined users or their friends or consultants impossible.

Why Linux (and OS X) ?

Not running on Linux is understandable, given the rather small (but growing) share of the desktop market that Linux has. However, when surveying the landscape of "popular operating systems", we find:

- older versions of Windows: plagued by abysmal stability and appalling security
- Windows XP: finally, a version of Windows that seems stable but still suffers from incredible security problems
- OS X: an amazing piece of engineering that is excellent for audio work but only runs on proprietary hardware and still lacks the flexibility and adaptability of Linux.

Security matters today, and will matter more in the future as more and more live or semi-live network based collaborations take place.

Let's contrast this with Linux, an operating system which:

- can stay up for months (or even years) without issues
- is endlessly configurable down to the tiniest detail
- is not owned by any single corporate entity, ensuring its life and direction are not intertwined with that of a company (for a contrary example, consider BeOS)
- is fast and efficient
- runs on almost any computing platform ever created, including old "slow" systems

- is one of the most secure operating systems "out of the box"

More than anything, however, Ardour's primary author uses Linux and wanted a DAW that ran there.

Having written a DAW for Linux, it turned out to be relatively easy to port Ardour to OS X, mostly because of the excellent work done by the JACK OS X group that ported JACK to OS X. Although OS X has a number of disadvantages compared to Linux, its ease of use and its presence in many studios already makes it a worthwhile platform.

Why doesn't Ardour run on Windows ?

There have been several discussions about porting Ardour to Windows. The obstacles are relatively few in number, but rather substantial in significance. Ardour was written to run on operating systems that properly and efficiently support a portable operating system standard called POSIX (endorsed by the US government and many other large organizations). Linux and OS X both do a good job of supporting POSIX, but Windows does not. In particular, the efficiency with which Windows handles certain aspects of the POSIX standard makes it very hard to port Ardour to that platform. It is not impossible that we will port Ardour at some point, but Windows continues to be a rather unsuitable platform for pro-audio work despite the improvements that have been made to it in the last few years.

Don't I need DSP hardware to run a good DAW?

No. Running DSP hardware may allow you to offload a certain set of processing, in particular certain plugins, to another dedicated processor. However especially in recent years with the advent of multi-core processing, this is becoming less of an issue as in essence it is adding another processor to your computer, compared to just getting a computer with more processing cores available, that not only can run plugins, but also perform other tasks.

Isn't this a really complicated program?

There is no point in pretending that Ardour is a simple, easy to use program. The development group has worked hard to try to make simple things reasonably easy, common tasks quick, and hard and/or uncommon things possible. There is no doubt that we have more to do in this area, as well as polishing the user interface to improve its intuitiveness and work flow characteristics. At the same time, multi-track, multi-channel, non-linear, non-destructive audio editing is a far from simple process. Doing it right requires not only a good ear, but a solid appreciation for basic audio concepts and a robust mental model/metaphor of what you are doing. Ardour is not a simple "audio recorder" - you can certainly use it to record stereo (or even mono) material in a single track, but the program has been designed around much richer capabilities than this.