

Sibelius Educational Suite | Music Education Software

AS A MUSIC THEORY nerd, I spent my years in high school and college getting excited about a voice-leading debate or a discussion over whether one chord change was more practical than another. Though they didn't revel in the glory of ear-training class as much as I did, my peers—many of them now performers, directors, and teachers themselves—must all agree that music theory and ear-training are important for communication among all kinds of musicians, and can truly expand the mind of a composer or songwriter.

The people at Sibelius have been kind enough to let me check out some of their Sibelius Educational Suite of software: Sibelius Instruments, Auralia and Musition. Sibelius Instruments is an interactive guide to orchestral and band instruments. It includes pictures, sound clips and instrument history, as well as instrumentation for over 20 bands and ensembles. When I was clicking around to find out which notes are just beyond the cello's range, but playable on double bass,

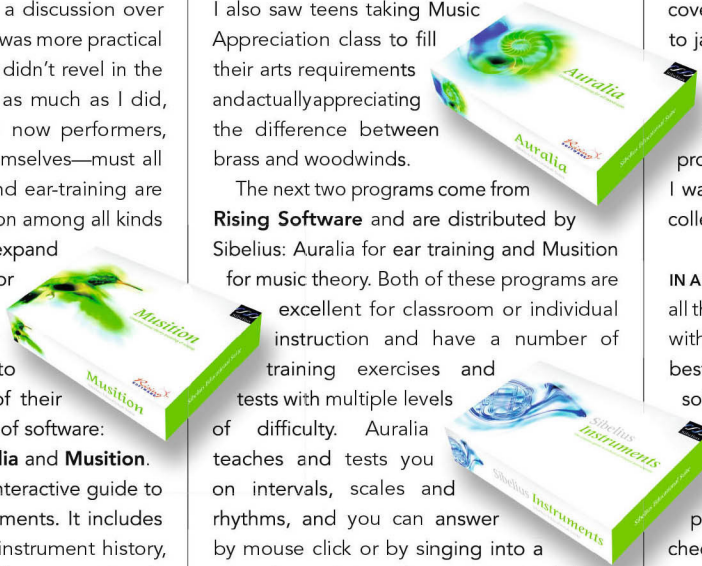
I envisioned my elementary school class sitting around computers in the music room. I also saw teens taking Music Appreciation class to fill their arts requirements and actually appreciating the difference between brass and woodwinds.

The next two programs come from Rising Software and are distributed by Sibelius: Auralia for ear training and Musition for music theory. Both of these programs are excellent for classroom or individual instruction and have a number of training exercises and tests with multiple levels of difficulty. Auralia teaches and tests you on intervals, scales and rhythms, and you can answer by mouse click or by singing into a microphone. Being a drummer, I particularly enjoyed the rhythm dictation exercise, which is also great for singers and horn players who have mastered the staff but have a little trouble

reading all those dotted notes and weird rests. Musition is packed with great theory basics and covers everything from drum and guitar styles to jazz scales and modulation. Like Auralia, it quizzes and teaches simultaneously, but Musition focuses more on concept than aural example. Again, I really loved this program, and wish I could have had it when I was drilling myself with lesser programs in college.

IN A NUTSHELL: I'm going to have to recommend all three of these excellent programs to anyone with a class to teach or attend. Sibelius is best known for its score writing and printing software, but if you need a little bit to build on before you start composing your next song or symphony, these educational jewels are a great place to start. For more programs in the Sibelius Educational Suite, check out www.sibelius.com.

PRICES: Musition and Auralia Pro: \$149 ea.; Musition, Auralia and Instruments Educational: \$119 ea.



SE Electronics: Gemini, ICIS, SE1A | Studio Mics

For this issue, I had the distinct pleasure of working with a few sE Electronics microphones straight from their new factory in Shanghai. sE has aligned itself with the U.K.'s **Sonic Distribution Ltd.** and the newly formed Sonic Distribution U.S.A., to control quality all the way from factory to user, and to achieve affordability along with worldwide distribution. I was really jazzed when these babies showed up, as they have been gaining a killer reputation in the U.K. and Scandinavian markets. After an enticing peek and a very pleasant meeting with sE at NAMM, I was eagerly awaiting the **Gemini, ICIS,** and a stereo pair of fine pencil condensers called **SE1A's**.

The SE1A's sounded great on acoustic guitar. They captured all the right frequencies of string sounds and sustain, whether in an XY position or with one mic on the body and one on the neck. Once tracked, the guitar required very little tweaking to sit well in the mix, with no EQ necessary as the balance of frequencies was already there. I haven't yet had the chance to try the SE1A's as drum overheads, but considering how well they

stacked up to other condensers on guitar, I'm really looking forward to it.

The ICIS is a vacuum tube condenser that looks almost as cool as it sounds. The included "spaceage shockmount" (sE's words) looks as though it is part of the mic's body, and the mic itself has a look reminiscent of '70s sci-fi. ICIS has great tube flavor for vocals and instrument tracks and, with such a modest price tag, would be a great addition to a home studio or a mic closet full of Neumanns.

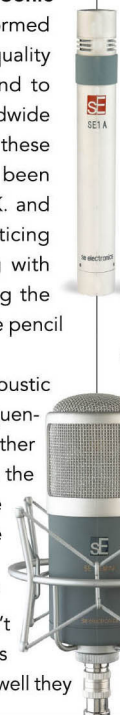
The jewel in sE's crown is the Gemini, a dual-tube, cardioid microphone with a huge, round body that takes both hands to mount on a stand. I've found that the Gemini will impress anyone who comes in to sing or play into it.

We tested it mostly on vocals, and it really soared. After doing a couple of shoot-outs with this mic and some others, the thing that strikes me most is that it sounds very "flat," or true to the sound source, not artificially coloring the sound. Some vocal mics have grown popular because they add high frequencies to help a voice cut through, but the Gemini's strength is that it tells you what's on

the other side of the glass without adding or subtracting.

IN A NUTSHELL: sE has done a great job with all of these mics—so much so that I can't wait to tell you more in our January "Affordable Mics" feature. Stay tuned!

LIST PRICES:
SE1A stereo pair: . . . \$449
ICIS: \$749
Gemini: \$1,499



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