

Andrew Keresztes on LA Scoring Strings Specs and The Future

By [Peter Lawrence Alexander](#) / May 20, 2010

Less than a year ago, Andrew Keresztes was a composer known within a small circle in Hollywood and as a pretty cool guy to know on the forums. Then he released L.A. Scoring Strings (LASS), and the composer turned entrepreneur found himself with a hot product and the beginnings of a new sample development company. In our exclusive interview, Andrew talks about LASS system specs and what's coming in the immediate future for the composing and music producing community.

PA – Originally you had a “monster” system spec for LASS to be spread over two computers for best results. So staying with your original spec for the moment, given that i7s are much cheaper now than last summer, would you still suggest LASS being spread over two computers? And if so, what would their specs be?

ANDREW – There are many users who use LASS on one machine without issues (I've been accused of being overly cautious with my ‘recommended’ system requirements — especially considering some of today's faster computers. 4- and 8-core machines). When I started developing LASS, Quad and 8-core machines were scarce, but now it seems everyone has them. So if you have a decent 4- or 8-core machine with a good 7200RPM drive, you should be good to go. But even for those who have lesser computers, you can use the full mixes or you can even use LASS to the fullest by rendering MIDI tracks. However, as a safety dead-line precaution, I only recommend two computers for those “prime-time” professionals who would use LASS to the fullest with deep divisi writing on all string sections simultaneously and playback everything in real-time with no glitches at the lowest latencies.

PA – SSD drives have recently come into the forefront for newer libraries. I checked out Best Buy and found an Intel X25-M Mainstream 80GB Internal SATA Solid State Hard Drive for under \$230. Since LASS is 40GB on a complete install, would you consider an 80GB SSD hard drive sufficient?

ANDREW – More than sufficient!!! An 80GB SSD would be beyond our recommended specs... but it never hurts to have the “latest/greatest” drives if you can justify the cost.

PA – Looking ahead, you have a 1.5 update coming, the muted strings collection, and you've also announced a LASS 2.0 at some date in the future. Looking into the Developer Crystal Ball, how big are you guessing these libraries might be?

ANDREW – Well, the upcoming 1.5 update will include a new ground-breaking performance feature allowing real-time capabilities that have not yet been achieved with sampled strings. We should have videos posted about this in the next week or so. This is a script-based update and will not increase the sample footprint of LASS. And this will be a free upgrade to all LASS owners.

LASS Legato Sordinos will have a substantial footprint, I'm guessing 8-16Gigs. This depends on whether we include 16-bit and some other criteria. LASS 2 will also be quite a few Gigs... but it shouldn't be over 40 Gigs. At least we're going to try to keep it, “lean and mean”.

PA – With Kontakt 4 64-bit now out as a public beta for registered K4 users, in your view is a 7200RPM SATA drive sufficient provided the user’s system has enough RAM?

ANDREW – Absolutely. That’s what I use. That’s what almost all people I know use, or FireWire drives, too.

PA – With an i7 Quad Core, do you see a value in spreading LASS across several drives within the same system?

ANDREW – That depends on your writing style and work methodology. I was given some good general Hard Disk advice by someone who said when putting your sample libraries on a drive, do not fill up your hard drive. Rather, use a large capacity drive (500+ Gigs at least 7200RPM and 16 meg cache) and only fill it up to 50% or *maybe* 66% capacity. This does two things:

- 1) Forces the files to be written to the outside portions of the HD platter providing faster data transfer.
- 2) Eliminates (or greatly reduces) fragmentation.

Also, distributing the libraries on different drives also increases performance. Also, Stevenson (from our forum) gave this advice:

“another tip with regards to drive efficiency is to partition the drive. the top most partition is the segment that is on the outside of the platter. therefore partition the drive and keep your samples on the first partition but you can use the other partition for backing up, or non-performance dependent data, thus not wasting the drive space but also preserving the performance.”

PA – What customer reports have you received back on running LASS on the same system as the Vienna Ensemble Pro?

ANDREW – Initially, VE Pro had issues running some heavily scripted libraries... but I must say that the Vienna people did a great job of fixing these issues and now it seems LASS runs great on VE Pro.

PA – For the person wanting to put LASS on a separate system, do they need a Vienna Ensemble Pro or can they use LASS with just MIDIOverLAN and an audio card?

ANDREW – I use MIDIOverLAN along with RME 9652 cards (on my PCs) and the RME RayDAT card on my Mac. Others might use a hardware MIDI box if they have it lying around. Also, A lot of people are using Plogue Bidule to host their VIs since it’s so flexible and efficient. Others use VE Pro.

PA – At one point, you had written on the VI-Control forum your plan to provide alternate EQ settings to transform LASS into mimicking the string sound of other composers in a selected group of films. Is this still in the works?

ANDREW – Well, in keeping with my approach to a, “Living Library”, everything is always in the works. Currently, I set up a thread on our forum for people to contribute EQs. EQ is such a personal thing. Quite a few people use LASS without the preset EQs... they prefer it, “au naturale.”

PA – Since Kontakt only has a 3-band EQ, have you considered releasing alternative settings for 5-band EQs that come with many of the sequencing programs?

ANDREW – No, not really... since there has not been the demand for it.

PA – As a working composer with many film/TV credits on IMDB, would you consider sharing what some of the other string libraries are you use to supplement LASS?

ANDREW – Well, I’m a big believer in, “you can never have too many good sounds.” So, I have something from everyone lying around on my drives ready to use in a pinch, but I use mostly LASS, and some custom libraries, Sonic Implants, and QLSO has some nice aleatoric rises.

PA – A number of months ago you announced the release of LASS Lite and First Chair solo strings. Is that still in the works for 2010?

ANDREW – Actually, they are finished. The reason they have not been released yet is they will be downloadable and we are putting the finishing touches on our new download delivery system. We’ve never done this before, and the infrastructure for this is more daunting than we thought because we are doing it all in-house. We aren’t using a “service” to do it for us. This way, we’ll have more control in the future. The good news is that we are very, very, very near completion of this downloadable infrastructure... and all future downloadable releases will be able to be released without delay.

PA – Any hot news we can publish first?

ANDREW – Well, I guess it’s OK if I tip my hand a bit. We are about to release LASS 1.5, and that release will feature Auto Arranger (AA)... a new scripted option which (among many other things) will be able to do auto divisi in real-time. No longer will you have to play 2, 3 or 4 passes of divisi strings to get chordal legato, port or glissando passages. You can now do it in 1 take in real time. It will also allow you to split up two-hand performances into violins, violas, cellos and basses in real time. Or with your right hand, you could play some nice chords and voice leading, and AA would voice the violas down an octave (for example) and make them divisi.... AND have them retain Real Legato performances. It will be easier to explain on a video... but it’s pretty cool... and Gabor (the programmer) worked very hard on it!!

PA – Andrew, thanks for your time.

ANDREW – You’re welcome.

For more on Andrew Keresztes and LA Scoring Strings visit www.audiobro.com.

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