

Soundtrack Pro and AlphaTrack

This document assumes you have already installed the AlphaTrack drivers following the AlphaTrack Users Guide, or Quick Start Guide. It is based on using AlphaTrack v1.1 Mac OS X drivers with Apple's Soundtrack Pro.

Check the Downloads page at www.frontierdesign.com for the latest updates.

Set-up

Before starting Soundtrack click on the AlphaTrack icon at the top of your screen, or access the AlphaTrack Manager from the Applications folder, and select "Soundtrack Pro (MCU)". This will configure the AlphaTrack to send and receive the correct set of MIDI messages for use with the Soundtrack Pro. For more information on Control Modes see the AlphaTrack Users Guide.doc.

Launch Soundtrack Pro, open the Preferences menu, and select the Control Surfaces tab. Click on the "+" button to open the control surface setup panel. Next to Control Surface Type select "Mackie Control". Set both the Input and Output connections to "Frontier Design AlphaTrack". Click OK and a graphic icon for a Mackie Control will appear in the Control Surfaces window. You can close this window now or click on "Control Surface Buttons" to modify any of the function assignments to the AlphaTrack.



General

The AlphaTrack features a high-resolution, 100mm, touch-sensitive, motorized fader with channel dependent backlit Rec, Solo, and Mute buttons, 3 touch-sensitive encoders, 8 function buttons, standard 5-button transport controls, SHIFT key, touch-sensitive scroll strip, and a 32 character LCD display round out the control set. There are also 17 LED indicators. Silk-screened labels indicate the basic functions of many of the buttons. On the back next to the USB connection is a 1/4" jack for a standard momentary foot-switch. The 5 mode select buttons immediately below the encoders are currently not used with Soundtrack Pro.

Pressing play will cause the project to begin playback just as if you had clicked the play button on the screen. Likewise many controls function just like their on-screen equivalents. While the AlphaTrack employs many advanced features, it is designed for easy of use right out of the box.

Fader Section

The high-resolution, 100mm motorized fader is also touch-sensitive to provide smooth level control. When the fader is touched, the LCD updates to show a bar graph of the current level. A thin vertical line through the bar indicates the position of unity gain.

There are also illuminated buttons next to the fader for setting the current track's solo, mute and record arm status. And in this case the using the Shift key together with the Mute button is used to turn the fader motor on and off. For instance, you may wish to turn the motor off during playback of a completed track or project to prevent it from tracking volume envelopes and making any noise. An "X" is displayed in the lower left-hand corner of the LCD whenever the motor is disabled.

Encoders and the LCD

When you open a Soundtrack Pro project the AlphaTrack LCD displays a track name and its pan position on the top line and the current time on the lower line. The left and right encoder functions are always Track, and Pan selection. Turning the left encoder will scroll and select an audio track and the right encoder is used to adjust the pan position of the currently selected track. By default the middle encoder is used to zoom in and out, horizontally and vertically. Simply turning the middle encoder will zoom the timeline horizontally. If you press and turn it then the tracks will expand or shrink vertically. Touching any one of the encoders will immediately refresh the LCD display with more information about what the encoder will do. This cooperative behavior between the touch-sensitive encoders and LCD are an important part of AlphaTrack's overall design.

Function Buttons

Eight function buttons with discrete LEDs occupy the center portion of the AlphaTrack. The bottom row is labeled TRACK DOWN, TRACK UP, LOOP and FLIP. The Track buttons behave just as they are labeled. You can use either the Track buttons or the left encoder to select tracks. LOOP toggles the state of the Cycle mode. Currently Soundtrack Pro does not have the ability to light the Loop LED however the onscreen icon will reflect its current state. FLIP is used to toggle the fader to the Master fader control. This row does not use the Shifted functions.

The upper row is labeled F1 - F4, and when SHIFT is enabled, F5 - F8 respectively. These buttons can be programmed as short-cut keys by the user. A complete description of this function can be found below.

Transport Controls

The standard 5-button transport is located just above the scroll strip at the bottom. These include REWIND, FAST-FORWARD, STOP, PLAY, and RECORD buttons. Pressing the SHIFT button with the RWD and FFWD buttons become Return-To-Zero (RTZ), (go to) END, and Local Settings.

SHIFT

The SHIFT button allows some of the other buttons to perform more than one function, expanding the range of control that AlphaTrack has over Soundtrack Pro. Press and hold SHIFT, then press another function button to access its expanded feature. SHIFT also has a "sticky" feature to simplify one-handed operation. Press and release SHIFT by itself to lock it in the enabled position. The SHIFT button with slowly flash its red LED to indicate that SHIFT is enabled. Now multiple shifted functions can be performed without holding the SHIFT key. Press SHIFT again at any time to disable it. The Shift button can be used with F1 – F4, Rewind, Fast-Forward, Stop and the touch-strip.

Touch Strip

At the very bottom of AlphaTrack is located an innovative feature called the touch strip. This behaves similar to a ribbon controller and is another touch-sensitive surface that can be used in several ways.

Moving one fingertip along the strip in either direction will jog through the project timeline in the same direction with a 1 frame resolution. Slide your finger across the touch strip and hold it at either end to shuttle left or right at a fixed speed.

AlphaTrack Button Functions

The following charts describe the normal and modified functions of each function button. You will also find “Soundtrack_Pro_Layout_v1.1.pdf” on the AlphaTrack downloads page, which serves as a quick visual guide for the AlphaTrack functions with Soundtrack Pro. You may want to print this document for quick reference.

Name	Normal Function	SHIFT + Function
REW	Rewind 1/2/3/4/5/6x	Go To Home
FFWD	Fast Forward 1/2/3/4/5/6x	Go To End
STOP	Stop	<i>(Hold for Local Settings)</i>
PLAY	Play	
RECORD	Record	
TRACK ◀	Move 1 Track Up	
TRACK ▶	Move 1 Track Down	
LOOP	Toggles Cycle	
FLIP	Select Master Channel	
F1	F1 – user-programmable	F5
F2	F2 see below	F6
F3	F3	F7
F4	F4	F8
REC	Toggle Track’s Record Arm	
SOLO	Toggle Track’s Solo On/off	
MUTE	Toggle Track’s Mute On/off	Toggle Motor On/off
FOOTSWITCH	Play	

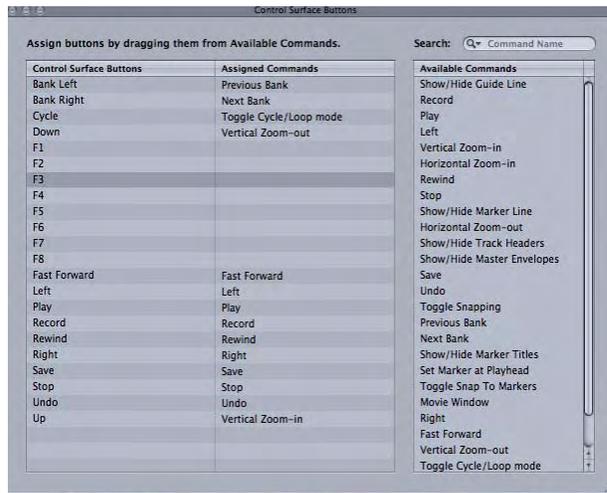
User-programmable buttons

Each of the F1 – F8 function buttons can be programmed to perform shortcuts from a list of available commands in the Control Surface Buttons panel.

To assign commands to F1 through F8:

1. Open the Control Surface Buttons panel (Preferences>Control Surfaces >Control Surface Buttons).
2. Click and drag any command from the right column labeled “Available Commands” to the F1 – F8 line.
3. Repeat this for each of the keys F1 through F8.
4. The Left/Right and Up/Down buttons correspond to AlphaTrack’s middle encoder and can be reassigned as well if desired.

When you have finished close these panels and begin using the short cut keys.



Troubleshooting

Because AlphaTrack uses only Mackie Control emulation to control Soundtrack Pro and does not install any additional plug-in, or control software other than its basic driver, troubleshooting problems are usually quite easy. The most common problems encountered are;

1. AlphaTrack’s operating mode has not been set to Soundtrack Pro (MCU) from its status bar icon, or from the AlphaTrack Manager.
2. Settings in the Preferences > Control Surfaces panel are not set correctly. Make sure you have added a Mackie Control and set the Input and Output connections to Frontier Design AlphaTrack.
3. AlphaTrack’s driver is not properly installed. Open the AlphaTrack Manager to make sure the status line reads “AlphaTrack Available”.