



ON THE DVD

**WHAT IS IT?**

'Intelligent' four-part harmoniser plug-in

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Intelligent mode is superb
- 2 MIDI Triggering well implemented
- 3 Can export all four parts as MIDI (VST only)



# zplane.development vielklang | £129

zplane.development's debut plug-in promises to make harmonising an effortless affair. *TJ Glover* discovers why four parts are better than one

**Y**ou probably haven't heard of zplane.development, but you may well have used their software without realising it.

This German audio signal processing 'technology and service provider' have an impressive client list of licensees (including Steinberg, Mackie, Native Instruments, Ableton and Creamware, to name but five) who have built their algorithms and SDKs into some very well-known products indeed. vielklang, however, is zplane's first actual 'end-user' release, and it's aimed at an area of the software market that's still surprisingly underpopulated: real-time harmonising plug-ins.

The aim of vielklang is to make creating harmonies from monophonic

sources as effortless or involved as any given user could want it to be. To that end, it can work fully automatically, using intelligent analysis to do literally everything for you, or be switched into a manual edit mode that puts total control of pitch, formant and all the rest of it in your hands. It's an appealing approach, for sure, but good intentions are one thing, successful realisation of them another altogether...

**Intelligent design**

vielklang loads as a VST/AU instrument rather than – as you might expect – an effect. The interface has that muted grey 'n' pastels look that's so in vogue with Teutonic developers these days, and comprises four main panes, three

of which can be folded away to maximise the real estate available to the piano roll editor (Pitch View).

Getting audio into the plug-in is as simple as dragging it in or hitting the Load button and browsing, whereupon its key, tuning frequency and variations, tempo, timing and specific note pitches are analysed.

Using this information, three harmony voices are synthesized and laid out along with the source material in the Pitch View. The original part is always orange, while the harmonies are shown in red, blue and green simply for ease of visual reference.

vielklang has three fundamental modes of operation: Intelligent, Parallel and Edit. Intelligent is the default, and it's in this mode that vielklang really flexes its technological muscles, using its built-in 'understanding' of harmony and voice-leading techniques to build a set of parts that progress in a creatively calculated, non-parallel and natural-sounding way. All this is done automatically, but you do have access to a handful of parameters with which to change things up profoundly – specifically, root note and scale (ie, key), the spread of the four parts, and the layer positioning of the source part in relation to the three harmonies.

Parallel mode enables you to specify a set of diatonic intervals to which the four parts will intelligently adhere. This gives more predictable results than

Intelligent mode, obviously, and is the one to go for if you're after a 'standard' progression, either for keeps or as a starting point for manual editing.

In Edit mode, you're given full hands-on access to the note data in the Pitch View, re-pitching notes up and down as you see fit. It's worth pointing out, though, that this is pitch editing *only* – there's no horizontal movement allowed, so rhythmic changes aren't on the cards.

### Total control

The bottom pane of the interface is home to four sets of individual voice controls, and it's here that volume and pan position are set, timing altered, artefacts concealed (to an extent), pitch quantising applied, and voices muted or solo'd.

The Tune and Drift sliders control how aggressively the pitch snaps to the nearest actual note value and how far it's allowed to deviate from the same – useful for reigning in vibrato and legato passages, or approximating the Auto-Tune 'Cher effect' (not that you'll want to be doing that, though, right? Right?!).

### On the trigger

vielklang is a plug-in instrument that effectively contains its own complete audio track, which makes things potentially a little complicated in terms of integration into a broader DAW context. Thankfully, zplane.development have managed to keep things straightforward with two distinct triggering modes. Time Trigger mode syncs the plug-in to the host DAW's transport as if

it were an audio track: jump to bar 6 of your project and vielklang's playback head will dutifully jump to bar six of its Pitch View timeline. This is the mode to use when first getting your harmonies and voice-shaping together, since you can move quickly around using your DAW's navigation system. MIDI Trigger mode is for when you want to work

your vielklang part into an arrangement. Using a snapshot system, you can store up to 32 different 'states' (i.e. presets), each triggered by its own assigned MIDI note. Thus, a range of different harmonic progressions and tones can be created and then switched between throughout the project, right from the comfort of your Matrix editor.

### SPECS

Mac: 1GHz CPU, OS X 10.4, VST/AU host  
PC: 1GHz CPU, Windows 2000/XP/Vista, VST host

all voice shaping to four sliders is remarkably successful. Melodyne users will scoff at the fact that you can only hard-set each parameter per part, as opposed to freely drawing their values into the Pitch View, but since everything in the Voice Settings pane can be host-automated, you can design modulations with relative ease.

And anyway, Melodyne doesn't have

vielklang is going to be disappointed. Vocals, brass parts, guitars and the like suffer from the same artefacts that always come up with this sort of thing (although they are often half-buried in the thickness of the overall harmonised output and can be tended to somewhat with the Shape controls).

Keep your expectations realistic, and you can't help but be amazed at the

quality of the results. The harmony-generation algorithms are quite incredible, coming up with the sort of four-part interplay that

music theory novices couldn't hope to match and even experienced orchestrators will be impressed by. In the context of a mix, genuinely convincing results are possible with vocals and 'real' instruments, while truly crazy things can be done with synths.

All in all, vielklang is a hugely impressive debut from a developer who clearly knows how to balance power with ease-of-use – and hit the market at just the right price point. **FM**

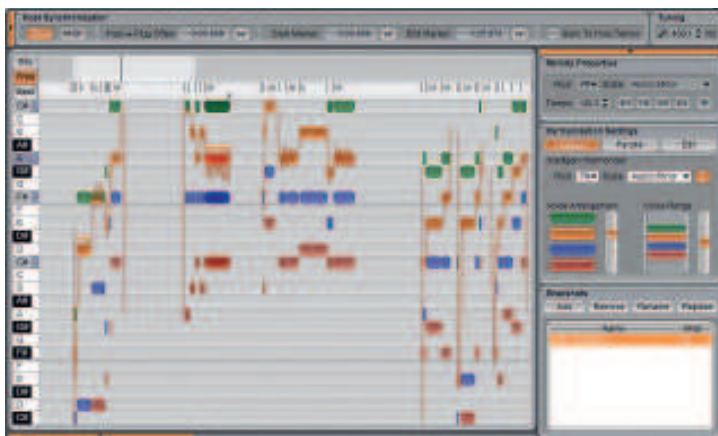
## A hugely impressive debut from a developer who clearly knows how to balance power with ease-of-use

Delay, meanwhile, gives you up to 100ms of temporal tardiness from the part's actual position to play with (for humanising the timing of your virtual quartet), while Shape is essentially a formant control, the effectiveness of which is dependant on the tonal quality of the source.

Simplicity is one of vielklang's main selling points, and the boiling down of

anything like vielklang's Intelligent mode, so talk to the hand, and so on. Incidentally, although vielklang defaults to outputting through the one stereo mixer channel in the host DAW, it can be set to send each of the four parts part to its own stereo output if desired.

As is always the case with pitchshifting and harmonising plug-ins, anyone expecting perfect results from



The original track shows as orange and vielklang's harmonic creations appear alongside as different colours

### ALTERNATIVES



**Melodyne plug-in**  
299 Euros

It can't do harmonies (you need one of the standalone Melodynes for that), but Melodyne plug-in is a veritable powerhouse of pitch correction.

[celemony.com](http://celemony.com)



**Melodyne cre8 3**  
319 Euros

The standalone (but ReWireable) Melodyne cre8 offers eight tracks and the full force of Celemony's stunning pitchshifting algorithm, but doesn't have an answer to vielklang's Intelligent mode.

[celemony.com](http://celemony.com)

**FutureMusic VERDICT**

**BUILD**  
[Progress bar: 10/10]

**VALUE**  
[Progress bar: 8/10]

**EASE OF USE**  
[Progress bar: 9/10]

**VERSATILITY**  
[Progress bar: 10/10]

**RESULTS**  
[Progress bar: 10/10]

vielklang is an artificially intelligent compositional companion that any producer would be glad to have.