# CONEQ™ P2/P8/P2pro/P8pro plug-in

## USER'S GUIDE

(for software version 1.2.0)

real sound lab

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# OVERVIEW

## ABOUT CONEQ™ PLUG-INS

Real Sound Lab's CONEQ™ is a technology to measure and equalize the acoustic power frequency response (APFR) of electro-acoustic transducer devices, such as loudspeakers. With CONEQ™ every loudspeaker sounds better – clear, natural, and without attenuations – within its whole frequency range. The CONEQ™ technology is applied in two steps. First, a precise measurement of how well the loudspeaker transmits energy at each frequency is done, and a compensation filter is automatically produced. Second, the filter is applied to the audio signal by any of the software or hardware tools supporting CONEQ™.

Real Sound Lab's CONEQ™ plug-ins are software components for applying the CONEQ™ equalization filters from within a host application. Host applications for RTAS and VST plug-in formats are currently supported. Typical examples of applications in which a CONEQ™ plug-in is used are DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) applications such as Digidesign Pro Tools, Steinberg Cubase, and Cakewalk Sonar, audio editing applications like Steinberg Wavelab, Sony SoundForge, and Audacity, and various media players. CONEQ™ plug-ins are a software alternative to the Real Sound Lab's flagship products, the APEQ™ hardware equalizers.

This document explains how to install and use the CONEQ™ P2, CONEQ™ P8, CONEQ™ P2pro, and CONEQ™ P8pro plug-ins. The term "CONEQ™ plug-in" refers to any edition of the plug-in. Differences between editions are described on page 10.

## REQUIREMENTS

### Operating System and Hardware

The following operating systems are supported – Windows XP SP3, Windows Vista, Windows 7, Mac OS 10.4 "Tiger", 10.5 "Leopard", 10.6 "Snow Leopard", and 10.7 "Lion". 32-bit and 64-bit editions of the above mentioned operating systems are supported. Both Intel- and PowerPC-based Mac computers are supported.

A fast CPU is recommended for maximum performance when using CONEQ™ plug-in. CPU load can be reduced by increasing the plug-in latency (see page 9).

### Host Applications

All editions of CONEQ™ plug-in work in Digidesign ProTools application as RTAS and AS plug-ins and in VST host applications (such as Steinberg Cubase, Cakewalk Sonar, and many others) as VST plug-ins.

### CONEQ™ equalization filters

The CONEQ™ plug-in uses CONEQ™ equalization filters made by the CONEQ™ Workshop application (a limited license is included with every CONEQ™ plug-in).

# SET-UP

## INSTALLING THE SOFTWARE

The installation CD contains installation programs for both Mac and Windows operating systems. Included are installers for all editions of CONEQ™ plug-ins as well as for CONEQ™ Workshop.

To install software, insert the installation CD. On Mac find the installer in the `Mac` folder at the root of the CD. On Windows, find the installer in the `Win` folder. On Windows the installer will start automatically if the auto-start feature is enabled.

You must accept the CONEQ™ User License Agreement (see page 13) to install and use the software.

## COPY-PROTECTION

CONEQ™ plug-in is protected against illegal copying using eLicenser USB device. The device is delivered together with the software. The eLicenser Control Center application that manages the licenses on eLicensers will be installed as part of the installation process. It is recommended to connect the eLicenser USB device only after the installation has finished. The licenses of Real Sound Lab products can be moved to eLicensers of other applications (e.g. Cubase) to have them all on the same device and free USB ports. The licenses cannot be moved to other types of copy-protection devices, e.g. iLok.

All CONEQ™ plug-ins are bundled with a limited license for the CONEQ™ Workshop application. Please refer to the CONEQ™ Workshop Quickstart Guide for information about activating the limited license.

# USING CONEQ™ PLUG-IN

## OVERVIEW

The CONEQ™ plug-in is a multi-channel equalizer used to equalize the acoustic power frequency response characteristic of loudspeakers. The equalization filters for the loudspeakers are obtained using the CONEQ™ Workshop application and then loaded into the CONEQ™ plug-in.

The CONEQ™ plug-in should be inserted as the last plug-in on the master track/bus and used at all times when monitoring a recording session and editing or mixing the material. However, the CONEQ™ plug-in only improves the sound quality of the equipment and not that of the mix. Therefore, the plug-in must be disabled (bypassed) when exporting the final production. Otherwise, the final result will be equalized for reproduction on a particular speaker system but everywhere else it will contain some unwanted equalization/colouration.

## TYPICAL WORK FLOW

A typical work flow when using a CONEQ™ plug-in is like this:

- Create/open a project in a DAW application
- Insert the CONEQ™ plug-in as the last plug-in on the master track/bus
- Load a CONEQ™ equalization filter for each channel
- Compare the equalized and original sound
- Adjust the input level so that no clipping occurs for filtered sound
- Do the recording, editing and/or mixing
- Deactivate the plug-in in the host application to export/bounce the final production

> ***IMPORTANT!*** *Deactivate the CONEQ™ plug-in during final export/bounce of the ready production! Otherwise, the sound will contain equalization which is unwanted on any system but yours.*

## INSERTING PLUG-IN IN THE MASTER TRACK/BUS

The CONEQ™ plug-in must be inserted as the very last processor in the sound path that is delivered to the loudspeakers. This is typically the last insert of the master track/bus but different DAW and other applications offer different ways to achieve that. Some DAW applications (like Steinberg Cubase/Nuendo) provide a dedicated sound path for monitoring purposes which allows applying CONEQ™ without the risk of influencing the final mixdown. Below are guidelines for some popular DAW applications. This should give an idea about where to look for the correct place for inserting the CONEQ™ plug-in in all other applications.

It is suggested that the CONEQ™ plug-in is inserted in the master track or similar track where all the output channels are grouped in a single track. If your project does not have a master track or similar location, it is possible (starting with version 1.2.0 of the CONEQ™ plug-ins) to insert the CONEQ™ plug-in in individual tracks. The number of tracks where the CONEQ™ plug-in can be inserted is unlimited but the total number of channels to which the CONEQ™ filters can be applied simultaneously is limited by the edition of the plug-in (see page 10).

### Inserting CONEQ™ plug-in in Pro Tools®.

Open the mixer by choosing ***Window⇒Mix***. If the session does not have a master fader then choose ***Track⇒New*** and create a ***Master Fader*** with the number of channels that corresponds to the session type. Now click on the last master fader insert and select the CONEQ™ plug-in from ***Multi-channel plug-in⇒EQ***.

### Inserting CONEQ™ plug-in in Cubase®/Nuendo®.

Open the mixer by choosing ***Devices⇒Mixer*** (or ***Mixer 2/3/4***). In the output section (on the right side of the mixer) click the "e" icon and then select the CONEQ™ plug-in from the insert menu of the last insert.

Cubase and Nuendo provide a special feature called **Control Room** that provides a dedicated sound path for monitoring as well as switching between several monitor set-ups. Select ***Devices⇒VST Connections*** from the menu and go to the **Studio** tab to configure the **Control Room** (see figure 1).

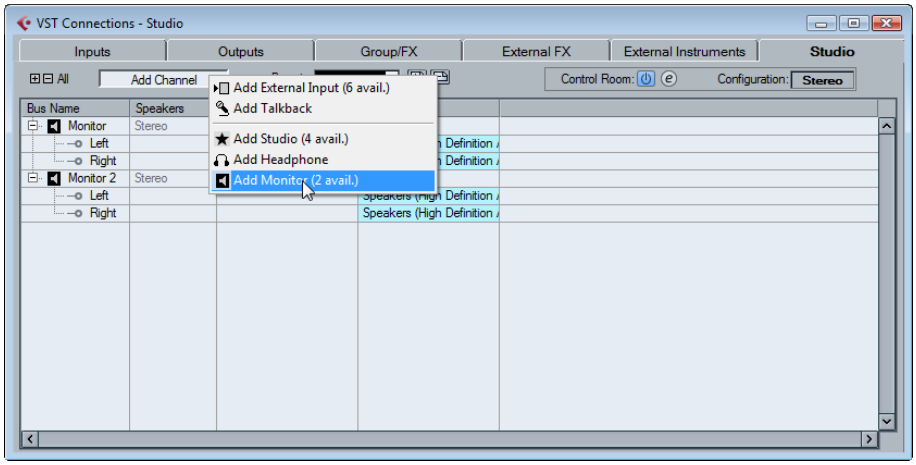


*Figure 1: Setting up the* **Control Room** *in Steinberg Cubase/Nuendo.*

To add CONEQ™ filtering to the sound path for a particular set of monitors, open the **Control Room** mixer by selecting ***Devices⇒Control Room Mixer*** from the menu. Insert the CONEQ™ plug-in in the last insert slot of the monitors that will be equalized (see figure 2) and load the corresponding filters in the plug-in.

### Inserting CONEQ™ plug-in in SONAR™.

On the **Master** track, right-click the **FX** area and select the CONEQ™ plug-in from ***Audio FX⇒vstplugins***. Make sure that the CONEQ™ plug-in is the last in the list. If it isn't then drag-and-drop it to the bottom of the list.

## PLUG-IN INTERFACE

After the CONEQ™ plug-in is inserted, its GUI (Graphical User Interface) will open (see figure 3.

### Information panel

The information panel has three areas. The **TRACK** (left) area shows the track type (mono, stereo, Quadro, 5.1, etc.) and sample rate of the track in which the plug-in is inserted. The **FILTER** area (middle) shows the resolution and sample rate of the loaded filters. The **PLUG-IN**


*Figure 2:* **Control Room** *mixer in Cubase/Nuendo with the CONEQ™ plug-in inserted for monitor set A.*

area (right) allows adjusting the latency (lower latency means higher CPU load) and shows the number of simultaneously active filters supported by this plug-in edition.

## Channel strips

There is one channel strip for each channel of the host track. For stereo tracks two strips will be shown, for 5.1 tracks – six, etc. Some plug-in hosts do not provide information on the number of channels and the layout type, in which case eight channel strips will be shown.

Figure 4 shows the elements of a channel strip. Click on filter name field to open a file selection dialogue which allows selecting a CONEQ™ equalization filter file for this channel. Click on the channel name field to rename the channel. Click on the filter-on switch to switch channel filtering on and off. The level meter shows the level after the CONEQ™ equalization has been applied. Click the clip indicator to reset the clip status and the max-


*Figure 3: Elements of the CONEQ™ plug-in user interface.*

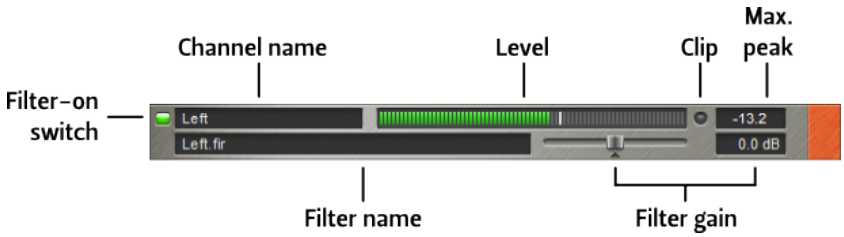


*Figure 4: Elements of a channel strip.*

imum peak value. Use the filter gain controls to adjust gain for this channel to make the filtered sound and original sound equally loud. Click on the small letter "**i**" to show the plug-in version information.

The number of filters that can be simultaneously switched on by a filter-on switch is limited depending on the edition of the CONEQ™ plug-in (see page 10).

## Bypass switch

The **Bypass** switch bypasses filtering of all channels. It is as if the plug-in was disabled or removed from the track except that the input level adjustment is still applied.

## Output meter

The output meter shows the maximum current level and the largest maximum peak value of all the channels. The clip indicator of the output meter turns on as soon as the first channels clip indicator turns on. Clicking the output meter's clip indicator resets all channel clip indicators and maximum peak values.

### Input level knob

The **Input level** knob is used to prevent clipping of the equalized sound by reducing the signal level in all channels before processing by the CONEQ™ equalization filters. See page 9 for information about adjusting the input level.

## LOADING CONEQ™ CORRECTION FILTERS

Once the CONEQ™ plug-in is inserted in the sound path, the CONEQ™ equalization filters should be loaded. Figure 5 shows a channel strip of a plug-in that has been just inserted and where no filter has yet been loaded.


*Figure 5: A channel strip with no loaded filter.*

Click on the filter name field (the area that displays the **Click here to load a filter for this channel...** text). A file selection dialogue will open. A file containing the CONEQ™ equalization filter for this channel should be selected.

The filter must be already created by the CONEQ™ Workshop application. CONEQ™ equalization filters have extension `.FIR`. To find where the filters are saved by the CONEQ™ Workshop application, refer to the chapter FILE STRUCTURE OF THE CONEQ™ WORKSHOP PROJECT on page 10.

The sample rate of the filter must match that of the material to be filtered. For example, if the project sample rate is set to 44.1 kHz then the equalization filter also must have a sample rate of 44.1 kHz. Please refer to the CONEQ™ Workshop documentation to learn how to save a filter with the required sample rate.

The sample rate and resolution of the CONEQ™equalization filters for all channels must match. If a filter of different sample rate or resolution is loaded then all the currently loaded filters will be unloaded.

If the sample rate of the loaded filters is different from that of the track sample rate then the plug-in will switch to **Bypass** mode.

Note that CONEQ™ plug-in editions differ in the supported maximum filter resolution. See page 10 for details.

## COMPARING FILTERED AND ORIGINAL SOUND

Once the filters are loaded, the equalized sound can be compared with the original. Play some material that you know very well with the equalization on. Allow the hearing to adjust and get used to the new sound. Then switch off the equalization using the **Bypass** switch and listen to the same piece again. Try several different pieces to cover the whole frequency spectrum. Depending on the quality of the loudspeakers, the difference can be more or less noticeable. For simpler speakers the difference (and improvement) will be big and obvious while for the higher quality systems the difference will be revealed as many nuanced improvements across the whole frequency range.

## ADJUSTING INPUT LEVEL

It may happen that the filtered sound is clipping (the clip indicators in the plug-in and host turn on). This is expected for saturated input signals because CONEQ™ equalization filters boost the signal in those frequencies where the speaker performance is insufficient. If there is no headroom in the input signal then clipping will occur. If that happens, reduce the input signal level by using the **Input level** knob (see figure 3). Note that the adjustment to the **Input level** remains active also when the plug-in's **Bypass** switch is on, allowing easier comparison between the filtered and original sound.

> ***IMPORTANT!*** *Please note that the* **Input level** *knob should NOT be used as a master fader to adjust the master level of the session/project. If the original signal level is already clipping before CONEQ™ equalization filter is applied then the signal level should be adjusted by means of the host application before passing the signal to the CONEQ™ plug-in.*

## EXPORTING FINAL PRODUCTION

When the production is ready to be exported, deactivate (but not remove) the CONEQ™ equalization plug-in using the means of the host application. This is a very important step because omitting it will cause the final product to sound unpredictable on all systems except the one for which the equalization filters were loaded at the time of exporting. Such a mistake can pass unspotted easily because when the exported material is played on the same loudspeakers on which it was produced, it will sound excellent because the correct CONEQ™ equalization filters were applied to it during export.

After deactivating the CONEQ™ plug-in, please verify that the master level is optimal. It will most probably be different from the master level with the CONEQ™ plug-in activated.

> ***IMPORTANT!*** *Deactivate the CONEQ™ plug-in during final export/bounce of the ready production! Otherwise, the sound will contain equalisation which is unwanted on any system but yours.*

> ***IMPORTANT!*** *For the DAW applications that provide such capability, it is highly recommended to use dedicated monitoring track and insert the CONEQ™ plug-in there. This will avoid equalizing the final exported material and lift the requirement to deactivate the plug-in every time when the exporting is done.*

## LATENCY

CONEQ™ plug-in allows adjustment of the filter latency. The latency is specified in samples and ranges from 2 samples up to the number of samples equal to half of the number of taps in the filter. Shorter latency means higher CPU load, so choose the setting according to the available CPU resources. Due to the way how the host applications evaluate delay compensation, the CONEQ™ plug-in has to be re-inserted or the host application restarted after adjusting the latency setting.

## PLUG–IN EDITIONS

There are four editions of the CONEQ™ plug–in – CONEQ™ P2, CONEQ™ P8, CONEQ™ P2pro, and CONEQ™ P8pro. The current document describes all of them unless specially marked.

### Filter resolution

The CONEQ™ P2/P8 plug–ins support filter resolution of up to 1024 taps. Such filter resolution means an EQ adjustment point at every 20 Hz. This allows very precise equalization for frequencies above 600 Hz. Below that the equalization gets less precise with lower frequencies. The CONEQ™ P2pro/P8pro plug–ins support the filter resolution of up to 4096 taps (an EQ adjustment point at every 5 Hz). This resolution enables very precise equalization across the whole audio frequency range.

The figure 6 shows the difference of filter resolution between 4096 taps (yellow curve) and 1024 taps (orange curve). The green curve shows the actually measured acoustic power frequency response which is equalized by the CONEQ™ equalization filters.

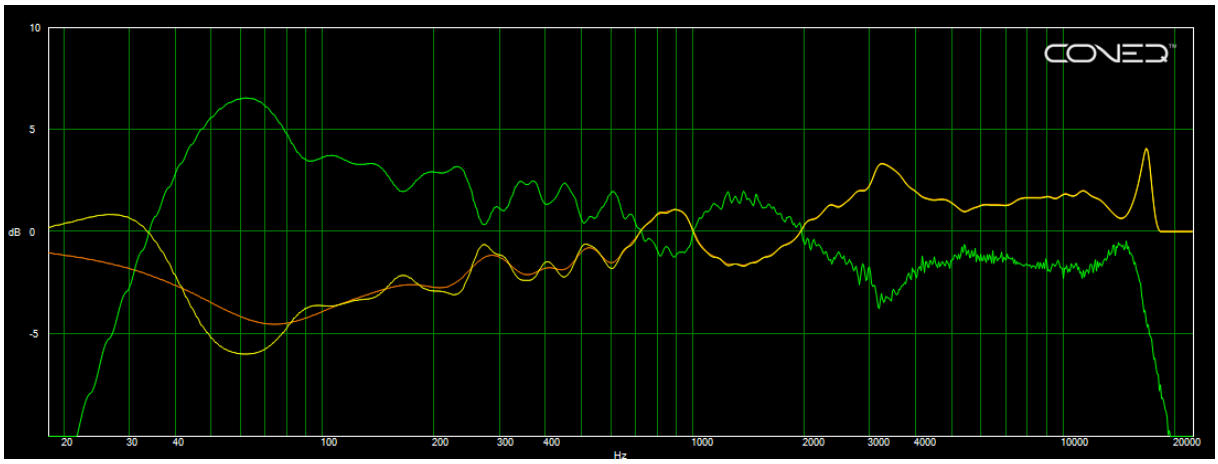


*Figure 6: Difference in resolution of 4096–tap and 1024–tap filters.*

### Multi–channel support

All CONEQ™ plug–ins can be used in mono, stereo, as well as in various types of multi–channel projects. This includes but is not limited to projects having 5.1 and 7.1 output. The CONEQ™ P2/P2pro plug–ins support simultaneous filtering of up to two channels. The CONEQ™ P8/P8pro plug–ins can filter up to eight channels at a time.

## FILE STRUCTURE OF THE CONEQ™ WORKSHOP PROJECT

CONEQ™ equalization filters can be created with one of the editions of CONEQ™ Workshop. CONEQ™ Workshop has a concept of projects. Each project is a folder on the hard disk. A project contains one or more measurements. One or more filters can be created for each measurement.

Filters are files with the extension `.FIR` in the project file hierarchy. Here is how to locate the relevant files. Let's assume your project folder is named `MySpeakers`. Let's also assume that you have made two measurements, named `Left_1` and `Right_1` for the left and right channels respectively. At last, let's assume that for the left channel you made one recalculation after changing some parameters. Then you should have the folder structure as depicted in figure 7 on your hard disk.

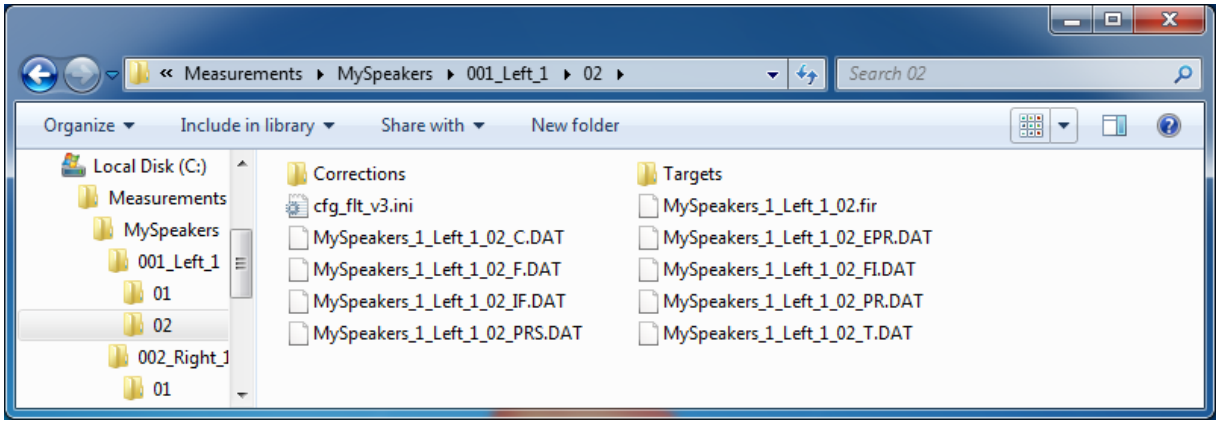


*Figure 7: The structure of the CONEQ™ Workshop project folder.*

The file `MySpeakers_1_Left_1_02.fir` is the filter for the left channel. As you see, there are two folders for the Left_1 measurement. The folder `01` always contains the equalization filter calculated directly after measurement was taken. The folder `02` contains the result of recalculation after the change of filter settings.

The filter for the right channel is located in folder `MySpeakers/002_Right_1/01` and is named `MySpeakers_2_Right_1_01.fir`.

These files are the CONEQ™ equalization filters that must be selected for filters in CONEQ™ plug-ins.

To locate the filter files, select ***Filter⇒Open filter folder*** from the menu in CONEQ™ Workshop when the needed filter is selected. This will open a Finder/Explorer at the folder where the corresponding `.FIR` file is stored.

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have any difficulties using the CONEQ™ plug-ins (our contact details are listed below). We will do our best to respond to you as quickly as possible. Our mission is to make your experience with CONEQ™ as simple and rewarding as possible. When contacting us, please inform us of the following:

- CONEQ™ plug-in version (click on the small "i" on the main plug-in window);
- CONEQ™ Workshop version (go to ***Help⇒About CONEQ™ Workshop...***);
- Your operating system version;

- Host application name and version. (e.g. Cubase 5 Studio);
- Computer information: CPU type and speed, installed memory;
- Description of your problem (as much information as possible for us to understand the problem).

## CONTACTING REAL SOUND LAB

Should you have questions or comments, please contact us using one of the following:

- E-mail: support@realsoundlab.com
- WWW: http://www.realsoundlab.com
- Phone: +371 6788 9828 (Real Sound Lab SIA Headquarters, Riga, Latvia)

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