CH Sound Design

USING MICPLOT & PALLADIUM ON A MAC

The following details the experiences of one of our customers in using MicPlot and Palladium on his Mac notebook.

"I've been using MicPlot and Palladium for the past several years, starting out on the Windows platform. Last January, I bought a Macbook Pro and thought I was not going to be able to continue using the software, at least conveniently. Not so. Both programs run nicely under Parallels, a virtual emulator program that allows multiple operating systems to run on Intel based Macs. Note -- the following only applies to Intel Macs!!

Parallels is inexpensive and continues to improve. Once loaded, installing an operating system is moderately easy, especially Microsoft offerings, although many others are also supported including Linux, and even DOS.

The downside is that a new Windows license is required to activate whatever Windows version you choose. I found that Microsoft would allow me to run a single license against both the Boot Camp installation, which just runs Windows as it would run on any computer, in a separate partition without interaction with OS X, and a Parallels installation. A phone call to their support number with an explanation that the version would be running on the same machine in a different partition was sufficient to get a second serial number.

However, Boot Camp is not the way you will want to go. Parallels allows an almost simultaneous operation of both operating systems, and is how I have run Chris' programs. I rarely start up Boot Camp.

First download Parallels and purchase the appropriate license. Next follow their instructions to load Windows. I recommend XP, as Vista doesn't seem ready for prime time. Once you have configured XP and started it up, choose the coherence feature to integrate the desktop to the Mac desktop.

Now, with Windows having the focus, install Palladium, MicPlot, and if you are using the USB key, the activation program. It is probably easier to just download the programs directly from the CH Sound Design web site, although you can get them ahead of time and place them in a shared directory that both operating systems can see. Parallels gives instructions on how to do this.

I have, however, had terrible issues with a TSR from Parallels called PVSNATD. It seems to consume almost 100% of the CPU cycles, and they have never responded as to why. Either kill it from the system monitor, or find the actual program and remove it to another folder so it does not start. It has something to do with networking, but in the configuration that I set up, it is apparently not used, so not starting it at all works fine for me. If installed, it runs whether Parallels is loaded or not, so have a look at the system monitor, see if it is there, and stop it, otherwise performance gets sluggish, to say the least. And, it gets re-loaded every time you update to a new Parallels version. Beware!

Don't put the USB key in place until Windows is running. It should be detected by the Windows operating system, rather than the Apple under those circumstances. The same is true for any connections you might want to make back to a mixer. I use a USB to MIDI interface by Yamaha, supported by both operating systems, and if I plug it in before starting Windows, OS X initializes it. So, don't plug in any peripheral devices until Windows is loaded and ready to run. Then add the plug in devices, then start MicPlot or Palladium. The devices should be recognized, provided you have installed their drivers. A Windows only MIDI interface would probably not be recognized by OS X, and could get around this problem. I haven't tried that approach.

Once you have done the initial loading and prep work, both programs, as Jerry Pournelle would say, just work. I have had no issues in working with either piece of software under Parallels. It is even possible to run OS X programs while MicPlot or Palladium is running, provided they don't try to grab the same resources.

The only quirk I have found is that the Apple function keys seem to want to retain Apple's special functions. When I have tried using the F1 or F2 keys with Palladium, I have generally succeeded in raising or lowering the screen brightness. I expect that the keys can be re-mapped, and there is probably an alternate key press selection to make them work as function keys, but I found it easier to just press the onscreen buttons with the mouse cursor.

When working with the track pad in the field, the single button mouse gets interesting, however, you can go into Parallels and check the correct modifier keys to get a right click. The default is OPTION-SHIFT-CLICK, but it can be changed to your preference. I have found that sometimes multiple presses of the Mighty Mouse right click key are required, but that seems to be true throughout the virtual interface, and not just limited to MicPlot.

On the whole, the above approach has worked well for me."

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