User Guide v 1.1.4

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www.orion-sfx.com

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Sonic Universe Toggles

System Requirements

ILok USB protection

MAC

ORION makes heavy use of powerful features in the latest Apple Silicon computers and more recent OSX versions. We always strive to support the oldest systems possible, but there is no escaping the fact that ORION needs a lot of power and speed to churn through thousands of sounds as fast as it does.

OSX 13.0 - Ventura
Silicon Mac (M-Series)
RAM - as much as possible
Disk - SSD library drive is highly recommended for faster ingest.

PC

Windows support is planned, but unfortunately tends to lag behind Mac.

Introduction

ORION is a standalone desktop application designed for fast retrieval of sounds from within the user's own library. It is designed primarily for Sound FX and foley, but can also be used for music or crowd.

ORION uses AI sound analysis to categorise every file in your library. The database that is built from this analysis can then be searched in various ways, including sonic similarity, linguistic similarity, meaning, and of course the standard text similarity.

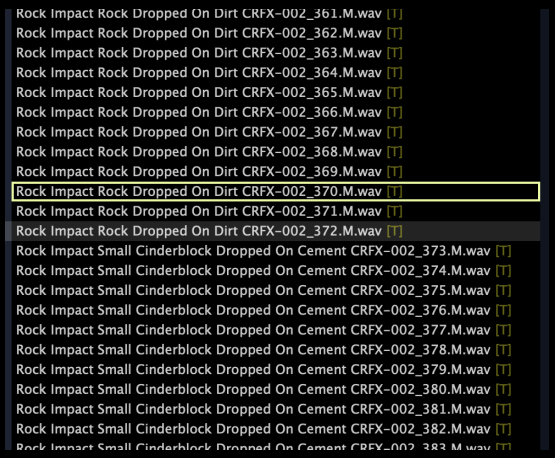
These varied search methods allow the user to embark on a journey through their library that standard text searching does not allow.

Quick Start

ORION is designed to allow immediate experimentation whilst the library ingest is in progress. This means that a matter of moments after dropping your library into the app, you will be able to start poking around with the sounds without having to wait hours.

Drop your library onto the app.

A dialog will show whilst the app makes an initial assessment of the layout of the dropped folder structure. The speed of this process depends on the speed of the drive and the amount of data, but it shouldn't take more than a minute. Once this is complete, the "Text Match" column will populate with items representing all the files in your library:



As the ingest progresses, these files will be read, chunked and analysed in various ways. The coloured box to the left of the name indicates the file is queued for this analysis. The <T> to the right indicates the file is queued for text analysis. Once a file is fully ingested it will appear as white on dark grey background.

There is no need to wait for the ingestion to complete before trying out the AI search functionality. As soon as a file is fully analysed it will be available to the search system.

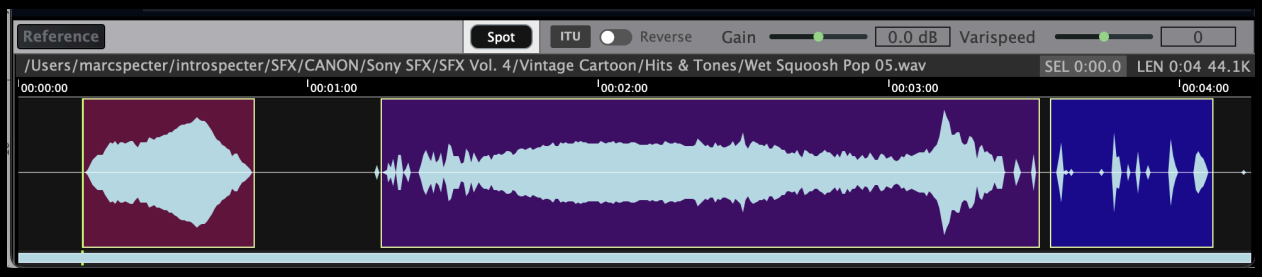
There are numerous AI search functions available, the most basic of which is "Sonic Similarity" search. Simply COMMAND CLICK on any (analysed) file listed and the app will show similar sounding 'chunks' in the Sonic Similarity column. An important

distinction here from the Text Match column is the results in the Sonic Similarity column are slices of audio files rather than full audio files. Orion has attempted to chunk up every audio file into usefully digestible pieces based on silence, transients, and tonal changes. These slices are all individually analysed for the search which means golden nuggets from within long files with multiple sounds can be found extremely quickly.

See the User Interface Tour for more information about the other search methods available. For now we will continue with the Sonic Similarity results to quickly get some sounds onto your timeline.

The Sonic Similarity column will now be populated with a selection of results based on the material so far ingested by the AI analysis engine. The results are SORTED and COLOURED by how similar they are to the searched item. This SORTING AND COLOURING is an important part of the app for more complex usage, but for now you can just simply say that the most similar items are at the top of the list and are coloured by heat from red (high similarity) to blue (low similarity), with shades in between.

Click some of these results and playback using the waveform in the standard fashion. The waveform shows all the slices in the app with the selected slice highlighted.



At this stage you may immediately find a sound you are happy with, or you may wish to continue the search by doing another COMMAND-CLICK on another file, or any of the results in the Sonic Similarity list. This is a critical workflow in the Orion, the idea of a 'journey' through similar sounds, until you arrive in the area you want and are able to browse from a variety of potential matches.

Drag-N-Drop

We will continue assuming you have found a sound you want. Using the waveform you can interact with the slices directly, or with a custom selection range by click-dragging as normal. Either way, CONTROL-DRAG to initiate a 'drag-out' of that slice into any other app that accepts drag-and-drop file placement, eg. Pro Tools, Soundminer Radium, Reaper, etc. A temporary file will be created in Documents/Orion/Rendered Files, but the ultimate home of the file will be decided by whatever the receiving app decides to do with it.

Spot To Pro Tools

Alternatively, you can spot directly to Pro Tools using the S key or the Spot button. The app will ask you to specify a spotted files destination. You can use any folder you like, including your Session Audio Files folder. The clip should appear on the timeline at the current playhead position on the current track (after some potential permission request popups). As many channels as are available on the destination track will be filled, so spotting a stereo file onto a mono track will drop the first channel only.

That's it! See the User Interface Tour or other specific pages for more detailed info.

You can also get more help at the website www.orion-sfx.com, the Facebook page "Orion User Group", and the Discourse Forum (link).

User Interface Tour

Text Entry (A)

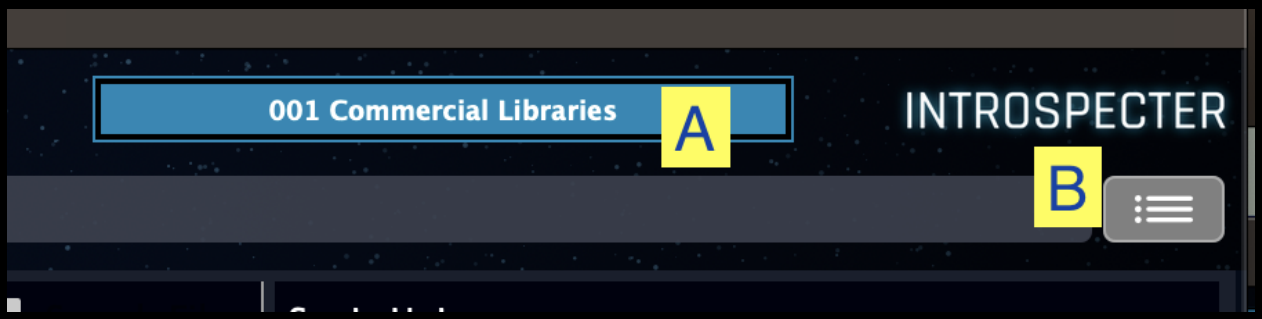
For normal text searches and special text prompts. See Special Text Prompts for more info.

Telescope Button (B)

Command-click to activate text-to-sound search - think of it as "The sound of XYZ"

Language Similarity Toggle (C)

Turn this on to show the Language Similarity file list. This will show file results that relate contextually to a plain text prompt, eg. "Seaside" will show results that contain, in the name or description, mentions of water, boats, seagulls etc.



Progress Bar (A)

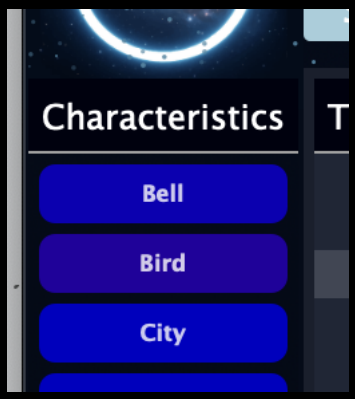
If any library ingests are happening, this bar will show various details about the progress.

Search History List (B)

Click this button to open up the search history to return to previous searches.

Search Mode Toggle

The SEARCH SORT COLOUR buttons are key to the advanced search functionality of the app, but can be left alone for default searching. The text next to the buttons shows the current search state.



Characteristics

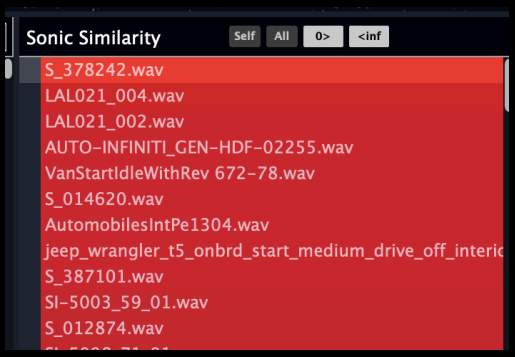
The characteristics list is a preset list of sounds or sound flavours that can be used as a search source, or to filter other searches. Click to toggle different ones on or off, and Command-Click to activate the AI Search using the current combination. For example, toggle on Distortion, Bell and Music to put the characteristics "machine" into Distortion-Bell-Music mode, and then Command-click to search for Distorted Bell Music in your library!

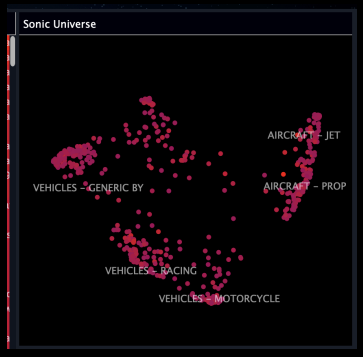
Text Match

This is an audio file list, like a standard sound library search tool. It will show direct text matches from plain text prompts. The button at the top right can be used to initiate a drag-drop of the current selected full file into another app.

Sonic Similarity

This is the main search results list. Unlike the Text Match List, it contains SLICES of audio files. Click the INCLUDE button to toggle to EXCLUDE , which means any results from the file of the current search will be ignored. Toggle ALL mode to BEST to show only one best result from each file. This is useful when you have files full of very similar slices like clock ticks and you only need to hear one.



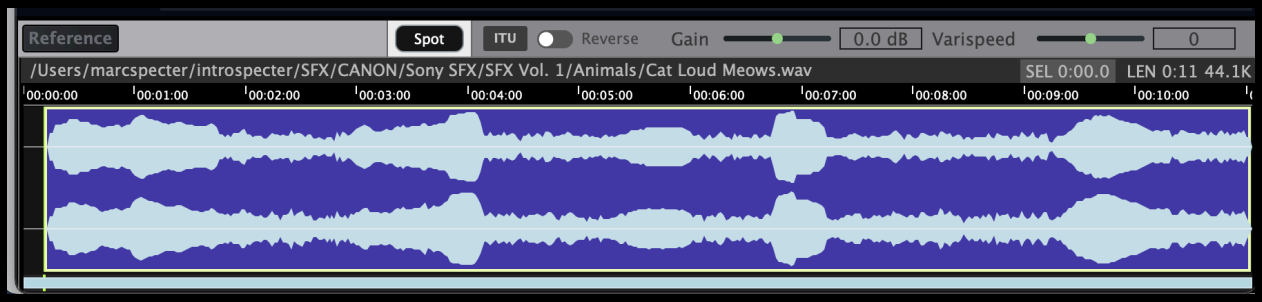


Sonic Universe

This is a 2D map of the Sonic Similarity results. The layout of points is an abstract representation of the different clusters of similarity in the results. Press TAB to full screen it. Control-drag to move around, Command-scroll to zoom in.

Live Audio Search

Set the input to a mic or other input. Press record, perform something into the mic, press record again to stop. Now you can Command-Click the waveform to Ai search for sounds that are similar to the recording.



Reference Button

When an AAX buffer is loaded, or an external file is dragged, this button will toggle the waveform between this external sound and the normal waveform.

Playback Setting

Reverse, Gain, Varispeed, Surround Order. The varispeed requires playback restart on change. In future we plan to make a live varispeed.

Search - Colour - Sort

The various search methods possible in ORION mean require a degree of careful control to get the most out of. The app allows you to Search, Colour, and Sort the results if you wish to.

To access any combination of these modes, mouse-click to toggle the buttons, or use 1,2 and 3 on the keyboard.:
Search = 1
Sort = 2
Sort = 3

The boxes shown in the screenshot above will light up to remind you which modes are currently active. These modes will apply to whatever you next Command-Click on.

Search

When an item is clicked with Search active, the middle column in the app ('Sonic Similarity'), will be populated with a result list of sound clips that sound the most similar to the clicked item.

Colour

When the Colour mode is active, the results that are currently in the Similarity list will be coloured by similarity to the clicked item.

Sort

When SORT mode is active, the items in the list will be sorted by similarity to the clicked sound. Sort is assumed during SEARCH mode, but it is possible using SORT by itself to show results matching one sound, sorted by similarity to another sound. For example, SEARCH for windy sounds by SEARCH-clicking (Command) on a wind sound, and then SORT by rumbliness by SORT-clicking (Control) on a rumble sound.

How To Search - A Different Way Of Thinking

Searching for sounds with Orion can be thought of as a journey. You choose a starting point, and then make a number of steps. At each step you can take a look around and decide which way you want to go. Here are the different starting points explained in detail:

Standard Text Search

As you would in Soundminer or other library tools, you can do a normal text search. Enter a phrase into the text input and press Enter. The Text Match list will show any files that contain that exact phrase in the name or description metadata. The column by default shows only filename, but you can show descriptions instead by pressing Command-T. In future we may show more metadata, including multiple columns, but for now we are keeping it simple to minimise UI clutter.

Language Similarity

Expanding on the simple text search, the Language Similarity list will find files whose name or description contains things assessed to be contextually similar by the AI model. Think of it as a small ChatGPT language model embedded in the app. If you type 'seaside', the model will find files containing the text "water", "boat", "seagulls", "breeze", etc. This can be a great starting point for ideas for backgrounds for example. The Language Similarity list is placed below the Text Match list because it has a very similar role - showing full file results - only with the contextual language search rather than direct text matching.

Characteristics List

When SEARCH mode is turned on, the characteristics list acts as a kind of preset list. Command-click on the 'Dog' characteristic to find dog sounds, or activate 'Water' and 'LF' to find low rumbly water sounds. Or 'Music' and 'Distortion' to find distorted music. The characteristics list can be thought of as a sonic flavour machine with different toggle buttons to alter the sound. A standard left-click only toggles different characteristics on and off, it doesn't actually activate the search. For this you must command-click. If multiple characteristics are selected, a command-click on any of the activated characteristics will perform an AI search using that combination. A Command-click on any unselected characteristic will activate and search for that characteristic instead of the previously toggled ones.

The 'Magic Telescope Sound Of' search

Haven't settled on a good name for this yet, but this is one of the highlights of the app. Type any text into the input field, press COMMAND-ENTER, or COMMAND-click on the telescope button. The app will analyse the phrase in AI space, and seek whatever nearby sounds it can find in the area. Much like how a sound designer would think, this means that the app can consider the meaning of a certain phrase, map that meaning into the sonic world....

Advanced Text Prompts

The text input box at the top of the app can be used to construct complex searches that combine multiple points in the AI model space. These prompts are activated using the telescope “Magic Search” button. The prompt engine is highly experimental.

The rest of this section is a deep-dive into the nature and potential of the prompt engine.

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The AI model in Orion allows you to ask questions like “What do gunshots sound like, but if they were angelic?”, or “What does laughing sound like, but if it was like an electric guitar?”
These two questions can be asked in the text prompt like this:

“gunshots, angels, -demons”
“laughter, electric guitar, -acoustic guitar”

Use comma to separate search terms and minus as a special character representing “not”.

It should be carefully noted that the minus does not mean ‘don’t include this term’, but instead should appear in opposition to a positive search term that has a similar/opposing concept, such as in the examples above. It would be useful for someone to consider the following structure to build a search term:

“<a main starting term>, <a concept>, -<a counterpoint/opposition>”

This opposition is required because the system needs to know in which direction to move your main search term, and thus requires the additional positive and negative terms.

The following search demonstrates why you need something in opposition:

“a person walking across a wooden floor, water, -wood”

As you might be able to see, trying to get someone from walking on a wooden floor to a wet floor (or in water) needs to move away from ‘wood', and towards ‘water’. It

wouldn't work in the same way if you moved away from 'metal' and towards 'water', or moved towards 'water' without defining 'wood' at all.

In this example, the difference of 'wood' to 'water' is transforming the first search term.

For example;
"a lamb, -a sheep" - describes a difference of youth.
"a sheep, -a lamb" - describes a difference of adulthood.
"far away, -very close" - describes a difference of more reverb and distance..
"a lion, -a cat" - describes some difference of scale, power, and danger.
"a zombie, -a person" - describes some difference of undeadness.

It should be noted that not all differences will work as well as others. Concepts that are very dissimilar may lead to unpredictable results:

"a pirate, -a flute" - What is the difference?
"anguish, -Costa Rica" - What does it mean?
"university, -sand" - Eh?
"alphabet, -alphabet" - These are the same, so they cancel to nothing..

With these additional search terms establishing a semantic difference, the primary term can now be used to search for ideas in relation to this difference plane.

"car engine, a zombie, -a person" - might get you an undead car engine.
"a person laughing, a lamb, -a sheep" - could get you a child laughing.
"a sword, a scream, -a whisper" - might return loud and angry metal clangs.

Having said that, you have the freedom to explore whatever prompts you want! Just make sure they are properly formatted with commas and minus where needed.

Using sounds in prompts:

These text prompts can be combined sounds by using certain specific labels..
"#Name" to reference a sound from your library. The name must be registered as a prompt token by selecting a sound and pressing Cmd-P to name it.
"@Name" to reference a characteristic from the list. Replace 'Name' with the exact name of the characteristic correctly capitalised.
"@LIVE" to access your Live Record sound.
Your sounds can be used in exactly the same way as you use text prompts, are interchangeable, and combinable;-

“@LIVE, metal, -wood” - to project your live recording away from wood in the direction of metal.
“@LIVE, monster" to find a monstrous version of your vocal performance.
“music, #somesound, -#othersound” to change music in the direction of the difference between two sounds of your library.

Commas inside search terms:

As commas separate search terms, to include a comma inside a search phrase, such as **“a calm, quiet sea”**, you must enclose the whole phrase in double quotes - “”

Keyboard Shortcuts

Legend: ⌘ Command • ^ Control • ⌥ Option • ⇧ Shift • ␣ Space • ⌫ Delete • ⇥ Tab • ← → ↑ ↓ Arrows

Navigation & Selection

↑ / ↓	Move hot selection up / down
⌘ + ←	Go back in history
⌘ + →	Go forward in history
T	Zoom to selection
R	Zoom to whole file
⌘ + ⇧ + R	Reveal selected audio file in Finder.
⌘ + k	Clear group selection
S	Spot To Pro Tools

Search & Filtering

1	Toggle Search
2	Toggle Sort
3	Toggle Colour
⌘ + F	Focus search box
⌘ + Enter	Do ‘Magic Search’
⌘ + J	Clear text search
C	Clear current search
⌘ + P	Add current chunk to text prompt
D	Toggle between filenames and description

Playback, Recording & Flags

␣	Play/Pause (spacebar)
⌘ + R	Start/stop recording (triggers Record button)
/	Flag current sound
^ + Y	Clear flagged list
⌘ + Y	Clear played list

Varispeed (Playback Rate)

+	Increase varispeed by +0.2 (also stops playback).
-	Decrease varispeed by −0.2; minimum 0.1 (also stops playback).
⌘ + =	Reset varispeed to 1.0 (also stops playback).

Project & Files

⌘ + S	Save project.
⌘ + Q	Quit application.
⌘ + C	Copy current file name to clipboard.

Sonic Universe Toggles

⇥	Toggle fullscreen
G	Centre selected sound.
⌘ + N	Toggle Characteristics labels
^ + N	Toggle UCS prediction label
N	Toggle file names