Love Juice Labs Tutorial: How to Transfer Files between Digital Audio Platforms

The problem: Platforms like ProTools, Logic, Sonar, Ableton are competing in the market so they don't get along. Each platform uses a proprietary method to save your recorded information. You can't open ProTools session files in Sonar and vice-versa. This is bad for everybody who wants to start a project in one platform and finish in another.

How audio platforms work: An application records your music by writing audio files (.wav or .aiff) to a particular directory on the harddrive. More important, it keeps track of the start time of each clip you record. It also keeps track of which takes you are keeping and which ones you've deleted from the session.

If you try grabbing the audio files and importing them, you have a mess, because each audio file doesn't know where it belongs. You end up with a bunch of tiny pieces of music, all starting in the same place. All those bad takes you deleted are in there too, unless you've run a utility to delete them for good. You don't know which takes are the right ones or how they fit together.

Luckily there are two methods for transfering only the keeper takes WITH the start times.

Method 1: OMF

OMF is a universal one-step solution. Read about it here:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Media_Framework_Interchange

- Make sure you embed the audio files in the OMF (you'll find this option on the OMF export menu.)
- Write down the tempo of the original file. OMF does not save the tempo.

Tutorial for making OMF files in ProTools. For other platforms, just Google a tutorial.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M769Nk3_fuo

Method 2: Wave Files

Wave file definition: Some platforms don't support OMF or they charge extra for the capability. In these cases we use a more universal format: .wav files, also known as .aiff files. Other than the extension, .wav and .aiff are pretty much the same thing. If you have a Windows computer, you'll find .wav files. If you have a Mac, you'll find .aiff. From here on, let's just call them wave files.

Why it works: To avoid the problems described earlier, like all the bad takes showing up, and all the files not knowing where they belong, export each track of your session as a separate wave file. Wave files are strings of data, so the timing is inherent in their structure. Just like the fourth car in a train knows where it belongs, each piece of the .wav file knows where it belongs.

General procedure: Your job is to combine the clips in your audio application into long wave files that all have the same start time. That way when I import the files, each piece will line up. And there won't be any deleted takes included. The only counter-intuitive aspect of this idea is that there will be a lot of blank space at the beginning of some of the files, such as vocal tracks. That's fine. All that blank is keeping track of the time.

Each file must correspond to one track. Don't mix clips together.

If you are running compression, EQ or effects, turn them off. Set the volume on each track to 0 or unity.

Specific procedures: Each platform has its own way of exporting single tracks. Here's a link for ProTools. For other platforms, just Google a tutorial.

http://www.pro-tools-expert.com/home-page/2014/4/10/moving-an-entire-pro-tools-session-to-another-daw.html

Love Juice Laboratories File Preference (Preference means not written in stone)

File format: .wav or .aiff. No mp3, no compressed file formats.

Sample rate: 44.1 khz or a multiple of that. Can't open anything > 96khz

Bit depth: 24 bit. 16 bit is okay; 32 bit is overkill.

Compression: none. Makes it hard to run transient-based processes like gating, triggering.

EQ and effects: none (unless it's something special like a characteristic sound, flanger etc)

Volume: unity or zero. Sending me varying levels doesn't help the mix, and it wastes bits.

"Drum Machine": Split computer-generated drums into as many separate parts as possible.

Triggered drum sounds: no. If you have sounds you like, send the un-triggered tracks as well.

Vocal pitch correction: no. I will fix the pitch and it won't sound fixed.

Summary: Send single tracks, not sub-mixes. As close as possible to the original thing you recorded.

Study the given tutorials. Don't just grab the ProTools audio directory and expect me to sort it out.

Record at Love Juice Labs (Ignore this if it doesn't apply to your situation)

You may be attached to the tracks you have already recorded. But keep in mind that the most time-consuming part of recording is writing, brainstorming and learning. Since you have recorded your music once, all that work is done. To record it a second time does not take nearly as long, and the takes are usually better.

Most of the tracks I receive for mixing are not recorded to my standard of audio quality or organization. With the time it takes to sort and fix someone else's tracking, I may as well have just recorded it in my studio, to my standards. It takes me less time to mix tracks I recorded myself because everything is already in the right place. In many cases, you don't save much money by recording yourself.

Consider calling your current tracks "pre-production." Record your "finals" at Love Juice Labs. This is how you get the best of both worlds: pre-production free, and final production to Love Juice standards, at a similar cost.