

# Review of »EarMaster Pro 5«

By Erik Berg Olsen, Naerum Amtsgymnasium (higher secondary school)



*EarMaster Pro 5. Price: One user license: EUR 79/*

*US\$ 69.99 School license: EUR 679/US\$ 699*

*Languages: 13 different languages, e.g. English, Danish, Spanish, French. System requirements:*

*Windows 98 or later, 14 MB disc space*

Once EarMaster 5 is installed on the computer it is a wonderful tool. If you find ear training the least bit of fun and have the slightest degree of competitive mentality, it won't take long before you constantly try to outdo yourself and improve your abilities in recognizing and transcribing intervals, chords, scales, rhythms etc.

The program is built around a number of exercise areas within traditional ear training:

- Interval comparison, where the user listens to two different intervals and determines which one is the greater.
- Interval, chord and scale identification
- Chord progressions, where the user learns to identify a sequence of harmonies/chords
- Melodic and rhythmic dictation
- Rhythm reading, imitation and Correction.

There are essentially two ways to do the exercises:

- Through the EarMaster tutor (standard or jazz)
- Through user defined lessons

If you pick the **tutor**, the exercises will gradually get harder. For instance, lesson 1 in chord identification in the jazz tutor

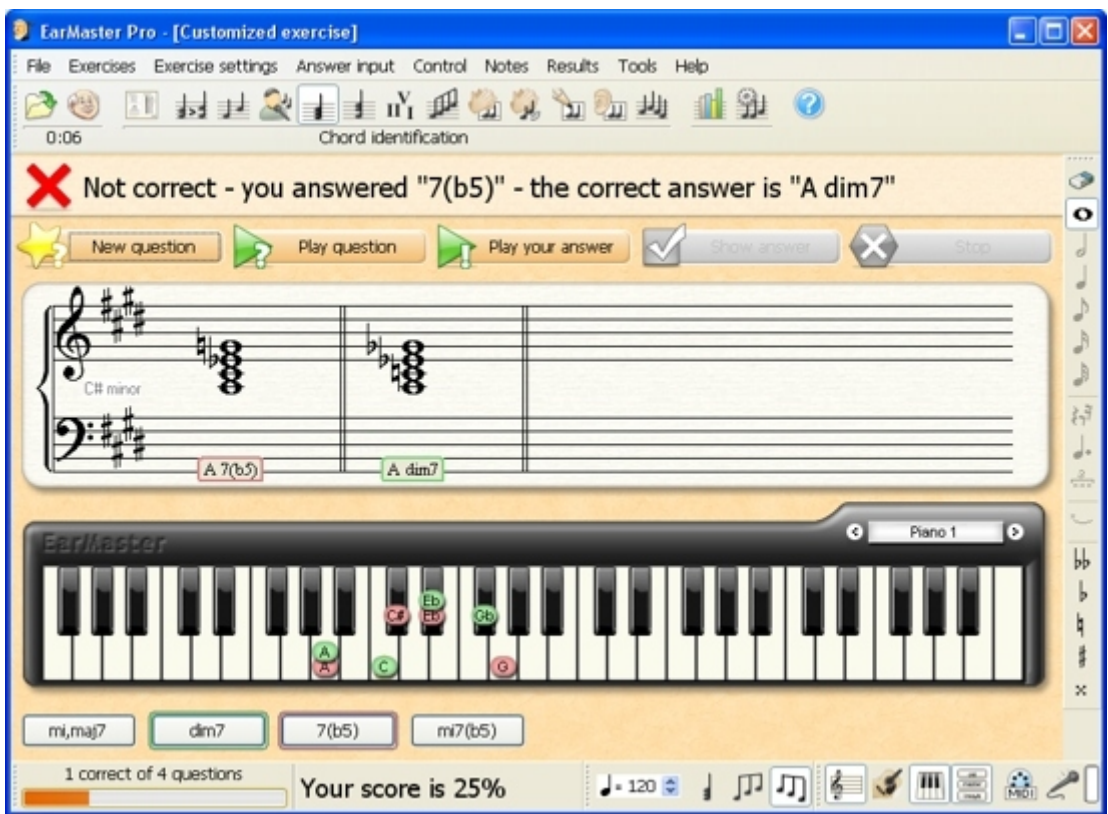
centres on getting to know the major chord, while you will be asked to separate 7(#5), 7(b5) Maj7(#5), Maj7(#11), mi,maj7 and mi,maj7(b5) in lesson 8.

While using the program you can keep track of the number of correct answers, in numbers and percent.

The versatility of the program really stands out in the **customized** exercise area. At this level, the user can do any kind of exercise, do his or her own scales, chords etc. and as mentioned before, it does not take long before ones competitiveness sets in and you want to be as correct as possible.

The program not only offers a wide range of opportunities for configuring exercises but also presents different ways of answering the questions. Answer inputs can be given by:

- entering tones into a staff
- entering tones into a screenshot of a string instrument (bass, guitar, cello etc)
- entering tones into an on screen piano
- entering tones on a MIDI-keyboard
- multiple choice buttons
- singing or clapping through a microphone



The combination of an on screen staff and piano and data entry using a MIDI-keyboard is convincing and a great overview for the user. The coupling between the staff and piano becomes apparent for the student very quickly and that ability will benefit the student in other musical contexts.

**D**uring spring I have tried EarMaster with a group of students that were not particularly strong in music theory or ear training, and the reaction has been very positive. The intuitive and very accessible user interface makes it easier for the students to start their exercises quickly and the competitive element in the program, where a student can see if he or she was right or wrong, maintains their concentration throughout the exercises.

Furthermore, the many possibilities for customization is a great tool for the teacher in teaching hardcore theory within the fields of intervals, chord inversions and rhythm.

Whether some students will find it boring in the long run is hard to determine, but several students have pointed out that working individually, and might I add, differentiated, has taught them a lot. The ear training capabilities also provides a good groundwork for the new written exam requirements.

It should be added that the installation of EarMaster 5 was very easy and without any problems and the program comes with an easy to read manual.

The fact that students can choose or be given exercises that challenge them on their specific level is a great feature - especially for the weaker students.

EarMaster proves to be a well thought out, logically constructed program with endless possibilities for solving and adding exercises at all levels. It seems to me that those students, who find basic music theory hard and tedious, will find it more fun and interesting by using the program.

In addition to the above praise for the program, it is important to mention that there are two versions of EarMaster 5: **EarMaster Pro 5**, which is the one reviewed here, and **EarMaster School 5**. The main difference is that the school version has a wider variety of possibilities of tailoring exercises for your students. EarMaster School 5 can also run on a network where the students can be set up as users grouped in classes.

This enables the teacher to see all the student's results, when they have finished the day's or week's exercises.

Additionally, it is possible to export assignments via e-mail to the student's home computer, whereupon the student solves the exercises and sends the results back to the teacher's computer.

As I understand it, 110 classes are reserved for A-level musical students giving 11 class hours to correct assignments per student at my school. With that in mind a scenario, where the teacher sends out (differentiated) home assignments to the students and gets them back already "corrected" is a good solution, when it comes to basic music theory. As mentioned, I have not had the opportunity to test the school version, although I would very much like to and I hereby recommend others to try it out for themselves.

Last, but not least, I should mention that you can log on to [www.earmaster.com](http://www.earmaster.com) and download a three week trial version.

