Write a short (approximately 1 page) description of the worst user interface you have used and what is wrong with it. How could it have been made better? Why do you think it turned out the way it did?

One of the worst user interfaces that I have used is MainStage 3, which is a music application designed for manipulating sound effects on multiple instruments. The main design fault in this application is that it is not intuitive for novice users. Since there are many initial features to set up and many features that can be customized, there is a large number of inherent layers to this application. This adds to the complexity of navigating through the main window.
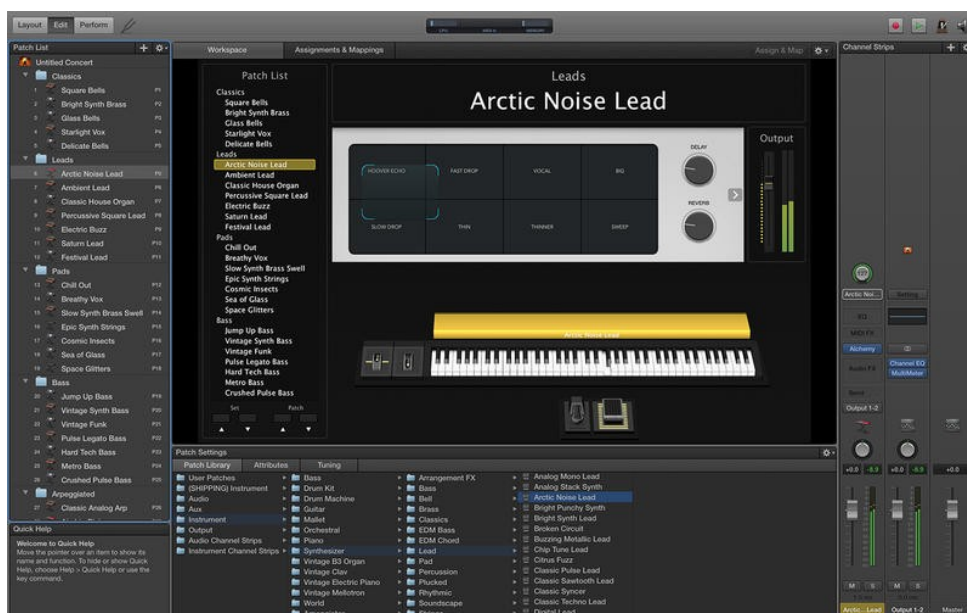

Figure 1: MainStage 3 main window

Two of the main design principles that this application lacks are visibility and constraints. Since there are such a large number of functions and features available to the users, it is not obvious how a user should begin when the application is initially opened. Additionally, because each effect is highly customizable, there are very few restraints placed on the user.

I think MainStage 3 turned out the way it did because it was intended for use by professional musicians. In the hands of an expert user, this application is a very powerful tool. However, in the hands of a novice, there is much room for misuse.