

Lexicon Lambda Desktop Recording Studio | £200

Lambda bridges the gap between the Omega and Alpha boxes. **Jono Buchanan** gets buss-powered...



ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?

It's a USB desktop recording studio for Mac and PC with bundled reverb plug-in

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Easy to set up and use
- 2 Clean sound
- 3 Excellent reverb plug-in

We've all heard of Lexicon. Having produced reverb units which redefine the

term 'industry-standard' for the past 30 years, it's probably fair to say that an overwhelming majority of records have been touched by their ambiances ever since. However, reverb units aren't the only items in Lexicon's product range.

A couple of years ago, they jumped headlong into the desktop studio market-place with the Omega, a wedge-

shaped box with eight inputs shared between mic, line and instrument sources, and bundled it with a copy of Cubase LE and their Pantheon reverb plug-in. Next came the Alpha, a stripped-down version of the same concept at a budget price.

Now here's the Lambda, which sits comfortably between its brothers in terms of spec and price but enters a market more crowded than ever before. Can it do enough to fight with its rivals for shelf space?

Plug and play

Lambda couldn't be easier to install. For Mac users with an operating system of 10.2.8 or newer you just need to hook the Lambda up to your computer via USB and you're off. For PC users, a simple driver installation process brings you to the same point. The installer CD also includes the bundled software, from which Cubase LE and Pantheon can be installed separately. Thereafter, it really is plug and play.

Lambda provides five inputs – two dedicated mic inputs, stereo line ins and a dedicated 'instrument' input. The latter of these is found on the front panel and borrows Line Input One's gain control. Otherwise, both mic and line levels have dedicated controls on the front, with phantom power provided at 48V via a real-panel switch for the mic inputs (with a status LED at the front).

Additionally, you get a pair of inserts on the rear panel, so that you can bring any outboard gear you desire to the party as well. This is a smart move – despite offering a complete recording solution in their own right, Lexicon have been sensible enough to realise that people aren't going to throw all their other gear away because of this.

Elsewhere on the back panel you'll also find MIDI In and Out, which is good news for those whose studios are

An extra 'A' and we'd be reviewing a hot latino dance instead...



built around a central master keyboard. Gone from the spec of the Omega is the S/PDIF I/O. For many, this won't matter too much, as the digital converters onboard leave you with a clean sound, which may not need to leave the DAW domain before the mastering stage but, if you're outside that camp, this may be an important consideration.

Recording and monitoring

Latency-free monitoring is promised and delivered via the Monitor mix dial on the front panel. This lets you set a balance between a recording and playback level so that (for example) headphone levels can easily be set during performance.

A front-panel button also allows you to decide whether monitoring takes place in mono or stereo, which is useful if you're recording mono sources. With the button depressed, the monitor signal is summed to both sides of the headphones, whereas a signal recorded via mic input one will be heard only on the left if stereo monitoring is selected. In use, this all leads to a clean, unfussy recording process.



Fancy a Lexicon reverb bundled, gratis? Course you do!

include a bundled software plug-in with the Lambda, but it's very welcome nevertheless. The Pantheon is a sophisticated affair, with the 'reverb type' the starting point for any new program. There are six of these – Hall,

Echo and the reverb's EQ settings. Within each reverb type, a generous range of presets are offered as starting points and any tweaks you make can be stored alongside programs you create completely from scratch. One source

of frustration is that Pantheon is only provided as a VST plug-in. We're so used to plug-ins being supplied in multi-format these

days that we're perhaps a little spoiled, but an AU version would be welcome.

Hey goodlookin'

Omega arrived into a busy market place, but for Lambda it's positively bustling. I suspect Lexicon might have enough to see off most of the competition: the bundled software turns this into a complete and attractive package. You may be deterred by the absence of digital I/O, but it's an understandable sacrifice to bring the price down, and as long as you don't need any more inputs/outputs this could be the box for you. **FM**

Omega arrived into a busy market place, but for Lambda it's bustling

The microphone preamps are beautifully clean and warm, as you'd expect, and the front-panel monitoring is clear and useful too, particularly for recording purposes.

Reverb

With Lexicon's pedigree in this area, it shouldn't come as a surprise that they

Chamber, Room, Plate, Ambience and Custom. Thereafter, you can tweak a number of parameters via the interface's knobs and sliders to tailor any sound to your requirements. The options are comprehensive, with the main sliders offering edits to Pre-Delay, Room Size, Mix and Level, among others, with separate sections controlling Density,

Lexicon's Desktop Product Range

Omega arrived on the scene in 2004 and is still available as Lambda's big brother, offering increased I/O spec in the form of four line inputs, and S/PDIF connections too.

Omega is also bundled with Cubase LE and Pantheon, so it's a similar package and it still appeals to those who need more routing flexibility.

At the bottom of the range is the Alpha. This is a slim, table-top interface with two ins and two outs, the former assignable

either as a mic and instrument combination, or as a stereo pair of line ins. Again, on board

monitoring is provided, as are the bundled software programs.

There's certainly scope for this range to grow further as well, as the immediacy of these products, coupled with their clean sound, equates to potential mass appeal, despite the strength of the competition.



FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD	■■■■■
VALUE	■■■■■
EASE OF USE	■■■■■
VERSATILITY	■■■■■
RESULTS	■■■■■

Lexicon's Lambda is strong and represents a very attractive option, despite stiff competition

SPECS

Bundled software: Cubase LE, Pantheon VST Reverb Plug-in

Microphone Inputs: Two female XLR

Phantom Power: +48 Volt
Gain: +44 dBu

Frequency Response: +0, -0.5dB 20Hz – 20kHz

Insert Inputs: 2 x 1/4" TRS

Line Inputs: 2 x 1/4" TRS balanced or unbalanced

Frequency Response: +0, -0.5dB 20Hz – 20kHz

Instrument Input: 1 x 1/4" mono jack

Maximum Input Level: +8.5dBu

Frequency Response: +0, -1dB 20Hz – 20kHz

Line Outputs: 2 x 1/4" TRS balanced or unbalanced

MIDI Interface: 5-pin DIN connectors for MIDI In and MIDI Out

Sample Rate: 44.1kHz or 48kHz (determined by computer application)

Sample Resolution: 16- or 24-bit

Power Requirements: USB powered

Dimensions: 165 x 170 x 87mm

Weight: 0.87kg

ALTERNATIVES



Focusrite Saffire LE
£229

Saffire is buss-powered too, via a FireWire port. It's also bundled with a plug-in suite, and boasts six inputs and eight outs **focusrite.com**



M-Audio Fast Track Pro
£159

Another buss-powered USB device with four ins and outs, plus digital I/O. The successful collaboration between M-Audio and Digidesign (which spawned M-Powered Pro Tools) has certainly made M-Audio's range of interfaces must-try products **m-audio.com**