

PreSonus DigiMax FS | £589

Running out of ins and outs on the digital desk or DAW? PreSonus invites you to expand with the DigiMax FS, reports **Karl Foster**

WHAT IS IT?

8-channel mic preamp.

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

1 Dual XLR/TRS analogue ins
2 Inserts on each channel
3 Optical I/O

SPECS

Mic preamp: XLR balanced

Frequency response: 20Hz-40kHz (+0, -0.5dB)

S/N ratio: >101dB

Common mode rejection ratio: >55dB

Gain control range: 0dB-55dB (+/-1dB)

Instrument input

Frequency response: 20Hz-60kHz (+0, -0.5dB)

S/N ratio: >101dB

Gain control range: -12dB to +10dB (+/-1dB)

Digital audio

ADC dynamic range: 107dB

DAC dynamic range: 110dB

Bit depth: 24

Reference level for 0dBFS: +18dBu

Project studio builders will typically kit themselves out with enough audio ins and outs to cater for their own

needs. Then friends get wind of the rig and, sniffing a money-saving opportunity, attempt to blag some free recording for their bands. "Sure," you say as they ply you with booze, but when the sauce wears off you realise that they've got more audio sources than you have inputs by which to record them. A drum kit will occupy four at the very least, then there's the bass, guitar, vocal mic and whatever else – suddenly, the session starts to look complicated.

Alternatively, in a spending frenzy you've lashed out on hardware tone generators and your mixing desk or audio interface starts to look thin on ins. In either scenario, you could deploy a sub-mixer or buy a bigger desk, but PreSonus has a new gadget that could present a much more elegant solution.

Elegantly sturdy

The DigiMax FS is an 8-channel mic preamp sporting balanced line/mic ins via TRS or XLR, each with its own discrete amp, rotary trim control and clip indicator. At rear, we've eight

quarter-inch outs, another eight direct outs for routing signals to a backup device, plus an insert jack for each channel. There are also optical ins and outs (ADAT, 24-bit, 96kHz), two for channels 1-4 and two for 5-8, plus BNC ins and outs for wordclock, along with a terminate switch, should you want to chain multiple devices that require wordclock sync.

This is not an A/D converter for your computer, so there's no USB or FireWire port, but an expander that adds channels to a digital console and is designed to complement PreSonus' own FireStudio, or third-party, lightpipe-equipped systems from DigiDesign, RME, Yamaha, Alesis, Mackie and more.

Build-wise, the FS is a sturdy 19-inch rack job – even the mains connector has a knurled knob so that the power cable from the supplied 18V trailing transformer won't fall out.

Once rigged, it provides an extra eight analogue ins, eight analogue or digital outs, another eight direct analogue outs mirroring the ins, and eight send/returns.

If using optical, the FS can be used as a wordclock slave or master, with internal clock settings of 44.1, 48, 88.2 or 96kHz. If you prefer to keep

audio and clock data separate, the BNCs are there, as is a front-panel switch to toggle between ADAT and BNC sync.

What's really exciting about the FS is the array of inserts at rear. Eight quarter-inch TRS sockets enable you to send, via ring, to such external signal processors as compressors, EQs, gates and effects, and route them back before the output stage, via tip, which adds considerably to the unit's flexibility. Returns 1 and 2 also double as line level inputs for those situations when you're not using inputs 1 and 2 for instruments or mics.

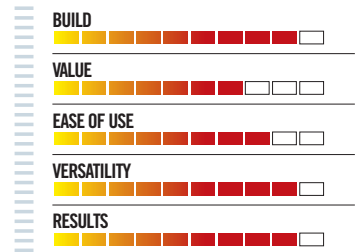
Functional

If you're in need of extra channels, you could plump for an extra mixer, although it's doubtful you'd get digital connectivity at under £600, and there's an issue of space – the FS occupies a mere 1U in your rack.

Looking at similar multi-channel preamps on the market, few compete in terms of signal-routing options and the FS is very competitive on price. If PreSonus was to build in a data port for computer hook-up, the unit would be monstrously desirable.

As it is, the FS performs a valuable function at a reasonable cost and makes notions of full band recording or project studio expansion all the more realistic and affordable. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



If you need extra digital mixer channels, the DigiMax FS provides a cost-effective, robust solution.

