

Yamaha n12 Digital Mixing Desk | £945

Integration to the nth degree – *Trevor Curwen* turns his computer into a comprehensive digital studio with the new Yamaha n12 mixer

WHAT IS IT?

Yamaha mixing desk with a FireWire connection for audio transfer and integrated DAW control

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Comprehensive monitoring section
- 2 Quality and clean sounding mic preamps
- 3 Onboard DAW control

To think of Yamaha's n12 as just another mixer would be doing it a disservice. Yes, it's a digital mixer but it's one

that Yamaha have stuffed full of features that allow it to be connected to a computer running Cubase to form a formidable self-contained recording and mixing studio. The n12 combines the hardware and software into an integrated whole bigger than the sum of its two components.

As well as a mixer facility that includes 12 input channels, reverb and a comprehensive master section with foldback options, talkback and

connections for several sets of speakers, the n12 functions as a 16 channel in and out FireWire audio interface. It also offers physical remote control of Cubase or whatever other DAW you may be using.

Channel hopper

The input section of the n12 is composed of 8 mono channels with mic inputs and a further two stereo channels designed for line level sources. Each of the mono channels has a mic input, line input and an insert point. The line input on channel 8 can be switched to Hi-Z mode to

take the signal directly from an electric guitar or bass. Facilities on each channel are comprehensive and include a pad switch, hi-pass filter and phase reverse. Phantom power is switched universally for channels 1 to 4 and 5 to 8. Compression is available on each channel courtesy of Yamaha's Sweet Spot Morphing compressor that has five preset compression types designed for various common tasks.

The five presets are selected via a rotary knob that 'morphs' between the types for some hybrid variations in the in-between positions. A Drive knob turns up the amount of compression applied. Channel EQ takes the form of high and low shelving controls and a swept mid-range.

Each channel has a dedicated reverb send plus an auxiliary send for either foldback or to access external effects and the channel is finished off with pan control, solo switch, channel on switch, a smooth 100mm fader and some routing switches.

At the right hand side of the unit are several clearly laid out panels that relate to all other functions. There are two headphone sockets – one fed from the aux send for musician's foldback, the other a control room feed. Up to three sets of stereo speakers or a 5.1



surround sound monitor setup can also be connected and these are selected by a set of buttons from a dedicated Control Room panel that also has talkback (the desk has an inbuilt mic), Dim and Mute switches, Level knobs and buttons to select what source is being monitored.

DAW remote control is carried out from another dedicated panel with transport controls, track selection and other features. It is from here that you can control Cubase but control of other DAWs is also supported.

In the mix

As a conventional mixer, (disregarding computer connections for the moment), the n12 is very easy to use. Anyone familiar with an analogue mixing desk will get to grips with the channel layout and be mixing direct to stereo shortly after removing it from its packaging. Sonically, the first thing to note about the n12 is the mic pres, which seem to be of high quality with plenty of clarity and very little noise.

The compressor is a most useful tool with a range of everyday applications covered by the five settings, allowing users to quickly choose the appropriate type and amount of compression and dial in the

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required sound with little fuss. The EQ is workmanlike – useful for a bit of sweetening or carving out some unwanted mid-range, while the reverb, a choice of Hall, Room and Plate with adjustable reverb time, is basic but convenient for adding a touch of ambience as needed.

FireWire connection made and the included driver software installed, the n12 becomes a 16-in, 16-out audio interface for any software. Channel outputs are recorded individually or collectively via a stereo recording buss accessed by the 'Rec' routing switch on each channel. The FireWire connection is not just for recording but also for mixing as individual DAW tracks can be routed back through the mixer channels and take advantage of the mixer facilities.

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Working With Cubase AI

The n12 is designed to integrate with Steinberg's Cubase and the AI4 version of the software comes packaged with the hardware. AI4 is a compact version of the audio and MIDI sequencer based on the same technology as Cubase 4.

What you get bundled with AI4 are 48 audio tracks and up to 64 MIDI tracks, the HALion One software sample player with selected Motif sounds, 25 VST effects that include 15 VST3 plug-ins plus 20 MIDI styles and 480 drum loops.

When hooked up and communicating with a computer running Cubase, a 'Cubase Ready' LED illuminates on the n12.

The special integration with the n12 puts in place automatic setup of input and output routing, driver selection and remote configuration. As well as a set of transport controls you get control over the Cubase metronome plus control of Dry/Wet monitoring with or without VST effect plug-ins. There's also 'Work' modes for flexible switching of routing within Cubase with one button push.



working. It is, however, Cubase users that will benefit the most from it as the integration of hardware and software is

seamless. Yamaha's purchase of Steinberg sees it's first major payoff, with plenty more to come. Anyone buying an n12 and its bundled Cubase AI to pair with their computer will be able to instantly create an extremely practical recording system with a user-friendly hardware front-end. **FM**

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Integration innovation

The n12 is very versatile product that can be equally put to use in a live situation or as a front-end for any recording software. There is an immediacy to the hands-on analogue style control surface that has great benefits for the speed and ease of

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD [Progress bar: 10/10]

VALUE [Progress bar: 8/10]

EASE OF USE [Progress bar: 9/10]

VERSATILITY [Progress bar: 10/10]

RESULTS [Progress bar: 10/10]

The ideal hardware front-end for Cubase users and a top of the range hardware mixer

SPECS

Sampling Frequency: 44.1, 48, 88.2, 96kHz

Connections:

Ins: 8x XLR balanced mic inputs, 8x 1/4" jack balanced line input, 8x 1/4" TRS jack insert points, RCA phono jacks L/R x 2 (channels 9–12), 1/4" jack balanced line inputs L(mono)/R x 2 (channels 9–12), 2 Track input input RCA phono jacks L/R

Outs: Stereo out 1/4" TRS jacks L/R, Stereo out RCA phono jacks L/R, Control Room out A/B/C 1/4" TRS jacks L/R, Aux out L/R 1/4" TRS jacks, 1/4" stereo headphone jacks x 2, MIDI In, MIDI Out, IEEE FireWire sockets x 2, 1/4" footswitch jack

Dimensions:

515 x 561 x 146mm

Weight:

14kg

ALTERNATIVES



Mackie Onyx 1220 + FireWire card

£500

A 12-Channel analogue mixer with a 24/96 FireWire I/O Option

mackie.com



M-Audio NRV10

£449

Combines a 10 x 10 FireWire digital audio interface with an 8 x 2 analogue mixer

maudio.co.uk



Presonus StudioLive 16.4.2

£TBA

A sixteen-channel digital mixer with built-in 22x18 FireWire recording and playback engine

presonus.com