

Audient MiCO | £391

While Audient's consoles might be beyond your financial reach, their new preamp offers serious consolation. *Jono Buchanan* plugs in...

WHAT IS IT?

A two-channel analogue/digital preamp from Audient aimed at bringing pro audio quality within reach of the masses

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Formerly expensive Audient mic pres at a never-before-seen price
- 2 HMX harmonic variation provides wonderful sonic colour
- 3 Quality analogue-to-digital conversion with switchable sample rates

In these days when DAW recording rules the roost, it's becoming increasingly common to find even the most 'digital' studios looking for a great analogue-to-digital conversion solution for sound sources that are still recorded with microphones. Similarly, high-quality preamps are all the rage for ensuring that recorded elements sound as though they've been passed through a high-spec mixing console, even if a studio has no need for such a device. Into this brave digital present step British audio firm Audient, who command huge respect in the industry for their high-quality preamps, compressors, EQs and, most of all, mixing consoles. Much of Audient's technology sits beyond the financial reach of project studio owners but that's set to change with the MiCO, Audient's new dual-channel mic pre, which handles all analogue-to-digital conversion too. Interested? Read on.

MiCO vitals

The MiCO is a half-rack unit offering controls for its twin channels on the front panel and the majority of its connectors round the back. Starting at the rear, you'll find a pair of XLR/line inputs, with direct XLR analogue outputs offered for each channel next

to these. In terms of digital connectivity there's an AES/EBU port, plus additional ones for S/PDIF and TOSLink. A word-clock connector sits next to the S/PDIF output, and next to this are a series of dipswitches which are responsible for setting the MiCO's sample rate and word-clock status. Additionally, a 1/4" 'direct input' jack socket is located on the front panel so that instruments can be connected

directly without recourse to the back panel. On that note, in some ways it's great to have compact gear, and the MiCO is wonderfully portable in its current form (it fits comfortably in my laptop bag) – but I, for one, have never been a fan of half-rack-sized gear. For a start, you need two units of this size to be able to rack-mount, to say nothing of the fact that there is nearly always an ergonomic downside. For me, the rear-mounted sample rate switches represent that downside here, as these provide a function to which there's a good chance you'll regularly want access. A longer, single-rack unit with front-mounted sample rate switches would be more practical, in my opinion.

Sound, glorious sound

Design issues aside, much greater importance should be attributed to the sound produced by the MiCO, and here

Audient – A Little Overview

In case Audient is an unfamiliar name, their flagship products are their mixing consoles, which are growing in reputation and popularity but which sell at prices that target them squarely at pro recording studios. The ASP8024 is a high-end in-line mixing console, while the ACS8024 provides a similar

recording spec but combines it with an integrated DAW control surface. Elsewhere, Audient's range contains the Black Series of signal processors with separate mic pre, compressor/limiter, EQ and ADC conversion units which can be racked to produce the ultimate recording channel strip. Alongside

these you'll find the Sumo summing amplifier, the Centro master section and a separate live console called Aztec. Perhaps most excitingly, though, there's the brand new Zen, Audient's new analogue desk with a hardware brain. This rather tasty-looking box combines an analogue recording console with fully integrated DAW support for direct-to-computer recording and mixing at a price that brings it within striking distance of the bank accounts of a whole new range of users.



