Novation Audiohub 2x4 | £159

Novation's Audiohub combines audio interface and USB hub in a neat compact package. ***Jon Musgrave*** gets buss powered

WHAT IS IT?

Compact two in/four out USB interface with integrated USB hub

CONTACT

Who: Novation
Tel: 01494 462246
Web: www.novationmusic.com

HIGHLIGHTS

1 Compact with nice layout
2 Solid construction
3 Convenient USB ports

SPECS

System requirements:
Mac: OS X 10.9, 10.8
PC: Windows 8.1, 8, 7
iOS: 7, 6

Hardware spec:
Inputs: 2 unbalanced RCA
Outputs: 4 unbalanced RCA, 2 balanced TRS jack, 1 headphone TRS jack
USB connections: 3 type A sockets, 1 type B socket.
Input gain: -0.7dB or +9.1dB
Output volume range: 69.4dB

Dimensions:
134x150x51mm

Weight:
0.6kg

Novation have dabbled with audio interfacing options in the past with XioSynth. Similarly, Audiohub 2x4 is a multi-faceted device, however this time it combines audio interface and USB hub, delivering integrated connectivity for ancillary USB devices such as NI's Maschine and Novation's Launchpad or regular USB controller keyboards.

Designed primarily for electronic producers and DJs (there's no mic or instrument input for example), main connectivity is two in/four out (all on unbalanced RCAs), with outputs 1 and 2 also available on balanced TRS jacks. There's one front panel headphone output switchable between each of the two stereo outputs, and three output level knobs for the headphones and the two output pairs.

Out of the box the unit is very compact and feels solid. Its black colour scheme is livened up with lime green labelling and the included lime green USB lead. Two top panel green LEDs indicate that 'hub' or 'audio' functions are active and there are also three individual 'active' LEDs indicating USB socket usage. Three further red/green two-tone LEDs indicate levels for the input pair and both output pairs.

Audiohub works as a buss-powered audio interface, although they advise using the included PSU anyway. To use the hub facility you definitely need to have the PSU hooked up. With regard to audio drivers, on Mac, Audiohub works with the standard OS X USB drivers, so you simply plug up and select Audiohub in the System Preferences, with further settings in the Audio MIDI Set-up. On Windows, for low latency use you'll need to grab the relevant ASIO driver from the Novation site. For both platforms Ableton Live Lite 9 and a 1GB Loopmasters Excite Pack 2014 come packaged. Audiohub also works with iPad via Apple's Camera Connection Kit and supports iOS 6 and 7.

Loud and clear

Audiohub 2x4 includes Focusrite internal electronics design. This means loud main and headphone outputs, which is a bonus in a performance or non-studio environment. Input gain on the other hand is kept simple with two settings (low and high) with roughly 10dB difference between them. With no mic or instrument inputs, this input limitation is less of an issue and keeps things simple in the field. The final front panel button is the Input Monitor, for zero latency monitoring. This routes the inputs in stereo to outputs 1 and 2, and includes all three connections (headphones, RCA and balanced jack). The input signal is blended with a slightly dimmed output signal to help avoid monitoring overloads. Outputs 3 and 4 do not carry the input monitor signal, so with suitable routing on your DAW, you can set up one cue mix output and one main output. The Input Monitor button is illuminated when active, which helps avoid confusion in dark conditions. I think they should have applied the same trick to the input level and headphone output buttons.

Ableton Live Lite 9 offers a slimmed down version of Live 9 with a slightly discounted upgrade path to both the Standard and Suite packages. Loopmasters Excite Pack 2014 includes taster packs from over 20 of their titles across styles ranging from House, EDM and Dubstep to Hip-Hop, Latin and Blues.

Audiohub 2x4 offers a neat solution for electronic producers, DJs and performers, delivering on its remit with a stylish, compact and sonically well-designed unit. It's a shame they couldn't stretch to a mic/instrument input as this would broaden its appeal considerably, but Focusrite have plenty of options to choose from. FM

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

Neatly combines analogue I/O and USB hub, but the lack of a mic/instrument input may deter some.