WHAT IS IT?

An analogue mixer with a USB connection for allowing you to easily

Tel: +44 (0) 1908 366700 Web: www.yamaha.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 A good-sounding,
- 2 Onboard USB for simple connection to computer
- 3 Easy as pie (not Pi, which is more complex...)



Yamaha MW12 | £250

Want an analogue mixer as a front-end to computer recording? Yamaha might have just the thing, as Jono Buchanan is set to discover...

> filling useful space, heating rooms and other important things, right? When the DAW revolution began and people started realising they could do their recording, synthesis, sampling and effects processing directly in their computers, big clumsy desks were among the first items to be packaged up and either sold or dumped in the nearest storage container. And vet an appetite for

ixing desks: useful for

propping doors open,

There are still phenomenal synths out there that don't exist in software form. And what if you want to submix four instruments at once and your channel strip, lovely though it may be, only has one mic pre? Welcome to the MW12, as straightforward an analogue mixer as you're ever likely to use. Twelve channels of input, EQ, the lot. And the twist? A sneaky USB port round the back, pre-loaded onboard drivers and a bundled copy of Cubase LE for PC and Mac, all of which means you can be using this desk to directly feed audio into your computer within ten minutes of it being unpacked.

Channel strip

The MW12's channel strip is straightforward and familiar. At the top, you'll find a Gain control with peak light. Also at this stage, an 80Hz highpass filter option allows you to lose any inherent noise from, for example, mic proximity or electrical interference. Under this, a 3-band EQ is provided, with fixed base frequencies for these at 10kHz, 2.5kHz and 100Hz and up to +/-15dB of cut/boost available.

Two auxiliaries also grace each channel, as does a channel On button, a PFL solo switch, a Routing button to allow signals to reach groups 1-2, plus pan and level controls.

The fader is a 70mm affair with a smooth action, which is by no means a given for a console of this size and price. Well done Yamaha

The EQ too, is useful. I suppose the only real concession to price is that the mid-range isn't sweepable. Financially, this does make sense, but I still get a little nervous without that control. It's a long way from 100Hz to 10kHz.

Still, the EQ does sound very clean, and as most people will be using this desk primarily as a means to get sound into their computer, I wouldn't have thought that radical EQ work would be called for too often.





Reviews | Yamaha MW12

SPECS

High-pass filter 80kHz 12dB/Octave

Channel EQ: (Ch. INPUT 1-11/12 to St. Out, Group Out, Aux Send, C-R Out, Rec Out)

EQ: ±15dB High: 10kHz (shelving) Mid: 2.5kHz (peaking) Low: 100Hz (shelving)

Digital I/O USB Audio1.1 44.1/48kHz 16-bit, USB B

Included rack mount ears Dimensions:

322 x 416 x 108mm

ALTERNATIVES

Behringer Xenyx 1204FX

Featuring a very similar feature set to the MW12,

with additional channel

integrated FX system.

inputs. It also features an

this mixer is also available

Weight: 5kg

Connecting people

All connections are made on the back panel (except for the front-mounted headphone port) and here you'll find that channels 1-4 are set up as true XLR mic, 1/4-inch line mono strips. Inputs 5/6 and 7/8 are switchable. either to serve as mono XLR ins, or as stereo line ins, with channels 9/10 and 11/12 fixed as stereo line ins.

Channels 1-4 also feature an insert port, while elsewhere you'll find the two aux send outputs, stereo return, stereo control room outputs, main stereo outs (either via XLR or TRS line jacks), Rec out (to DAT or Minidisk, for example), two-track inputs and outputs for Groups

Cubase LE

The MW12's box proudly states that it contains everything you need to start making music.

This is because, in addition to the mixer itself, a copy of Cubase LE is bundled – great news for anyone starting out, as it means you get hardware and a decent sequencer for a very reasonable price. The program painlessly installs

on either Mac or PC. Indeed, the MW12 itself is so straightforward, a large proportion of the manual details exactly how to record and mix with Cubase LE. All of this is



really impressive - I can see how this package could capture the imagination of techy newbies, or educational establishments the world over who are looking for quality recording equipment on a budget.

And as for the 'everything you need' tag? Well, you might just want to run out and pick up a cheap mic or two...

The simplicity of the MW12 leaves you wondering why more technology isn't made like this

1-2. The power inlet and all-important USB connector complete the puzzle.

As with everything on this little mixer, the clear layout and unfussy approach means you'll be connected and up and running in no time. There's onboard phantom power too, though be warned there's just a single switch for this for all channels. Sensibly, it's been mounted on the front, so you're not reaching round the back for access.

In use

Even with dependable protocols such as USB and FireWire now the established hubs of our studio, we still expect to have to install drivers for most gear we choose to hook up to our main DAW. Not so with the MW12. It comes preloaded with drivers for Mac OSX and Windows XP, so setup really is as simple as connecting a USB cable to your computer, and then choosing the appropriate driver from the list that

appears in your sequencer. Thereafter, you can record directly to inputs 1 and 2 and monitor back through a dedicated USB/2-track return. You can then decide whether you want to feed that return back through the stereo buss.

The mic pres offer a perfectly decent sound and the reassuring 'On' lights for each channel allow you to monitor which of your channels are activated at a glance. If the MW12 expands into a range, it would be great if multi-channel recording were available, perhaps via additional groups, as stereo inputs may not be enough.

Nice and simple

The simplicity of the MW12 leaves you wondering why more technology isn't made like this. As soon as you're connected, you can route signals and record with a simple USB connection, dumping all computer audio straight back into the mixer for monitoring.

Accordingly, the MW12 auickly becomes a central studio focal point. exactly as mixers should be. There's scope to develop all kinds of

products based on the MW12, from true multi-channel recording interfaces, to dedicated control surfaces. For £250, you get a proper analogue mixer, which is as happy in the studio as it would be doing live recording/PA, and an integrated direct-to-computer recording tool. There's some stiff competition out there, but this is still great value.

BUILD

FutureMusic VERDICT

EASE OF USI VERSATILITY RESULTS

Good value and great for beginners, analogue mixing is rarely such a modern thinker.



Like the MW12, this is really an analogue mixer with a cheeky USB connection. Only eight channels, but this chap even has some integrated effects

