

Mackie DL1608 iPad Mixer | £959

Alex 'Ears' remotely swipes his way through this small, yet powerful, digital audio engine

WHAT IS IT?

Digital audio mixer engine for iPad, with built-in FX and dynamic processing

CONTACT

Who: Mackie
Web: www.mackie.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Simple intuitive control interface
- 2 Fully packed feature set
- 3 Solid, clutter-free build

It's nearly 25 years since Mackie raised their flag when they introduced the CR1604, setting a precedent for their range of

well-built, value-for-money audio hardware. While many of their offerings may lack some of the features old pros are used to, they're more than good enough for the majority of semi-pro users, and very popular with bands that mix themselves.

The DL1608 brings some slick new technology to the market, adding remote control to an increased set of features. In the box you'll find a slightly boring looking black plastic box, with a row of connectors and gain pots. It feels nicely solid in construction, although

the adaptor tray necessary to accommodate different versions of iPad, makes it feel a little 'plasticy'.

You'll find an iPad-sized quick-start guide in the docking slot, reminding you that this isn't a standalone mixer, however, this reliance on the iPad as a control surface gives the DL a distinct advantage over many low budget mixers – the control surface is a user changeable part so a spare is now possible! Sliding the required iPad into the dock obviously makes it look more interesting and there's a chunky lock to prevent theft.

It was disappointing to see a global phantom power switch. A good compromise would have been to switch

in banks of four. It's also a shame that the input gains are physical pots with no digital recall, giving no remote control or proper use of scene presets for multiple bands. I'll still be using my digital camera to 'note' pot settings between bands, on a digital desk [sigh]. In fairness, though, both of these details keep production costs down, and shouldn't be a problem in most real-world situations.

Power out

The DL1608 comes with an external power brick, which might be annoying to some, but reduces the noise floor. I was surprised to see a lack of integrated soundcard or digital in/out and CA phono input and output. Playback and recording can be achieved when the iPad is docked directly to the DL1608. The manual is pretty clear, but full of weird humour (although not quite as weird as the promo video!).

The Master Fader software can be downloaded free from the iTunes App Store (which is handy if you want to get a feel for it before purchasing). After following the setup guide, when I tried to connect a warning prompt said the DL's firmware needed updating.

The preamps seem fairly good sounding, although a little noisy at



