

Mac PC What is it? Small form-factor control surface  
CONTACT: HHB, 0208 962 5000 WWW.presonus.com

PRICE: £159

# PRESONUS FaderPort

This mini-me mixing surface intrigued us when it was announced, but is it actually worth buying?

## ► SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PC: Windows XP, USB port

Mac: OS X, USB port

## ► TEST SYSTEM

PC: P4 3.2GHz, 1GB RAM, Windows XP

While MIDI control surfaces are nothing new, it's fair to say that they're becoming increasingly specialised. PreSonus's FaderPort, for example, is aimed at the producer who wants hands-on control of their software's mixer but doesn't have the space for a unit such as Behringer's BCF2000 or the Mackie Control Universal. Rather than replicating an entire mixing desk, the FaderPort offers just a single fader and a handful of controls.

The fader itself is OK – it's a standard 100mm affair that's satisfyingly sensitive – but it's pretty light and 'plastic' and doesn't really reflect the FaderPort's asking price. But while a more luxurious fader would have been nice, the construction quality of the unit is by no means poor, and the fact that it's fairly light means it scores brownie points for portability.

One cool touch is that the fader is motorised: it glides between different levels as you change tracks. However, while the FaderPort can be powered by USB, you have to use the bundled PSU if you want the motorised fader functionality. This means mobile users will probably opt to do without it, but at least the option's there.

## ► ALTERNATIVELY

Frontier Design Group AlphaTrack  
N/A >> N/A >> \$249

Another one-fader control surface, this will be available very soon, so look out for our review

Frontier Design Group Tranzport  
cm89 >> 9/10 >> £200

Not quite for the same purpose, but just the ticket if you want wireless control of your DAW

## Inte-grate fun

At the time of writing, the PreSonus website offers downloads and instructions for using the FaderPort with Cubase, Nuendo and Sonar on PC, Logic Pro (version 6 and later) on Mac and Pro Tools on both platforms. It's not yet compatible with Logic Express, GarageBand, Final Cut and Soundtrack, though PreSonus are working to rectify this situation.

Mac Cubase LE support should be

available by the time you read this, while Digital Performer compatibility is currently at the beta stage.

Reason and Live are currently unsupported, though PreSonus tell us that they're currently investigating the possibility of developing a plug-in that would bring FaderPort compatibility to the latter. However, Reason users should take note that support for their app is unlikely to be forthcoming.



◀ It's like a tiny slice of a real mixing console! Just don't get any ideas about combining scores of 'em to make a 'super mixer'

## Fade to grey

As well as the fader, the interface features a pan pot (which is, thankfully, an endless rotary encoder), transport controls and a selection of other buttons for navigating your mixer, muting and soloing tracks and changing the fader's mode. The buttons are good enough – a little stiff but extremely sturdy-feeling – and they light up pleasingly when pressed. The Fader Mode controls enable you to select read and write automation options, which means you can record precise fader automation without having to resort to using the mouse.

FaderPort doesn't require any kind of installation – just plug in the USB cable and you're good to go. The device starts sending MIDI information right off the bat, and while there's no way to customise its output, the manual and website feature patches and instructions for setting it up with the popular DAWs (see *Inte-grate fun* boxout). We tried it with Cubase 4 first, and after following the painless installation and configuration walkthrough in the manual, we found the integration to be pretty perfect.

FaderPort is a well-conceived and executed piece of hardware, but it

seems a little expensive for what is basically a luxury, and it will soon face stiff competition from Frontier Design Group's AlphaTrack. If you simply must have hardware control of your DAW and don't mind splashing out, though, it's a worthy purchase. **cm**

## VERDICT

### FOR

- + Small form factor
- + Well designed
- + Great integration so far
- + Motorised fader...

### AGAINST

- ...That needs its own power
- Fairly expensive for what it is
- Not customisable

FaderPort works well enough, but smart cookies will wait and see how it compares to Frontier's AlphaTrack before splashing out

## RATING

