

PreSonus FireStudio Mobile | £269

Mobile interfaces are popular, yet many sacrifice quality. *Jono Buchanan* finds a middle ground...

WHAT IS IT?

A portable interface with the same circuit quality as FireStudio

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Tons of I/O for a compact interface
- 2 Solid construction
- 3 Great sounding pres

SPECS

System Requirements

PC: Windows XP SP2 or Vista, 1.6GHz processor, 1GB RAM

Mac: OS X 10.4.11 or Mac OS X 10.5.2 or later (10.6 supported in 3.4.2 driver)

Microphone Preamp: XLR Balanced

Phantom Power: +48V

Instrument Input: ¼" TRS

Main Outputs: ¼" TRS

Impedance Balanced, Output Impedance: 51 ; Headphone Output

Digital Audio

FireWire 400Mbps

Bit Depth: 24-bits

Internal Sample Frequency

Selections: 44.1, 48, 88.2, 96kHz

Dimensions:

140 x 140 x 45mm

Weight:

2kg

PreSonus' FireStudio interface has become a popular choice for many a studio, as it combines a generous 26

channels of I/O with FireWire operation, 24-bit/96kHz quality, digital options, software control and even a 4GB bundle of instruments and audio loops to get going. For some users, this has proved to be an over-specified system, so PreSonus have responded with FireStudio Mobile, a super-compact interface that manages to pack a serious amount of its big brother's features into a portable package.

I/O to go

The first thing that strikes you about this interface is that it's built like a tank – with a rugged, brushed aluminium finish which immediately gives the reassuring impression the box won't be bullied by the inside of your laptop bag.

The front panel offers a pair of line/XLR inputs, with gain controls for each channel, a headphone port and level dial and master output knob. Round the back, you'll find twin FireWire 400 ports (new MacBook users take note of this compatibility issue), while further I/O is

supplied in the form of six additional ¼" inputs and a stereo pair for the Main Outs. By now space has almost run out so PreSonus have neatly provided a combined solution for the interface's S/PDIF and MIDI capabilities – a breakout cable.

In and Out ports are provided for both types of data. Including the headphone output, this therefore equates to 10 inputs and six outputs in total – an impressive number for such a compact device. The interface is bus-powered via its FireWire port (though the box also includes a separate 12V power supply) and features switchable sample rates, with 44.1, 48, 88.2 and 96kHz all offered.

Portable quality

The preamps for inputs 1 and 2 are PreSonus' own XMAX designs, as featured on the FireStudio, which ooze quality. The sound produced is warm without being coloured and much more detailed from that captured from several 'rival' devices of this size. Couple this with JetPLL 'jitter elimination technology', zero-latency monitoring and the afore-mentioned solidity of

construction and what's so pleasing is that this becomes a true 'go anywhere, record anything' interface which should appeal as much to field recordists as it does laptop musicians looking to sling an interface in a bag for gigging or mobile recording, though do bear in mind that for 'outdoor' recordings, the bus-powered interface will eat your battery life for breakfast.

In the unlikely event that you don't have software which you already use for recording, FireStudio Mobile even ships with their own 64-bit DAW called StudioOne, which can be upgraded to StudioOne Pro if you like its approach, which expands the feature set with additional plug-ins, a dedicated Kore soundpack, lots of audio loops and other assorted goodies.

Conclusion

I've seen many portable interfaces pass through my studio but few feature this amount of I/O and mic preamps of this quality. If you're one of the many people looking for a mobile interface for whom those things are the primary interface requirements, FireStudio Mobile is worth your serious consideration. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY



VALUE



EASE OF USE



VERSATILITY



RESULTS



Not the cheapest but one of the highest quality mobile interfaces around.

