

Universal Audio 710 Twin-Finity | £599

UA's latest offering is a hybrid preamp that contains a blend-able tube/transistor signal path. *Dan 'JD73' Goldman* travels from here to Twin-Finity!



WHAT IS IT?

A twin channel, mic/instrument preamp, utilising tube and solid-state signal paths with unique blend control

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Can sound clean or dirty or anywhere in between using the blend control
- 2 Low noise with plenty of gain/headroom available
- 3 Will sit comfortably on a desktop, out and about, or in a rack

There's been steady flow of new Universal Audio products coming through *Future Music* HQ lately. From the DCS

Remote Pre and 2-LA-2 to the upcoming UAD-2 card, UA's design workbench is busy to say the least!

The latest offering from UA is the Model 710 Twin-Finity mic/line/Hi-Z/DI preamp. It not only provides a tube and transistor signal path but also a blend control, allowing the user to move smoothly from 100% transistor signal to a 100% tube signal or any blend of the two in varying amounts. In theory, this pre could be the answer to many people's dreams!

Make no mistake, the 710 looks great and is well laid out. The 2U, half-rack, metal-chassis design, reminds me of my Avalon U5 preamp/DI though the 710 weighs considerably less. The 710 can either sit upon a desktop or is rackable using the included rack-

mounting kit – a nice surprise considering we normally get fleeced for essential extras such as this!

There are three main dials on the front panel that control the two

preamps' input/output and blend between the solid-state/transistor and tube signal paths. On the left is a gain control that raises the amount of gain applied to the input by a not-to-be-sniffed-at +60dBu (for the mic input), or +40dBu (using the line input or front panel Hi-Z jack input/DI). There is a 15dB pad available for high output mic's as well.

Ins 'n' outs

On the right is a level control that acts as a master volume, attenuating the signal sent from the rear panel line out XLR (to your DAW for example). Unfortunately, there is no mic output level XLR on the 710. In the bottom centre of the front panel is the blend dial, which is the key feature of the 710 (more on this important feature later). Moving swiftly on, taking front-panel

Tube versus Solid-State

There are two separate preamps contained within the 710 (summed into one output). The Class-A, high-voltage vacuum tube amplifier utilises a single 12AX7 tube and is based on 'vintage guitar amplifier designs' according to the manual (though most guitar amps have several tubes methinks?)

It's designed to allow precise and smooth control over the amount of even-order harmonic

distortion applied to the signal path. Even-order harmonic distortion is very easy on the ears and can transform the most anaemic of sounds into something altogether more warm and sizzly!

The solid-state transistor preamp in the 710, is designed to be super-quiet, capture fast attack/transients and exhibit very low distortion characteristics in line with the preamps found in

many of UA's other devices (such as the DCS Remote Preamp).

It's what UA call a 'transimpedance design' that feeds current back into the circuit to inhibit noise and distortion and thus, this pre is largely transparent in character until the input gain is pushed. Transparent pres are particularly useful for tracking, when colour is to be added via other pres or outboard at the mix stage.



