

RME Fireface UC | £746



altering timbres when recording. This is a fantastic feature and enables some cool drum, vocal and guitar tricks.

Interface the music

Like all RME interfaces, there is a mixer application (TotalMix) which allows for the most flexible zero latency signal routing on the market with controls for talkback, multiple monitor paths, M/S processing, muting, soloing, level adjustments and mixer setup loading/saving. On top of this is the excellent DigiCheck application that offers a host of flexible and highly professional monitoring tools, from super-accurate peak/RMS metering to phase vector scopes and frequency analysers.

Operating at the lowest latency (48 samples or around 1ms) glitching didn't occur until around 30 plug-ins had been loaded across 16 stereo channels, and at moderate latencies (256 samples and above) the plug-in and track count went well beyond the demands of my most intensive mixes.

I know many engineers who spend countless hours (i.e. lost revenue) trying to iron out compatibility issues with their interfaces. If one was to add up these lost hours, the price difference between the Fireface UC and an alternative (cheaper) product disappears and in fact reverses. I would heartily recommend this unit to anyone looking to buy a non-Firewire interface. **FM**

RME add a USB option to their Fireface family. **Robbie Stamp** thoroughly approves.

WHAT IS IT?

36 channel 192kHz USB 2.0 interface

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Rock solid performance
- 2 Unique pitching feature
- 3 Routing flexibility

SPECS

Interface Type: USB 2.0

Sample Rates: 44.1kHz to 192kHz (24-bit)

Analogue Inputs: 2x XLR/TRS combo mic/line (front), 2x TRS inst/line (front), 4x TRS line (rear)

Analogue Outputs: 6x TRS (rear), 1x TRS (headphones or unbalanced stereo line)

MIDI: 2x In and 2x Out on breakout cable

Digital I/O: ADAT In, ADAT Out, S/PDIF In (RCA), S/PDIF Out (RCA)

Wordclock: In/Out on 2x BNC with 75Ω termination switch

Buffer Size/Latencies: 48 samples (~1ms) up to 8192 samples (~186ms)

Platforms: Windows XP, XP 64, Vista, Vista 64, Windows 7/64 and Mac OS X Intel (10.5 and over)

Dimensions:

218 x 155 x 44mm

Weight:

1.5kg

The Fireface UC is ostensibly the same as the Fireface 400, providing 36 channels of analogue and digital I/O with

only the interface format changed from FireWire to USB 2.0. The analogue inputs are split across the unit with two mic/line and two instrument/line sockets at the front and the remaining four at the rear on balanced TRS sockets. Six of the analogue outputs appear as TRS sockets, which can be used for feeding a 5.1 surround system, while at the front is a single TRS socket for either headphone monitoring or an unbalanced stereo monitor path.

There is a single knob and two-digit LED display on the front of the unit that allows for control of all output levels (analogue and digital) as well as the four front input gains. The driver interface has a dedicated page for control of the analogue I/O with gain faders, pad switches, phantom power for the mic inputs and impedance switching for the instrument/line inputs.

Also on this page are settings for the overall gain structure of the analogue inputs, TRS outputs and headphone outputs. There are three ranges: 10dBV (unbalanced), +4dBu (balanced) and a Hi Gain (outputs) or Lo Gain (inputs) which offers more headroom for those who work with high-gain level balanced outboard. This is a unique function that

really opens up the interconnection flexibility of the unit.

Convincing conversion

The AD and DA conversion is 24-bit and sounds great, particularly thanks to the almost jitter-free RME SteadyClock system. Obviously you can get more esoteric or high-end converters, but for a soundcard interface, this is excellent quality. The mic preamps also perform well with 65dB of gain available with very low noise, a wide frequency response range and a clear, uncoloured sound. The instrument inputs are also quiet with a flat frequency response and have plenty of gain.

The digital I/O, like the analogue AD/DA, runs up to a sampling rate of 192kHz. The single ADAT input and output can be used at the high rates via the double and quad speed SMUX, but this of course halves and quarters the channel count on ADAT. The driver interface page contains a host of digital clocking options with plenty of feedback on the sync status, which is also featured on the unit's front-panel LED section along with MIDI activity. The unique feature on this page is a pitch adjustment control allowing +/- 5% on the sample rate when the Fireface UC is the master clock. Though implemented for professional video applications, this also works for matching tunings or

FutureMusic VERDICT	
BUILD	████████████████████
VALUE	████████████████████
EASE OF USE	████████████████████
VERSATILITY	████████████████████
RESULTS	████████████████████
A great quality interface with superb features and reliability at a reasonable price.	

