

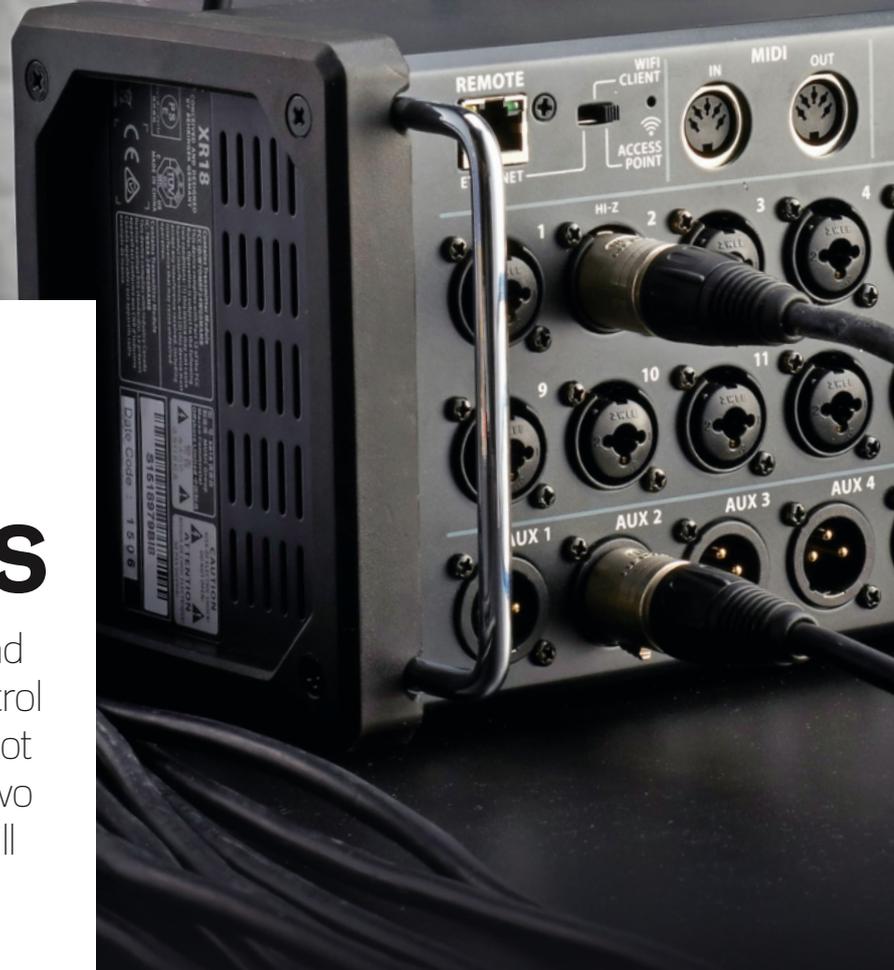


1 Allen & Heath
Qu-SB
£849

QUICK SPEC: 18 inputs, 14 outputs
32 channels DAW I/O via USB
Onboard multi-track recording direct
to USB stick

Compact Digital Mixers

Combining a stage box, digital mixer and audio interface with remote tablet control has proved incredibly popular, and it's not hard to see why. Here we've lined up two very similar products, but which one will prevail? Let's find out...



Allen & Heath Qu-SB

£849

Behringer X AIR XR18

£549

1 Qu-SB is a portable mixer with 18 inputs (16 mic/line, two line), 14 outputs (12 XLR, two TRS) and one headphone output. Allen & Heath's dSnake equipped AudioRacks can extend the connectivity further (potentially 38 ins, 24 outs) and it's compatible with their ME Personal Mixing System. Mixer control is iPad only, and you'll need to hook up your own wi-fi router. Nevertheless, you do get three complementary apps: Qu-Pad (the engineer's app), Qu-You (musician's monitoring) and Qu-Control (a levels only mixer app).

Onboard processing includes EQ, dynamics and ducking on all inputs, and EQ and dynamics across all outputs, with a selection of full channel and individual module presets. There are four iLive inspired FX engines with 82 reverb, delay, modulation and gated verb presets. These default to the four dedicated FX busses but can also be inserted across inputs and outputs. As well as the full mixer, you get three Custom layouts, and selecting just the elements of your choice (inputs, busses and so on) is a nice touch.

Qu-SB supports 32 channels of DAW I/O via USB 2.0, but also includes onboard multi-track recording to USB stick, supporting up to 18 tracks at 48kHz 24-bit. Further features include automatic gain adjustment for multiple mic set-ups (AMM), and MIDI DAW control (there's a template for Mackie Control and HUI).

All told the Qu-SB is an excellent and scalable device, with some great options and excellent iOS apps.

www.allen-heath.com

VERDICT 8.8

2 Behringer's XR18 is a super compact and sturdy unit. It has 18 inputs (16 mic/line, two line), eight outputs (main L/R and six auxes) and one headphone output. Mic preamps are quality Midas designs and inputs 1 and 2 also get high impedance support. Control connectivity is via onboard wi-fi or wired ethernet, and audio connectivity via USB 2.0 provides 18 channels of DAW I/O. It supports Behringer's Ultranet protocol and the dedicated Ultranet output can carry 16 digital sources for onward use in Behringer's P16 Personal Mixers or Turbosound's iQ PA systems.

The XR18's sole physical control is the headphone level. Beyond this settings are handled remotely via the cross-platform X AIR Edit software (PC, Mac, Linux, Raspberry Pi, iOS and Android). The XR18 X32 effects engine includes EQ, dynamics and four multi-effects modules. The latter can be used either in the four dedicated FX busses or as inserts. The 60 effect types include reverbs, delays and modulations as well as some vintage EQs and dynamics.

The in/out routing page offers powerful selectable signal tapping (pre/post fader, pre/post EQ etc) for USB, Aux Outs, Ultranet and Main Outs. Meanwhile the Meter page provides a quick overview of signal activity across Analogue ins, USB returns, Effects Sends and Returns Bus Output. Further functions include four DCA groups, four Mute groups and Auto-Mix for auto gain control in multiple mic set-ups.

It's a serious feature set for the money and very easy to set up/use.

www.music-group.com

VERDICT 9.1

2 Behringer X AIR XR18

£599

QUICK SPEC: 18 inputs, 8 outputs
Cross platform software support
Onboard wi-fi router

FM VERDICT



Both units are excellent and, given its scalability and spec, maybe the Qu-SB should win. But the cheaper XR18 is small, robust, has cross platform software support and, with a built-in wi-fi router, works straight out of the box. Brilliant.