

# Mackie 1220i | £799

Mackie's latest pairs analogue mixer with FireWire audio interface. **Trevor Curwen** wonders if it's an ideal combination...and what's all this about Pro Tools?

### WHAT IS IT?

Analogue mixing desk with integral FireWire digital audio interface

### CONTACT

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Streamlined integration between mixer and computer
- 2 Nice sounding preamps
- 3 Practical connectivity options for use in a small studio

FutureMusic



**B**est of both worlds is a phrase that gets overused, but when Mackie's product manager used it at their launch to

describe the new Onyx i-series he may just have been right.

Besides the obvious wiring and space-saving advantages over separate units, combining an analogue mixer with a computer audio interface and mixer makes complete sense, giving you the familiar hands-on layout of a mixer while feeding audio directly to your computer with convenience and speed.

What you get with Mackie's new Onyx 1220i is a 12-channel analog mixer combined with a 16 x 2 FireWire interface and, what's more, a first for a non-Avid product, it can be used with Pro Tools.

Extremely robust and powered via an IEC lead, the 1220i features four mono mic input channels plus another four stereo line inputs that can be used in mono by connecting the left input only.

The four mono channels are equipped with insert points and sport both an XLR mic input with individually switchable phantom power and a 1/4" jack input, which, in the case of the first two channels, can be switched to Hi-Z operation for plugging guitars and instruments directly in.

Each channel has a switchable hi-pass filter (18dB/octave below 75Hz), plus a three-band EQ offering up to 15dB of cut and boost for high- and low-shelving EQs (at 12kHz and 80Hz respectively) and a swept midrange (100Hz to 8kHz) EQ. The

stereo channels each have the same low and high EQ with a single midrange knob centred on 2.5kHz.

All channels feature two auxiliary sends, each globally switchable between pre- and post-fader operation. Each also has a panpot, a 60mm fader, a solo switch and a mute switch that has a secondary function of routing the audio to an alternative (alt 3/4) rear panel hardware output.

Routing audio from any channel to the equivalent FireWire input on the computer is automatic – a 'FireWire' switch nestled just above the EQ section will determine if it is sent pre- or post-EQ. Aux sends 1 and 2 are automatically sent on FireWire channels 13 and 14 and the main mix on 15 and 16. The stereo output of the computer can be routed back to the mixer through stereo channel 11-12 for monitoring or for integration into the mix, it can also be directly assigned to the main mix.

A compact master section offers volume controls for the control room outputs and headphone outs plus options for setting the sources. Rotary knobs control the volume of the stereo auxiliary returns and there's a talkback mic built-in with level control and routing to the headphone output and the auxes.





**Mackie control**

The 1220i is very easy to operate, all the physical controls are neatly and logically laid out while integration with all the major DAWs is instant – Mac software works via Core Audio, drivers for PC are supplied and quickly installed while Pro Tools M-Powered 8 users need to buy a Mackie Universal Driver upgrade. It's a practical compact size, easily transportable and well-suited

One big advantage of using an analogue desk for recording is in making latency-free overdubs – monitoring the input channel directly without any round-trip through DSP – and the 1220i is well set up to do this, balancing the input channels against any computer output coming back through channel 11-12. The two aux sends can be used for separate cue mixes when recording or to feed

plenty of opportunity for sweetening the sound at top and bottom with some useful shaping of the midrange and it's great that you can do this while recording the signal, if desired. No problems with the A/D converters here either – what you hear gets recorded accurately.

**Verdict**

The 1220i has a compact footprint and enough input channels for small scale ensemble recording to make it a very practical purchase for the home or project studio to use as a front end for any

One big advantage of using an analogue desk for recording is in making latency-free overdubs

for sitting neatly on a table top, but the 12-input channels give the 1220i a certain amount of versatility for multitrack recording – the elements of a small ensemble, a drum kit with kick, snare and overhead mics and even a full band with a mixture of mic and line inputs can all be sent simultaneously to separate recording tracks via FireWire, as can the main mix.

foldback monitors in a live situation. Alternatively, as both aux sends have a FireWire connection, you could utilise them, playing live, to access plug-in effects on a laptop to add to the mix.

Soundwise, the Onyx mic amps have a proven track record and the four in the 1220i give quality results with a range of microphones. Likewise the Perkins EQ is practical and musical, combining

computer-based DAW – and with Pro Tools compatibility that really does mean any DAW. Anyone that needs less or more inputs has the option of the 820i (£599), 1620i (£1,099) and 1640i (£1,899) – the latter allowing the user to return up to 16 DAW channels right back into the channel strips for a true tape-style mixdown, rather than purely mixing in the box.

So, best of both worlds? We think so... Mackie have come up with an affordable and extremely well thought out integration of mixer and interface that makes light work of recording audio to your computer. **FM**

**The Pro Tools Connection**

Pro Tools might be the industry-standard software recording application but it is essentially a hardware/software package, as it has always needed a hardware audio interface from parent company Avid without which it cannot run. There are a range of Digidesign packages with interfaces and software plus some M-Audio interfaces which run the M-Powered version of the software.

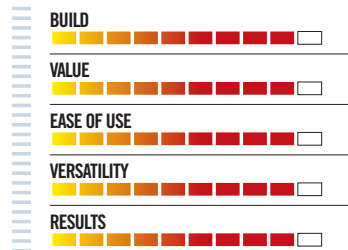
When Mackie announced the Onyx

iSeries earlier this year their statement that the mixers would be qualified by Mackie for use with Pro Tools M-Powered 8 caused a bit of a stir as it was believed that Mackie had achieved the Pro Tools integration by reverse engineering rather than licensing it from Avid, causing speculation that Avid would mount a legal challenge or change the software to lock Mackie out.

Apart from a statement saying that they had not

approved or tested Mackie equipment to be interoperable with any of its solutions, Avid had been surprisingly quiet on the subject. Recently though, Mackie announced that the pairing was indeed official and that Pro Tools would support their iSeries mixers. Pro Tools M-Powered 8 users can purchase the Mackie Universal Driver Upgrade for \$49.99. Pro Tools M-Powered 8 is currently available for £199.

**FutureMusic VERDICT**



A practical melding of analogue mixer and interface – a versatile front end at a reasonable price.

**SPECS**

**Resolution:** 24-bit  
**Sampling Frequency:** 44.1, 48, 88.2, 96kHz

**Connections (Top Panel):** 1/4" line/instrument inputs x 2, 1/4" line inputs x 2, XLR microphone inputs x 4, 1/4" line inputs (L&R) x 4, 1/4" control room outputs (L&R), 1/4" main outputs (L&R), 1/4" alt 3-4 outputs (L/3&R/4), RCA phono tape inputs (L&R), RCA phono tape outputs (L&R), 1/4" headphone output

**Connections (Rear Panel):** balanced XLR main output (L&R), 1/4" aux send (1&2), 1/4" channel insert (1, 2, 3, 4), 1/4" aux return 1 (L&R), 1/4" aux return 2 (L&R), FireWire x 2

**Options:** Mackie Universal Driver Upgrade (\$49.99) for Pro Tools M-Powered 8 users

**Extras:** FireWire cable, drivers CD-ROM

**Dimensions:** 310 x 96 x 420mm  
**Weight:** 6kg

**ALTERNATIVES**



**Allen and Heath ZED R16**  
**£1,958**

16-channel analogue mixer with 18x18 FireWire interface and DAW control.  
[allen-heath.com](http://allen-heath.com)



**M-Audio NRV10**  
**£435**

8x2 mixer with 10x10 FireWire interface and Pro Tools M-Powered integration.  
[m-audio.com](http://m-audio.com)



**Yamaha n8 or n12**  
**n8: £880 n12: £1,273**

Both of the n-series products combine a mixer, FireWire I/O and DAW control.  
[yamaha-europe.com](http://yamaha-europe.com)