

Universal Audio Apollo Twin MkII

from £590

The Apollo Twin MkII is not just a pretty new face, as **Jono Buchanan** discovers...

CONTACT WHO: Universal Audio **WEB:** www.uaudio.com **KEY FEATURES** Desktop 2x6 Thunderbolt interface for Mac/Windows, 24-bit/192kHz audio conversion, UAD-2 Quad, Duo, or Solo Core Processing, talkback mic, improved monitor functionality 2 mic/line preamps; 2 line outs; front-panel Hi-Z instrument in and headphone out, 8 channels of additional input via Optical TOSLINK connection,



It's easy to forget that as the digital division of Universal Audio – UAD – continues to add to its roster of award-winning plug-in emulations, the company's origins were founded on the hardware designs of Bill Putnam. Alongside the recording channels and dynamics processors that Universal Audio continue to sell today, equally well known among its hardware ranks are the Apollo audio interfaces. These Thunderbolt-enabled boxes for Mac and PC balance high-quality audio conversion with two killer unique selling points. Firstly, UAD plug-ins are powered from the Apollo's onboard DSP, taking the load away from your computer's CPU. Secondly, through Unison technology, you can track through some of the most coveted hardware emulations of all time, with near-zero latency. So, what does the latest addition to the Apollo line-up offer?

The original Apollo Twin was launched in early January 2014 and it remains the most compact of the Apollo interfaces. The 24-bit/192kHz MkII offers the same two-in/six-out I/O configuration and broadly retains the same shape and feel, albeit the unit is now a darker colour, to match its big brothers in the Apollo range. The Twin's front edge offers a Hi-Z instrument input and the headphone output, while the rear panel provides two Unison-enabled microphone/line inputs. These have increased dynamic range over their predecessors and are a direct match for the Unison-enabled preamps of the Apollo 8, 8p and 16 interfaces. There are twin stereo outputs, primarily to drive two pairs of monitors, while an ADAT input offers eight channels of further audio input routing. The Twin MkII can act as a 'front-end' for a larger Apollo system: you can daisy-chain up to four Apollo interfaces using Thunderbolt with the Twin's main rotary dial acting as a monitor controller for the entire system. Indeed, this can extend further yet; as two further UAD devices can be added, if you own Satellite or UAD-2 PCIe cards, a monstrously powerful system can be configured.

The buttons on the Twin MkII's upper panel now have dual functionality. In addition to configuring the unit's preamps for recording, you can now access



The Twin MkII brings its capabilities in line with the rest of the Apollo range

Monitoring functions too, routing sound to the Alt Monitor outputs, as well as accessing the Talkback mic, alongside Dim and Mono monitoring options. Buying a Twin entitles users to the 'Realtime Analog Classics bundle' of UAD-2 effects, so you'll be able to run emulations of 1176 and LA2A dynamics processors, Pultec EQ, the UA 610-B channel strip for Unison-enabled recordings, alongside a raft of other effects, including amps and reverbs. Of course, any of the other UAD plug-in titles can be added whenever you wish to make additional purchases.

The Apollo Twin MkII brings its capabilities in line with the rest of the Apollo range and, coupled to Unison-enabled recording channels

and (up to) a Quad processing card, this is one of the best-sounding and most powerful compact Thunderbolt interfaces money can buy. **FM**

FM VERDICT

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With sumptuous AD/DA conversion, increased monitoring capabilities and enhanced preamps, the Apollo Twin MkII is a winner.

THE PROS & CONS

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The Quad Core Apollo Twin MkII is the most powerful portable interface from UA ever

Extended monitoring and talkback capabilities

Included software bundle offers a good range of classic hardware emulations

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There is fierce competition and some rivals' interfaces are considerably cheaper