LIVE SOUND
INTERNATIONAL

ASHLY AUDIO DIGIMIX24

Checking out a recently released compact digital mixer.
by Craig Leerman

The Ashly Audio digiMIX24 is a compact digital mixer offering 24 total inputs and 14 mix buses, with 16 microphone preamps onboard. There are 33 channels of DSP that each include an expander/gate, compressor/limiter and parametric EQ, and each channel also provides up to 300 milliseconds of delay. Two FX processors deliver reverbs, choruses, delays, and combinations.

A relatively large 7-inch color touch screen supplies visual information while also fostering parameter adjustments of all features in conjunction with a purpose-specific knob. The surface also sports a motorized fader in addition to numerous buttons and knobs for control over mix parameters. An option card slot currently accommodates a 32-channel USB audio interface card and a 32-channel Dante networking card. Dimensions are 20.1 x 14 x 5.6 inches (L x W x H) and weight is 17.6 pounds.

The feature set also includes expander/noise gates on every input and FX channel, compressor/limiters on every input, subgroup, output, and FX channel, 4-band parametric/shelving EQ filters plus high- and low-pass filtering on every input, subgroup, output, and FX channel, along with 31-band graphic EQ on main, aux, and sub outputs. The mixer has password security and can be software-controlled via Windows, Mac and iPad.

The front surface includes 16 gain controls across the top, and directly below are 22 large LED ladder meters for the 16 inputs, four subgroups, and selectable main outputs or solo. Under each meter is a select channel button.

The lower left side of the surface contains the color touch screen joined by 18 select

The digiMIX24 from Ashly Audio.

and assign buttons, while the lower right side houses adjustment knobs, the large motorized fader, aux, sub and FX sends, DCA buttons as well as line, tape and USB input sections. A headphone jack, USB 2-track I/O and master volume knob complete the surface connections and controls.

The rear panel supplies 16 TRS/XLR combo inputs with TRS 1/4-inch insert jacks on the first eight channels as well as TRS 1/4-inch connectors for the two stereo input channels. There are also TRS 1/4-inch sub and aux outputs, TRS 1/4-inch and XLR L+R main outputs, and RCA tape I/O jacks. A pair of TRS 1/4-inch jacks are provided for the control room outputs. The rear surface also contains USB and RJ45 network connectors, the option card slot, and a power cord IEC connector with power switch.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS
Opening the digiMIX24 box, I encountered an attractive, compact mixer that doesn't weigh a lot. The touch screen is

a nice size, and the unit is very well built with a metal chassis and surface with rugged plastic end caps. One feature my old eyes really likes is that the white lettering for the controls provides plenty of contrast to the dark surface, making reading at a glance easy.

The unit that I received for this evaluation shipped in a quality flight case that's available as an option; it's well made and provides ample protection for the mixer when transported or stored. The design also allows users to lift off the lid and use the mixer while it's sitting in the tray.

Without looking at the manual, I had audio passing through the mixer in under a minute. Everything is well labeled and logically laid out — it will be easy for any audio tech to quickly figure it out and get to work.

Plugged into my bench system, it sounded great, the mic preamps in particular. I really like that all of the inputs are TRS/XLR combo style because my company does a lot of shows with ample

The capabilities provided on the mixer's rear panel.

amounts of local playback devices and wireless microphone systems, and we prefer using TRS cables instead of DI boxes so that there's less cabling to manage and wrap up at the end of a gig. Another thing I immediately liked are the large 12-segment LED meters on every input channel.

Focusing on the FX, I discovered that there are a lot of effects like tremolo and flanging that can come in quite handy for instruments, making the digiMIX24 a welcome choice for musicians who directly plug in instruments for both live shows and recording. In addition, there are mutes for the effects right on the surface, so it's a snap to mute them in between songs when the performers may talk to the audience.

I downloaded the digiMIX app from the Ashly Audio website, plugged a Wi-Fi router into the network jack on the back of the mixer, and logged on. The app automatically discovered that a mixer was connected to the network, so I simply chose the mixer on the list, pushed a connect button on the app, and I was in business. By the way, the app also allows adjustment of all mix parameters.

GETTING BUSY

After some time getting more familiar with the placement of controls and making sure everything was working properly, we took the digiMIX24 out to a few gigs. First was a corporate event with a podium mic and backup, wireless lavalier and backup, board mic, and three stereo playback units that included a computer to provide walk in/out music. I really appreciate having a TRS/XLR combo jack on every input to connect playback to any input, unlike some mixers with limited combo jacks — or none at all — leading to the need to deploy extra cables and DI boxes at front of house.

Meanwhile, the touch screen shows eight input channels and the mains simultaneously, so there was no problem arraigning the main microphones and playback devices all at once on the display.

To adjust levels, easily touch the virtual fader with a finger and make adjustments right on the touch screen, or touch the channel onscreen and use the motorized fader for volume, parameter and pan knobs to make adjustments. The remote app also shows eight input channels and the mains at the same time on the iPad screen, so it basically mirrors the touch screen.

Another cool feature is that both the app and the surface screen can display in Long Fader Mode (the eight inputs and mains faders) or in Small Fader Mode that shows all channels, aux and sub buses at once in four rows of eight faders on the entire screen. Using the app as an additional display screen next to the surface allowed me to display all faders on one screen and then set the other screen to the eight faders I was working with. Add to that the row of large meters across

the surface, and there was a lot of information at a glance. Needless to say, the mixer handled the needs of this gig easily and then some.

SWITCHING GEARS

Next up was doing monitors for a praise band at a church comprised of four vocalists accompanied by four instrumentalists, making for a total of 10 instrument inputs and four vocal mic inputs. Normally the group gets just a pair of mixes, but since we had multiple amplifiers and loudspeakers available, we doubled the count to four mixes. This application also showed another positive of the digiMIX24 — next to each mix bus on the surface is a send button that brings up a screen with all of the sends for every input channel for that mix.

In addition, each channel can be configured as pre or post individually as needed in the same aux bus by pressing a pre/post button under each send knob. Same with the effects sends; speaking of which, individual channels can also be configured as pre or post for the effects sends.

It took very little time to configure the mixer and we were ready for sound check. The remote app made mixing the monitors a breeze in general, and during sound check it allowed me to stand next to the performers onstage and adjust their sends while hearing what they were hearing. By the way, I'm also a big fan of using apps for remote house mixing. It's great being able to adjust levels and

The digiMIX app allows adjustment over all mix parameters.

EQ while walking around a room, and on some gigs, we aren't allowed to set up FOH in the audience area, so the apps are of great benefit in still being able to hear the system while mixing.

The mixer's effects sound great, and they offer plenty of parameter adjustments. There are also a few multi-effects like reverb with delay and reverb with chorus, to choose from. For this show, I used verb on the singers and a little reverb/chorus on the acoustic guitar during the ballads to fatten it up, and it was a winning approach. The desk also offers six DCAs that make it easy to get control of the mix, and even on this small gig, I set up a few.

FINISHING IT UP

Finally, I took the digiMIX24 to another corporate gig, this one with dual presenters onstage and a total of six inputs, including two wireless headsets and

The optional case provides ample protection.

backups, and a computer for walk in/out music. Having the 4-band EQ and a compressor on every input and output made it simple to keep the presenters in check, even as they walked around the room in front of the main PA. (Luckily they'd informed me that they were going

to "wander" around, so I took extra care in ringing out the mics and system.)

The unit provided by Ashly came with the Dante card, so I utilized Dante networking to record the presentations into a computer running Dante Virtual Sound Card. It worked like a champ. Also, the onboard USB 2-track I/O will work well for recording shows.

The bottom line is that the digiMIX24 offers a lot of mixing, routing and recording options in a compact package. Adding the optional Dante or USB cards deliver even more routing and recording options. So if you're in the market for a compact yet full-featured mixer, take a good look at the digiMIX24. LSI

U.S. MAP: $1,249

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