

StuDiomaster digiLive 16 Digital Mixing Console

Suddenly, fully digital, moving fader mixing breaks the price barrier and becomes affordable even for pub and club bands. **Bob Thomas** tests the latest from StuDiomaster - and likes it so much he took it to Paris for the weekend.

Milton Keynes-based StuDiomaster has a long and storied history as a UK manufacturer and distributor of analogue live sound mixing consoles, loudspeaker systems and accessories. Nowadays, as part of China's Soundking Group - one of the largest professional audio manufacturers in the world - the StuDiomaster brand is growing rapidly in both UK and international markets. Being part of a sizeable company has brought StuDiomaster not only increased investment and R&D resources but also access to technology from other Soundking Group companies.

First announced in April 2015, the StuDiomaster digiLive 16 is a compact 16-input, 16 Bus, 8 output digital audio mixing console designed specifically for live sound applications. The digiLive 16's control surface centres around a 7" touchscreen and full-size (100mm) moving faders and the console can be remotely controlled over wifi via iOS or Android tablets. The digiLive 16's features and facilities, as we will see, are extensive and extremely sophisticated and the StuDiomaster R&D engineers may well have gained both expertise and inspiration from talking with their colleagues both in Ningbo, China, and at Luton-based Cadac, a Soundking Group company that manufactures high-end analogue and digital consoles.

The Box

For a digital live sound console that features 12 mono mic/line input channels, two line-level stereo inputs, a stereo S/PDIF digital input and a USB port for stereo playback

and recording and eight output busses, the digiLive 16 is a surprisingly compact and lightweight unit for what's on offer. Physically, it follows a growing trend with its "face-down" L-shaped cross section, in which



all the analogue electronics and analogue I/O are placed in the short section and are therefore shielded from the digital electronics, screens and (in the case of the digiLive) moving fader motors, which occupy the longer arm. The triangular gap between the tabletop and the bottom of the casing allows for convection cooling and removes the need for an internal fan.

STAR RATING



PROS Designed for use in live sound by a company that knows how to do just that • Comprehensive features and facilities • Sounds great and is easy to operate • Moving faders - say no more!

CONS Send fader layer currently cannot be directly accessed unless a channel send section is active - a minor bug that no doubt will get squished at some point

The front panel carries the digiLive's 12 gain controls, the touchscreen, a rotary encoder, the eight channel moving faders and the unmotorised master fader, plus all physical switches, eight individual mono channel LED meters, a stereo master LED meter, headphone jack with level control and the USB stereo record/playback USB port. This compact layout is designed so that it takes no more than two button presses to get to any channel or buss and Select, Mute or Solo it – a speed that is essential in a live situation.

Navigation is extremely simple – three layer switches (Inputs 1-8, 9-16 and Output Busses 1-8) bring the chosen layer up on the touchscreen and move the faders to the correct position for the layer. A fourth switch (Sends) brings up a further layer where the fader positions correspond to the levels being sent the output busses from the selected channel. One slight anomaly (which, knowing Studiomaster, I am sure will be swiftly put right) is that the Sends layer switch only brings up the sends layer if the sends section of the channel touchscreen is



already selected – not exactly intuitive, but as long as you remember that that's what happens, it isn't a deal breaker by any means.

Once a layer is recalled, its input channels or output busses are displayed on the touch screen, where you can see the various functional sections. Touching the channel selects it and touching a section on a selected channel expands to display all controls available for that function. Usefully, you can step through the channels in a layer by using on-screen L/R arrows or the physical Select switches so that you can, for example, check all the

EQ settings without having to go out of, and back into, each individual channel.

The digiLive's input channels put everything that you'll need in a live situation right there in front of you on the touchscreen – 48V phantom power, reverse polarity, a time delay to help sort out phase issues, a high pass filter, 4-band fully parametric EQ, a gate, a compressor, four mono bus sends (1-4), four stereo bus sends (5-8) and a direct routing to Master LR bus.

The mono busses can be routed to any of the stereo busses and/or the Master

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LR bus, whilst the stereo busses can only be routed to the Master LR. In addition, busses 1-4 are permanently routed to physical Outputs 1-4 and stereo busses 5 and 6 are permanently routed to physical outputs 5 and 6.

This routing might sound a bit complex at first, but it becomes more understandable if you think of it in the context of a live situation and in conjunction with the digiLive's eight on-board stereo effects engines – two each of modulation (flange, phase, chorus etc.), delays, reverbs and 15-band graphic EQ. Each FX module can only be inserted once onto either a channel or bus, although you can insert two modules at a time on one or the other. All this means when you're running your PA is that - assuming that you were to insert an instance of modulation, delay and reverb on busses 6,7 and 8 and insert a GEQ instance on the Master LR bus – you could have Bus 1-4 as monitor sends, bus 5 as a stereo FX or IEM send, bus 6 as your stereo chorus and flange etc., bus 7 as your stereo delay and bus 8 as your stereo reverb, with an overall

stereo 15-band graphic on the main output to take care of any room anomalies. In addition, you'd still have one instance of each FX engine to deploy – so you could use delay and reverb on the main vocal channel to get that just right, modulation on the lead guitar channel and a 15-band graphic on the drum overhead to take out all the frequencies you don't want there. All in all, the digiLive is a delight for creative sound engineers.

On top of all the on-board control, you've got exactly the same control over wifi via the iOS iPad app – there's a neat slot above the Gain controls to hold your iPad so that you've got two touchscreens and the faders



to work with – plus you can charge your iPad or mobile phone from the front panel USB socket if required.

There's tons more to mention – the supplied USB wifi dongle that allows the digiLive to connect to a local network or act as a hotspot; the facility to plug a mouse and/or keyboard into the USB ports; the libraries where you can store EQ, dynamics and full console scene set-ups; the patch page; the meter page; all the control that you have over the FX engines (including bpm matching the delays); the monitor page with its oscillators and noise generators; the separate stereo monitor output; the AES/EBU digital output and the S/PDIF digital I/O; and

I can't leave this section without mentioning the USB recorder/player that allows you to plug in a USB stick with mp3 and wav files, navigate through your folders and to replay selected tracks from it. In addition, you can record the Main LR output to it – even when you're playing a track back from it. This means that you can prepare a backing track and record it through the digiLive to the USB stick and then play it back and overdub (say) a lead guitar and then repeat the process by overdubbing a vocal on the overdubbed track. Not quite multitracking, but useful for those playing to backing tracks or for recording band rehearsals and gigs.

In Use

I've had time since making the video to take the digiLive out with me on a gig that my band played in Paris and if I was impressed during the shoot, I ended up super-impressed with it in a live situation. It was very quick to work on when I was under time pressure to get a soundcheck done before the doors opened, the iPad app worked flawlessly and was super-useful when setting up monitor mixes on stage and while walking round the venue adjusting the GEQ on the main mix. Most importantly – the digiLive sounded great worked flawlessly all day from soundcheck to encore and it was so intuitive to operate that I didn't need to refer to the manual once.

Conclusion

The Studiomaster digiLive compact digital mixing console, for my money, is currently the most impressive 16 input console – analogue or digital - in the sub-£1000 price category and there are some more expensive consoles that are going to find the digiLive to be very stiff competition indeed. Its features and facilities supply everything that you'll need to run a live gig, its sonic performance is excellent and its touchscreen, iPad remote control and moving faders give you a fast and intuitive user interface to work on.

If you're looking for a sturdy, compact, great-sounding 16 input digital (or analogue) console at around the price of a digiLive, you really should get down to your local Studiomaster dealer and give this little console a listen. I think that you'll be as impressed as I am. Highly recommended and worthy of every one of its stars. **END >**

Studiomaster digiLive 16 Digital Mixing Console

RRP £699 inc VAT US \$999

MIC Input 12 8 x XLR / 4 x COMBO XLR / JACK

LINE Input 2 (Stereo) two 6.5 stereo Jacks, one 3.5 stereo Jack in parallel with one stereo channel

Master output 2 Left/Right balanced XLR

Smart Outputs 6 assignable balanced XLR

Internal busses 16

Stereo Monitor 1 TRS Jack output

Headphone 1 TRS Jack output

Screen 7" high definition touch screen

Faders 8 x motorized 100 mm faders + 1 x motorized 100mm fader for L/R mix

Operating System Android system

Sample Frequency 48 KHz

AD/DA 192KHz, 24-bit

DSP 40-bit float point, SHARC processor

iPad Remote control Yes

Effects up to 8 assignable effect modules (reverb, modulation, delay, 15 bands GEQ)

Digital input/outputs

AES/EBU Output (XLR)

S/PDIF Input / Output (RCA phono)

USB Interface 2 for playback/ recording, scene storage and system updates

Network yes via WIFI external module

Bluetooth Yes via external module

Power 90-240V - 50/60Hz power supply 12VDC output.

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