



Universal Audio Apollo

Real Audio Quality in Real Time

Universal Audio built its reputation on the art of tonal manipulation by designing great outboard analog gear such as EQs, reverbs, compressors and limiters. With the explosion of digital recording technology, the company followed a logical path in establishing itself as a leader in the software plug-ins market with a line of offerings that emulate the sound of these highly coveted analog devices. However, unlike other plug-ins that rely on the host computer for processing, Universal Audio utilizes proprietary UAD-2 hardware processors to handle the task, freeing your computer up for other music processing functions. Expanding even further into the digital realm, the company has introduced the Apollo, a complete recording solution that combines a high-quality 18 x 24 digital audio interface with real-time UAD processing to provide crystal-clear tracking and optimal plug-in performance.

The Apollo connects to a Mac or Windows 7 host computer using either a FireWire 800 cable or via an optional Thunderbolt Option Card. Apollo is compatible with most major DAW software packages and integrated seamlessly with my Logic Pro setup. For input, the unit houses four microphone preamps (the four mic pre channels are switchable, for a total of eight available line inputs) plus an additional four balanced line inputs. There are also two DI ¼-inch inputs for connecting instruments such as guitars or keyboards. The output section fea-

tures stereo monitors, dual headphone ports, eight individual lines out plus ADAT and SPDIF input/output.

Although the Apollo can be controlled directly from the front panel, the real power of the box is unleashed when running the console software, which emulates a full-blown mixer. In addition to its routing options, the console gives you the ability to insert UAD Powered Plug-Ins into the recording and monitoring paths with virtually no latency, thanks to the four on-board Sharc processors. This is particularly attractive for use during studio tracking—especially vocals, which typically require a considerable amount of processing.

As impressive as the UAD Powered Plug-Ins are, the Apollo also sounds great with high-resolution 24-bit A/D converters capable of sample rates up to 192kHz. The on-board mic preamps are clean and transparent, adding almost no color to the tracks. The DI inputs also work well, delivering great results when tracking with plug-ins such as Universal Audio's Softube Amp Room. Apollo comes bundled with the company's Analog Classic plug-in package.

The Apollo shines in terms of its overall quality and the workflow options it delivers. The UAD Powered Plug-Ins sound great, and the tight integration with DAW software packages makes tracking a pleasure. —Keith Baumann

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