PreSonus Quantum 2626 £599

Looking for a decent multiple stream audio interface? **Jon Musgrave** fires up this latest recording-focused interface

CONTACT **WHO:** Presonus **WEB:** presonus.com **KEY FEATURES** **I/O:** Eight mic/line inputs with inserts on 1 & 2, Instrument option for inputs 1 & 2, 8 balanced line outputs and separate stereo main output, 2 ADAT I/Os providing 16 streams at 44.1 / 48kHz and 8 streams at 88.2 / 96kHz, 1 stereo S/PDIF, Up to 24-bit / 192kHz operation, MIDI in/out, Word Clock in/out, Thunderbolt 1, 2 or 3.0

Looking to record and monitor multiple audio streams at once? USB may not be robust enough. The most reliable plugin system is Thunderbolt and Presonus' new Quantum 2626 is their first interface to support the latest Thunderbolt 3 protocol. Its USB-C style connector works with a Thunderbolt 1, 2 or 3-equipped computer (for Thunderbolt 1 or 2 you'll need a converter cable). At just under £550, the 2626 is PreSonus's cheapest Quantum interface. But it still sports an impressive feature set and operation at up to 24-bit 192kHz via its analogue inputs. One of the big selling points is lightning fast and stable operation at very low latencies.

The front panel includes eight XLR/TRS mic/line inputs (two with Hi-Z inputs) with corresponding gain controls and two-tone LED metering. There's also a monitor output knob and a pair of headphone outputs with individual level controls. I'm sure the front panel input configuration won't appeal to everyone, but you can't argue with the simplicity of it. Round the back you have eight balanced (TRS) line outputs with an additional main output that follows the main output knob. Note, the main output pair is DC-coupled, so you can use these to send CV signals to hardware synths. Further connectors include MIDI in and out, Word Clock in and out and S/PDIF in and out. There's also dual ADAT in and out which brings the I/O connectivity up to 26 streams. Plus individual insert points for inputs 1 and 2, a nice touch.

When PreSonus launched the Quantum series, they boldly ditched their onboard minimum latency monitoring and instead focussed on developing efficient reliable drivers that could deliver minimal latency. Quantum 2626 uses their Universal Control app but primarily for settings and input meter. For monitoring you're fully reliant on your DAW. This rules out monitoring the inputs independently of your DAW, but is good for recording and overdubbing.

In use the 2626 performed excellently. The Class A XMAX mic pres sounded wonderfully clear, with plenty of gain, and the operational simplicity of the unit meant no curve balls. But the winner here is the round-trip latency. Using Apple Logic X this was an impressive 3.4ms with 64-samples buffer size, and even at 128 samples I found the 6.3ms latency mostly workable. Both these buffer sizes let me run quite CPU taxing sessions and monitor via plugins. But if you're willing to keep things simple, the 16-sample buffer setting in Studio One 4 delivered a whole 1.27ms round-trip latency.

All told the Quantum 2626 delivers game changing latency in an incredibly affordable package for all Thunderbolt users. FM

FM VERDICT

9.0

Lightning fast latency and quality Class A mic pres in a truly affordable package make the Quantum 2626 a highly desirable interface

THE PROS & CONS

+

Excellent quality Class A mic preamps

Extremely low latency and robust performance

The I/O can be expanded using the ADAT connections and additional converters

Up to 192kHz operation using onboard connectors

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Thunderbolt 1 & 2 users need to buy a supported adapter and these are expensive

Physical input meters are limited to two-tone LEDs