



PreSonus ioStation 24c £258

Fancy an interface and controller for any DAW in one smart box for a bargain price? Time to take the train arriving at this ioStation...

> PreSonus' ioStation 24c was announced back at January's NAMM show as an all-in-one control surface and audio interface, but we didn't realise quite how low the street price for this one-box production unit would be. Around £250 for what is touted to be a high-end interface plus a controller for all major DAWs with a motorised fader – albeit just the one – sounds like incredible value on paper, so let's see just how it shapes up.

Two-in-on

You could quite easily think of ioStation 24c as an amalgamation of PreSonus's FaderPort and the company's Studio 24c 2-in, 2-out audio interface. In fact you don't even have to try and conjure up a Frankenstein image of the two units joined at the hip – ioStation 24c is literally a one-fader FaderPort with identical controls, with an interface around the back with audio controls running down the right of the front panel.

Importantly, though, the fully loaded PreSonus FaderPort and Studio 24c interface will cost well over £500 together. If you can manage with just one motorised fader – and the thinking is that you can tackle tasks like automation one channel at a time – then ioStation 24c looks like a huge bargain.

Out of the box, the unit nicely angled for desktop use. You'll possibly want to attach the supplied rubber feet to stop slipping on said desk, but we found its weight kept it in place during our tests without them.

The unit needs to be powered by a supplied PSU (not buss-powered sadly). Controls on the front are dominated by a great set of transport controls and 16 buttons split above and below a main rotary that can control multiple parameters depending on which mode you are in. Each of these buttons doubles up in functionality by means of a Shift button. You'll need to download and install the latest version

of PreSonus's Universal Control software which allows you to set sample rates, buffer sizes etc on connected interfaces. You'll also have to make sure everything is up to date at this stage – we had to make sure both UC and our version of Studio One were the latest versions and also updated the ioStation firmware. Then on boot up with Studio One the ioStation 24c should be available as one of the controller devices. (Check it's there using the Configure External Devices option.)

Once done, though, integration with Studio One (and the supplied and excellent Studio One Artist) is understandably excellent. It feels that much more integrated than the other DAWs we try (see below) and that bit quicker to respond, although we're not sure if we are imagining this or if it's just because the combination feels so slick and made for one another.

Navigating around the main arrangement is a joy, with reassuring clicks and motor whirs from

“It really comes into its own for proper colouration of beats, basses and beyond”

the fader as you jump from channel to channel (and the subsequent volume to volume).

The Solo, Mute and Arm (for recording) buttons all control their respective icons on the top panel of the unit, and the Transport controls do the same at the bottom. The Automation features are also useful with Touch, Write and Read options. Switching between channels using the Prev/Next buttons (and the various buttons beneath the main encoder), zooming and navigating around are also a joy.

The manual is also very good and takes you on a hand-holding journey through the other main DAWs in terms of audio interface setup. In terms of setting the unit up as a different DAW controller you simply restart it and press Next, then either the Mute, Bypass or Arm buttons to enable Logic, Cubase/Nuendo and Live respectively (in MCU mode), the Touch button to enable Pro Tools (HUI) operation, or Solo to put it back in Studio One mode.

In Logic, the unit works well as a controller with broadly the same controls as Studio One. It isn't quite as instantaneous - which seems to be Logic lagging somewhat - but all in all, additional features like the Undo/Redo and Zoom options make it a pleasing experience, and one that we think we will quite easily grow used to with a bit of practice.

Ableton Live (in MCU mode) performed pretty much identically aside from the fact that it also comes with the ability to launch clips and scenes by pressing Scroll then Click for a clip and Section for a scene, plus options to switch between Session and Arrangement views. Zoom options and the Undo and Redo are also present and correct and while there are (pretty obviously) better Live controllers, ioStation 24c does a great job - one of the best we've seen within the confines of the MCU standard.

Conclusion

We look at the interfacing side of ioStation in the box top right and that, combined with its extensive control features, make it an attractive



The Studio Magic bundle contains pretty much every plugin you need to make music



The interface section offers high quality recording options and some useful hands-on controls

The Interface

With all our chat about ioStation 24c's DAW control capabilities, it is almost too easy to overlook the back panel and front controls that double this device up as an audio interface. There are two XLR/instrument line combos at the back plus two quarter-inch outputs, a headphone-out and a Footswitch control that can be used to start and stop recordings and the like. (Useful if you have your hands full with a guitar or something).

The interface incorporates two XMAX mic preamps and 24-bit, 192 kHz analogue-to-digital converters which pay off with the resulting sound which delivers crystal clear recordings.

Around the front you get Gain pots for the mic preamp inputs, a Line level button (that changes the input from Instrument level to Line level for keyboards and drum machines) plus a 48v phantom power button. Most useful are the Mix dial (that allows you to mix the recorded signal with your DAW playback at zero latency) and the Mute button which enables you to switch off your monitors when recording. A headphone level dial completes the controls. It's a very solid interface, very useful for a wide variety of recording tasks - from singer-songwriter to bedroom producer, there's plenty of flexibility here.

multi-solution box. In fact if you consider that it also includes two DAWs (Studio One Artist and Ableton Live Lite) plus the Studio Magic bundle that includes Output Movement and Arturia Analog Lab Lite plus other plugins (six virtual instruments, and nine effects plugins in total) you could consider this as the ultimate beginner bundle. Certainly if someone had thrown this in as an option when we began our journey in music production, we would probably have bitten their hands off. It is one great-sounding interface, a versatile DAW controller (with the luxury of a moving fader) and all the software you need to make music... at just over £250 for the lot. **cm**

Web presonus.com

Alternatively

Behringer X Touch One
£122

A motorised fader and LED screen on this MCU and HUI controller but there's no software bundle

Softube Console 1 MkII
cm246 » 9/10 » £349

Fully-featured DAW controller with quality UA and Softube effects

Verdict

For Great, high-quality interface
Controller digs deep in most DAWs
Especially good for Studio One
Very good value for what you get
Good software bundle

Against Not buss-powered
Need to update everything for a slick controller result

An all-in-one box that actually performs both (actually all three) of its tasks with some aplomb. Great value too

9/10