



Behringer Xenyx 2442FX Mixer

Paul White

The Xenyx 2442FX is an updated version of Behringer's Eurorack UB2442FX mixer, offering improved mic preamps, and 'British' vintage-style EQ. Also included as part of the package is a self-powered, two-channel USB audio interface that can be connected to the Tape In/Out phons for recording the stereo output from the desk

The Xenyx range of analogue mixers offers improved sound quality and USB interfacing with computers, plus the extremely competitive pricing we've come to expect from Behringer.

and for stereo playback. This is a true four-buss console with a separate, dedicated stereo buss, so the group busses can be used as multitrack recording outputs at the

same time as some of the stereo channels are used for multitrack return monitoring. There's also been a bit of a cosmetic overhaul too.



150kHz, and is only 3dB down at 200kHz.

The mixer still adheres to the 19-inch format, with included rack ears that can be bolted to the sides of the chassis if you need them. Also included in the box is the USB interface, which has a captive USB cable and four unbalanced phono connectors (two-in, two-out). The layout of the mixer comprises eight mono mic/line input channels, two stereo input channels that can also double up as mono mic channels, and two line-only stereo input channels.

This means that the maximum number of microphones that can be connected is 10, although that should be enough for most small band giging situations, and certainly sufficient for the majority of home recording applications. All eight mono channels have insert points and direct outputs, the latter being particularly useful for recording when you need more simultaneous feeds than the four buss outputs can provide. Each channel has routing buttons to send it to the main Left/Right mix buss and to the four groups, but if you want to record directly from a channel output without sending it anywhere else, you can achieve this simply by not routing the channel to either the busses or the main outputs.

Conforming to the usual wedge-shaped profile, the mixer layout is absolutely identical to that of the UB2442FX, with the mic and line inputs, insert points and two-track phonos on the top panel, along with two headphone outlets and a 12V BNC connector for lighting power. To avoid overcrowding the top panel, the main and buss outs, the aux inputs and outputs, the direct outs and other connectors are on the rear panel. Both balanced jack and XLR versions of the main outputs are provided. Note that the four group outputs are doubled up onto eight output jacks so that you can leave an eight-track recorder or audio interface permanently connected; buss 1 feeds both sockets 1 and 5, 2 feeds 2 and 6, and so on, with the recorder then used to determine where the signal is actually recorded. A stereo TRS jack carries the output from the internal effects section and there's an effects bypass footswitch jack for use with an optional latching footswitch.

Global 48 Volt phantom power can be applied across all the mic inputs via a rocker switch on the rear panel next to the power switch, and the PSU is internal so there are no wall-warts to tread on or to lose. The

integral switched-mode power supply automatically adapts to any mains supply from 100 to 240V, at 50 or 60 Hz, without the need to switch voltages.

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Maximum Effectiveness

The Xenyx 2442FX also incorporates a 24-bit digital effects processor, which I assume is based on their Virtualizer rack effects box, as it seems identical in architecture to the one used in the earlier incarnation of this console. It does come loaded with a different set of presets, however, which looks a bit more promising, as the original version had, in my opinion, too many effects that you'd never normally use and not enough sensible, bread-and-butter delays and reverbs.

The effects section still offers just presets, with the 99 options covering reverbs, ambience, delay, modulation, pitch-shift and many useful combination effects based on delay plus one other effect. The delay has no tap-tempo button, which I find rather limiting, but you have to keep in mind that this is a very inexpensive mixing console and it still offers a lot more functionality than some of its more costly



competitors.

The integral effects are fed from Aux 3 and come back into the mix via the Aux 3 return, but these send and return points are also available on the rear panel, if you wish to connect something else. There's also a stereo feed available from the effects processor output if you need it. In all, there are four sends: two switchable as a pair

SOUND ON SOUND

Behringer Xenyx 2442FX £289

pros

- Good sound quality with smooth-sounding EQ.
- Inexpensive
- Flexible for recording or live sound.
- Improved effects presets.
- Included USB audio interface.

cons

- Short faders.
- Effects have no tap-tempo function for setting delay times.

summary

Given its attractive price, the Behringer Xenyx 2442FX mixer has a lot to offer the small studio operator and the included USB interface is a bonus if you only need to record two channels at once.

The mic preamps in this console use the latest Behringer Xenyx circuitry, which is claimed to be an improvement over its predecessor, the Invisible-series preamp, while the EQ is now designed to recreate the vintage British EQ sound, by which I assume they mean things like the old Trident consoles from the 1970s. The overall frequency response of the mixer circuitry has been further extended, and is now within an impressive ± 1 dB from 10Hz up to

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▶ between pre- and post-fade, and two fixed as post-fade effects sends. All have stereo returns with both send and return level controls as well as the ability to solo the sends.

A two-character blue LED display shows the number of the current effects patch, while the effects categories and their locations are printed below. The effects signal can be routed to either the main output or groups. In live situations, this routing button can also double as an effects kill switch as long as you're not using the busses for anything else.

Channel View

As is now common with many of today's mixers, whilst all eight mono channels are identical, offering both mic and balanced line inputs, the stereo channels are equipped slightly differently. On the mono channels, the white Gain Trim knob is followed by an 18dB/octave, 75Hz low cut switch and a (non-bypassable) three-band EQ. The high and low EQ shelving filters operate at 12kHz and 80Hz respectively, with ± 15 dB gain range, while the mid sweep covers 100Hz to 8kHz. This is a useful frequency range as it means the upper bass frequencies are included, which isn't always the case, as swept mids often stop at 200 to 250Hz.

The stereo channels don't have swept mid EQs; the same high-and low-shelving controls are teamed with a pair of fixed-frequency mid-bands operating at 500Hz and 3kHz respectively. The standard mic channels all have balanced XLR and jack inputs (connecting the jack disables the XLR), whilst the first two stereo channels have stereo line inputs on balanced jacks and mono mic inputs, with the same switchable low-cut filters as the mono channels. Finally, we come to the two stereo, line-only channels, which have no low-cut switches, but feature the same four-band fixed EQ as the other stereo channels. All four aux sends are available to all channels, as is full routing to the two buss pairs or to the main output. Each channel also has its own Mute button, with amber status LED, and a Solo button, with a red status LED that also doubles as a

Alternatives

If you don't need the USB audio interface, the cheaper Behringer UB2442FX offers the same functionality, but with the older EQ and preamps and, in my opinion, a less useful choice of effects presets. It's hard to find anything else that offers so much functionality for the price, although the Alesis Firewire mixers are well worth a look and if your budget can extend a bit further, you have the Soundcraft FX range, which has the advantage of programmable effects. The Samson MDR10 is also an affordable alternative for basic home recording requirements.

Xenyx 1222FX: 12-channel version

The smaller Xenyx 1222FX is a simple 12:2 mixer with a fixed three-band EQ (mid set at 2.5kHz) on all channels. As with the Xenyx 2442FX, rack ears and a USB audio interface are included and power comes in directly from the mains. The first four inputs are mono mic/line channels, with switchable phantom power on the mic inputs, and the first two stereo channels can also function as mono mic channels; the final pair of stereo inputs are line-only. This mixer has the same effects section as the Xenyx 2442FX, but also includes a surround knob for widening the apparent width of the stereo effect.

On this console there are just two aux sends, one for pre-fade monitoring and the other feeding the internal effects, but with a jack output allowing it to be connected elsewhere. Two separate effects controls allow different amounts of effects to be routed to the main and monitor feeds, and there's also a voice canceller that, in effect, tries to subtract mono mid-range sounds to reduce the amount of vocal left in a mix. Next to this is a

Standby button that kills all the mic channels so you can play music in live gig interludes without having to mute the mic channels first.

All the channels have Mute buttons, but the Solo button is a casualty of economy, as is control-room monitor source switching. However, the mixer does include a nine-band graphic equaliser that can be used in the main or monitor signal path, and this includes LEDs in the slider caps that indicate when excessive activity, such as feedback, is occurring in that band. An octave-per-fader graphic equaliser is a bit of a blunt instrument for tackling feedback, but it's better than nothing.

There are no direct outs on this mixer (although the first four channels have inserts) and no busses, but using the included USB interface, it provides a very cost-effective means of recording and monitoring two tracks at a time, and the good effects section is a bonus. It's also a good choice for anyone who needs something simple that will double for demo recording and for small live gigs.



clip LED. The Pan/Balance controls determine the odd/even buss selection and left/right routing in the usual way, and there's a further large red Solo LED in the master section to let you know one or more Solo buttons are down. All the faders are 60mm types, and the master fader is ganged stereo.

Master Section

The master section is clearly set out, with the effects section at the top and the aux send and return level controls and send Solo buttons below. Preset effects are selected using the rotary Effects knob and loaded by

pressing the FX Program knob. Two additional controls enable the two effects returns to be added to the correspondingly numbered monitor mix, while the Aux 3 return (the internal FX section) can be routed either to the main stereo mix or to either of the two subgroup pairs. A further button solos all four aux return busses, so that you can easily hear any soloed channel with any added effects.

The control-room monitoring panel is set out for studio use, but with a shared phones and control-room level knob. You can, however, feed two sets of phones at once. ▶

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► For monitoring, the control-room/phones source is switchable between two-track input, subgroups 1/2 or 3/4, or the main stereo mix. When a Solo button is pressed, the solo signal overrides the currently selected monitor source, but doesn't affect the main outputs. The Tape To Main button allows the stereo tape input phonos to be fed into the main stereo mix; if you were to use this to bring back the mixed output from a software sequencer, you would be able to monitor your sequencer tracks along with the live sounds passing through the mixer. It is to these Tape inputs and outputs that the included USB audio interface is most likely to be connected, which means that most of the time you'll want to monitor either just the two-track return or the two-track return plus the

I always find preset effects restricting, especially when it comes to delays, where you probably want to fine-tune the delay time, but on the whole the effect quality is good and this new selection of presets is infinitely more usable than before, both live and in the studio. In particular, there are several really nice vocal reverbs, whereas before you were pushed to find two or three that were actually useful.

In terms of quality, I was always surprised at how well the previous mic preamps performed. The phantom power circuitry seems perfectly happy with half a dozen condenser mics and some phantom-powered DI boxes connected at the same time. The new mic preamps sound both very low in noise and uncoloured to my ears, and there's also a



mixer's main output.

Metering is via a three-colour, 12-LED stereo bar-graph that normally follows the main stereo output levels, or the PFL level when Solo is being used. There's no metering at all for the group busses. All four group faders have separate Left and Right routing buttons for sending the group signal to the main stereo mix, as you may wish to do when subgrouping drums or backing vocals, for example.

User Impressions

Having used the predecessor to this mixer both for live work and as a small studio mixer in a friend's studio, I have always found the format to be pretty flexible, especially when you consider how little the mixer costs. It's fine for eight-track recording and mixing, or for use as a recording front-end if you're mixing 'in-the-box'. The fact that you now get a bundled USB audio interface is icing on the cake, as it avoids having to buy a separate interface if you're the type of user who records only one or two parts at a time.

The built-in effects are easy to use, as you'd expect from their preset nature; pick a number, push the button and, apart from setting the level, you're done.

sensible amount of headroom. Whilst only the main the inputs and outputs are balanced, hum and noise was not an issue, and the new EQ sounds pretty good, with a nice warmth and clarity to it. A three-band EQ will always be limited, but for adding a bit of gloss or for taking out a bit of low-end mud it works fine.

The included two-channel USB audio interface was recognised immediately by my Mac system, without the need to add any driver software, and the subjective audio quality I achieved from it was surprisingly good. In all, I feel the upgrade to this already workmanlike little mixer has been highly worthwhile, and within its price range it now offers a lot of flexibility to both the home studio owner and the band looking for a small live sound mixer with integral effects. **SCS**

information

£ Xenyx 2442FX £289; 1222FX £187.
Prices include VAT.

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