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Review - Presonus AudioBox 1818VSL

MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 2012 AT 7:13AM | [EMAIL ARTICLE](#)



A few years ago, the thought of having to consider even a tablet for music making, let alone an interface, was unthinkable. **Yet with the arrival of Auria**, music making on an iPad has gone from kid to teenager, getting ever closer by the week.

The Auria offers most of what anyone will need to make music on the road, but of course an audio interface is required if you are going to do any serious tracking.

My weapon of choice from [the list outlined in the Wavemachine Labs website](#) was the Presonus AudioBox 1818VSL; perhaps through my misunderstanding, or poor marketing, I did not realise that the Presonus AudioBox 1818VSL is the guts of a StudioLive console, which makes it an attractive proposition. For those considering both studio computer and iPad mobile rigs, it may be the best choice as it works with both.

First impressions count and having being spoilt by interfaces like the the Avid Omni and more recently the UA Apollo, I did feel a little disappointed when opening the box. It looks beautiful, don't get me wrong, but it isn't that deep and it does feel a little more like a consumer box, than something professional - of course as I say that's a first impression - but they do count. However to be fair, the two comparisons mentioned are at least 3 times the price, so size may not matter when you do the math!



What I do like about the Presonus AudioBox 1818VSL is that it gives me 8 x Jack/XLR connectors on the front panel, with gain controls, UA and Avid take note! It also has 2 ganged 48v switches for easy selection on the front panel. Around the back it has PSU connector, USB2, MIDI in and out, sync out, SPDIF and lightpipe, as well as more outputs and the main monitor connectors, all on jacks. So although this may look like a consumer box, the connectors show it means business.

It also ships with their [StudioLive](#) software, which, like the UA Apollo, allows you to set up complex processing in the record chain and then either record or simply monitor with those in the chain - nice. Of course this does not apply when using it with an iPad, then you simply have the access to the inputs for recording.

Conclusion

The XMAX pre-amps sound nice, using a 30v power rail to give them the extra oomph; if there's one thing that audio gear likes, that's power and often the first thing to suffer in prosumer audio equipment is this kind of thing. So hats off to Presonus for not trying to skimp on this.

The supplied software is comprehensive and again helps when tracking, where you can add channel strip and dynamics to the chain, you can also add reverb and delay to your monitor send, although in their own words 'The time-based effects are for monitoring only and can't be recorded. Of course, most people add reverb and delay effects during editing and mixdown, rather than while tracking, in order to ensure that the effects on all tracks work together.' Not a deal killer, but sometimes you want to be able to record time based effects, so that would nice to see sorted in the next version.

The unit streets for around £400, which when you consider all it has to offer, with an excellent amount of I/O, near zero latency monitoring (via the supplied software) and the added bonus of being a pro iPad interface when required, then this is an interface worth giving serious consideration to. My advice is check it out, but if you're as fickle as me, then don't be put off by the small physical footprint - size doesn't always matter!

Thanks to Alex at Source Distribution for the loan unit

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