

TapeOp Magazine, January/February 2007 DigiMAX FS



By Andy Hong

When this unit arrived in my studio, my first assumption was that it was a "remix" of the DigiMAX 96 or LT, both of which are fine units and sound pretty good, especially for their price. But honestly, they're kinda boring. Eight preamps feeding eight A-D converters to Lightpipe—clean sound, affordable, boring. I didn't expect much more from the FS. Boy was I wrong!

First of all, I was immediately impressed by the FS's sound. Not only do the mic preamps sound natural and clear, with better low-end extension, cleaner highs, and less upper-midrange "friction" than what you might expect from other affordable mic preamps (we're talking less than \$100 per channel here), but whatever PreSonus did with the converters, they got it right. For example, at 96 kHz, I preferred the sound of the PreSonus DACs over those in my Pro Tools HD 192 I/O—and it wasn't just a minor difference—whether I clocked internally or externally with the latest Drawmer and Lucid clocks.

Oh wait, did I say Digital to Analog Converters? Yup. The FS ain't just a mic preamp. In fact, if you've got a recorder, mixer, computer, or whatever with ADAT Optical I/O, the FS might be the perfect companion. Here's the scoop:

You get eight channels of discrete Class A mic preamps. And yes, after the sound of the unit impressed me, I just had to open up the box and look inside. Turns out that each Neutrik Combo input connector has an army of individual surface-mount components (along with normal-sized capacitors) behind it. There are a bunch of 33079 quad op amps too, but these are for... the inserts, direct outs, and DACs! What a package this thing is!

So imagine hooking up the FS to your rig. You get the eight preamps, two of which can operate as instrument DIs and the rest as line inputs. You get eight direct outs—

not only great for feeding analog devices/recorders down the line, but also for zero-latency monitoring if you feed a mixer. You get eight inserts for analog processing before A-D conversion. And plus, you get eight channels of D-A conversion coming back. (For 88.2 and 96 kHz operation, pairs of Lightpipe in S/MUX configuration are required.) Alongside a small analog mixer, the DigiMAX FS is pretty much all you need to record, overdub, and mix with your Lightpipe-equipped recorder or computer. Even if you prefer working "in the box", you can use the FS to bring audio out for analog processing before going back in. Or heck, for \$600 street, buy an FS to upgrade the sound of your PT HD rig! (New Year's resolution: stop bitching about my HD 192 I/O, and sell it.) And speaking of PT, I found the FS to be an ideal partner to my M-Audio Lightbridge (FireWire to ADAT Optical converter) reviewed in this issue.