

Focusrite Clarett+ OctoPre £710

Need more mic inputs and already have a suitably equipped interface? This unit could be ideal, says **Jon Musgrave**

KEY FEATURES I/O: 6 Mic/line inputs; 2 Mic/line/instrument inputs; Inserts on all inputs; 2 ADAT I/O for 8 channels at 44.1/48kHz and 88.2/96kHz, 4 channels at 176.4/192kHz, 8 balanced line outputs on 25pin D-Sub connector; Simultaneous A-D and D-A option **BUNDLED SOFTWARE:** Focusrite's Plugin Collective; Red 2/3 Suite, plus offerings from Brainworx, XLN Audio, Antares, Relab and Softube





Most audio interfaces offer two or maybe four mic inputs. If you want to record multitracked drums or simply want more mic inputs, you could opt for one of the few interfaces with eight mic inputs. However, many interfaces include additional line or digital inputs allowing you to extend your mic input options by using an additional mic input device. This is where Focusrite's OctoPre comes into play. Part of their prosumer Clarett+ USB interface range, OctoPre is a mic pre and A-D, D-A converter with no computer interfacing. This not only makes it pretty easy to understand, but also means that you can pair it up with any manufacturer's suitably equipped interface. It offers improved sonic performance over the original Clarett devices, with a lower noise figure on both inputs and outputs, better dynamic range and new A-D and D-A converters.

Magic 8

Let's have a quick run through what's on offer. First up you get eight Clarett mic pres. These were specifically designed for this range and have a very linear response and very low noise. The preamp also includes their switchable analogue Air circuit. This emulates Focusrite's classic ISA transformer design, changing the input impedance and also engaging the transformer resonance effect, resulting in a gentle sloped boost that starts around 100Hz, reaching +4dB at about 10kHz.

The Clarett+ OctoPre has two

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inputs on the front and six on the back and all use combi mic/line TRS connectors. The two on the front are suitable for Hi-Z instruments. You've also got single jack TRS-style insert points for all eight inputs. Line outputs are on a 25-pin D-Sub, which is slightly frustrating, but understandable given the space constraints on the back panel. You also have two pairs of ADAT optical in/out and Word Clock in/out. The ADAT I/O serves two purposes, providing digital output of the mic pre signals, but also providing D-A conversion from the optical input to the line outputs on the D-Sub connector (see below).

One-stop shop

OctoPre is very much a self-contained unit and front panel features include sample rate selection, phantom power (two banks of four), clock sync (Internal, Word Clock and ADAT with lock indicator LED), multi-part input meters, and individual switching to Hi-Z for inputs 1 and 2. Each mic pre gets its own smooth action physical gain knob with red overload LED. Below these are two-colour backlit soft buttons that work in conjunction with the global Insert and Air buttons to activate these functions. There is also a button labelled ADAT to Line, for simultaneous A-D and D-A

conversion using both ADAT inputs and outputs. When disabled, the mic preamps feed both the line outputs and ADAT outputs.

OctoPre's instrument inputs use a JFET circuit. I've tested this before and once again the clarity of this design coupled with the impressive gain on offer (57dB) make this great for weedy passive pickups. It also handles peaky transients really well. As you'd imagine, the mic pres are whisper quiet, and deliver a nice clean signal. But you've also got the Air option for added sheen if needed.

All told it's a welcome, though predictable, upgrade to this mic pre converter, and although not cheap, it provides an excellent I/O extension to your existing interface. **FM**

FM VERDICT

8.7

OctoPre was already a great and this refresh brings it in line with other Clarett+ units. A costly but excellent way to extend your I/O

THE PROS & CONS



Very quiet, linear mic preamp

Excellent JFET instrument input

Simple, one-button-per-function design

Simultaneous A-D and D-A routing



Quite expensive

Line output only via D-Sub