



New Products,
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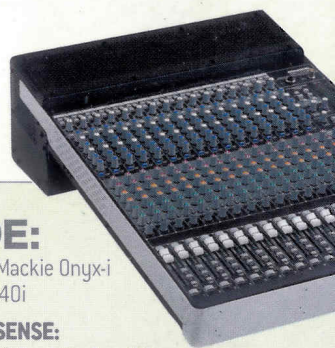
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ProAudio Review

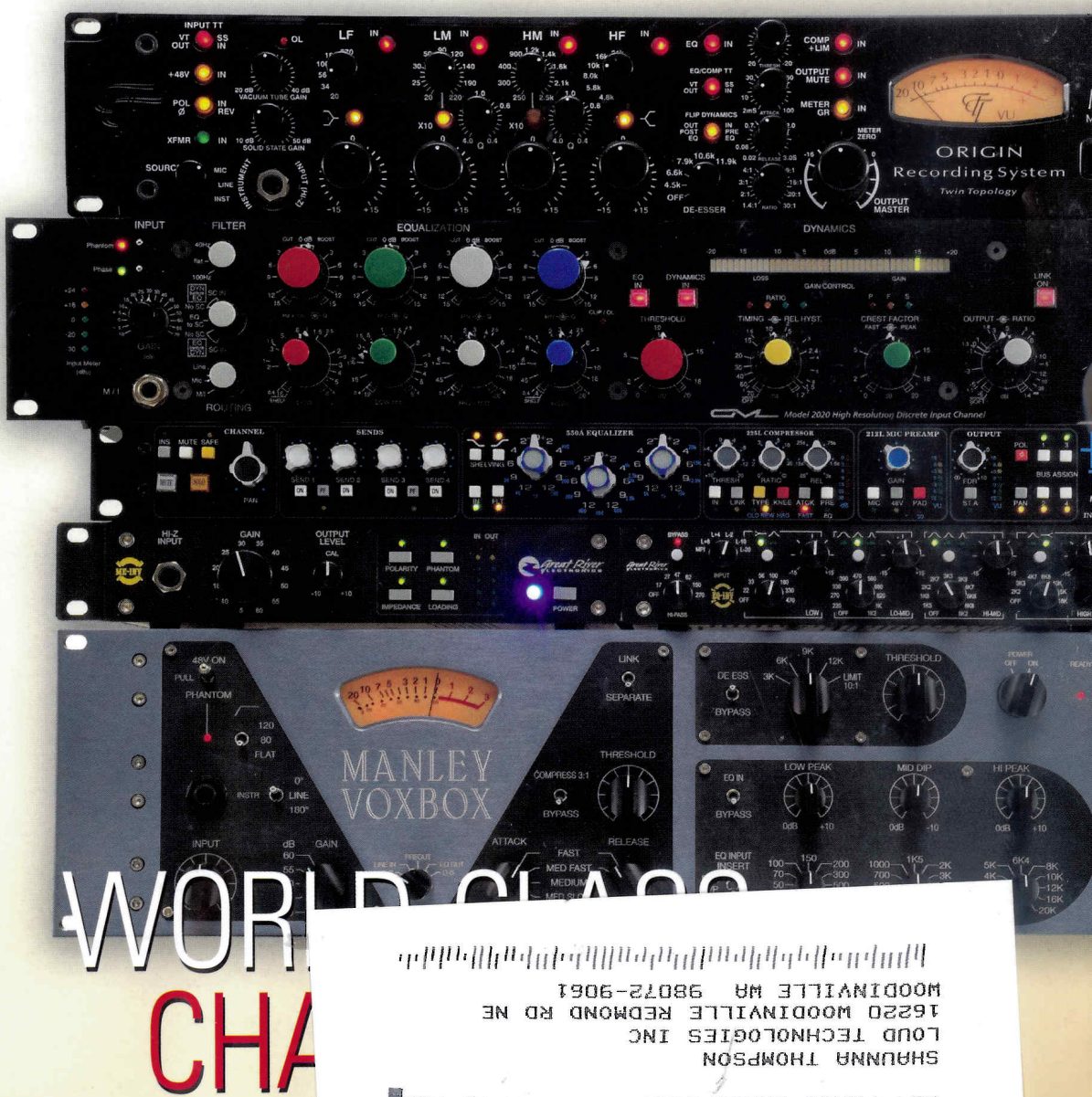
The Review Resource for Sound Professionals



INSIDE:

- **IN USE:** Mackie Onyx-i Series 1640i
- **STUDIO SENSE:** Premium Priced, Budget Wise

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Mackie Onyx-i Series 1640i Analog Console/Digital I/O

Onyx-i is a potential game-changer based on just one of its significant DAW-friendly features.



stereo mix out). It has been at the center of my personal studio ever since, and I've become quite fond of, and accustomed to, its features. For the money, I haven't discovered another console out there that serves the same purposes at the same quality level and it has worked flawlessly from day one of ownership. I must also note that the 1640 (just like the 1640i) serves as a great analog mixer for sound reinforcement when 16 input channels is enough.

From an analog perspective, the new 1640i is much the same as its predecessor offering all of the best qualities of the original 1640: four busses; 16 channel strips each with nice Onyx mic preamps; the useful four-band Perkins EQ with sweepable high-mids and low-mids, per channel; available DI on the first two channels; six pre/post channel aux sends; 16 balanced, pre-channel-insert direct outputs (post preamp/pre-EQ) via two DB-25 connectors. [This mic amp and EQ in the i-Series are also featured in Mackie's Onyx 24-4 mid-format live console; see our take on those components in this late 2007 review: www.proaudioreview.com/article/2540 — Ed.]

So what's new? Updated aesthetics — snazzy brushed aluminum edging around a decidedly more rugged-looking chassis — encapsulate three key updates for the 1640i, each based on FireWire-enabled routing features and increased functionality: dual built-in 24-bit/96 kHz FireWire ports, allowing 16 channels both in and out; truly comprehensive I/O routing via FireWire, including aux sends, groups, and pre/post EQ for all channels; and — last but not least — a new compatibility with Pro Tools M-

In today's ITB (in-the-box) mixing world, the debut of a new analog mixing console usually gleans comparatively little attention amongst feature-packed DAW updates and innovative plug-in releases.

Unveiled at last year's AES Convention in New York, the Onyx-i Series of analog consoles — and particularly the flagship model, the 1640i — is an anomaly. It simply can do what no other affordable multipurpose analog mixer has done before, a fact that is true on a multitude of levels of functionality.

For these reasons, Onyx-i easily won a

2009 PAR Excellence Award. In conducting this review, I learned exactly why the Onyx-i earned its widespread industry accolades.

Features

Two years ago, I bought an original Onyx 1640 analog mixer along with its additional 24-bit/96 kHz FireWire I/O card (allowing 16 + mix DAW inputs and

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Powered 8, via Mackie's \$50 driver downloadable from the Mackie website. This driver effectively turns any Onyx-i mixer into Pro Tools-compatible I/O — one with no need for Avid hardware.

In Use

When I first replaced my 1640 with the 1640i, it behaved and was used just like its predecessor with very few and minor differences [e.g., no main mix trim pot on its now-standard two-port FireWire I/O]. Thus, in typical Mackie fashion, well enough was left alone, even in such a significant product update.

Whether recording live tracks to an Alesis HD24-XR via DB-25 analog direct outs or monitoring/mixing pre-recorded tracks with multiple inserted compressors, hardware-based effects via aux sends, and multiple EQs on a console full of line-level signal, the 1640i met my high expectations, those originally set by the 1640's admirable capabilities and good sonic qualities.

Gradually, I discovered the essence of the 1640i is how it can serve as a deep comprehensive interface for any Mac or



PC-based DAW. As such it becomes an affordable 16x16 FireWire digital I/O with numerous insert points, sends, and built-in EQ, allowing truly creative audio production, in or out of [or somewhere in between] "the box." For example, in my first two mixing tests using a rock recording project, I utilized my main DAW, Apple Logic, for pre-mix editing, multitrack comping, and submixing, mute and level automation, and digital effects, then sent 12 tracks to the 1640i channels for some EQ, as well as inserted channel compression, outboard EQ, and a few guitar effects from gear I already own, then back in the box as a stereo mix.

That experiment revealed just the tip of the iceberg in signal path possibilities that lie within the 1640i. For studio use, consider subgroup-enabled track bouncing via FireWire following console EQ with patched-in outboard compressors or mixing a studio project [or live event] while using DAW-based effects: routing the 1640i's aux sends via FireWire to a DAW for multiple mono in/stereo out processors [and back to console via input switches FW1 and FW2]. Analog/digital I/O options abound when an Onyx-i is the nexus. I've already tried a few of

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Fast Facts

Applications

Project/private recording/mixing studio; live club/theater and house-of-worship environments

Key Features

4-bus, 16 channel mixer; 16 Onyx preamps; 4-band Perkins EQ w/ sweepable mids; 4-segment metering per channel; 16x16 FireWire channel streaming; FireWire routing for aux sends, groups, and pre/post EQ for all channels; 6 aux sends with pre/post assignment and solo; 60mm channel and master faders; DI on first two channels; qualified for use with all major DAWs, including Pro Tools M-Powered 8 (latter of which requires \$50 USD driver via mackie.com)."

Price

\$2,199 list

Contact

Contact: Mackie | 425-487-4333 | mackie.com

Product Points



- ▶ Well equipped, good-sounding, 16-channel analog mixer suited for studio and live applications with plenty of I/O
- ▶ Unprecedented FireWire-to-Mac or PC DAW integration, including Pro Tools M-Powered
- ▶ Familiar Mackie logic
- ▶ Helpful, friendly technical support



- ▶ No stereo mix trim on FireWire output (available in optional card for original 1640)"

Score

Thanks to its comprehensive FireWire routing features for virtually any DAW platform, the 1640i is well built to serve many masters.