



Arturia AudioFuse 8Pre

RUSSELL COTTIER tests a feature-packed USB interface & ADAT expander

The sleek yet utilitarian industrial design of the AudioFuse 8Pre belies its comparatively reasonable price point (around £600 street price). Arturia is perhaps best known for a background in software and hardware synths, but can they deliver in the audio interface domain? Arturia's preamps utilise the DiscretePRO technology for very impressive noisefloor figures on paper, but how does this 16-in 20-out audio interface actually sound?

The first striking thing about this 1U rack is the weight, the casing seems very well built indeed and the orange rack ears can be configured to mount as feet also. In a nod to the current trends there are two front panel inputs combi XLR/TRS sockets. These inputs are also present on the rear, including balanced inserts on TRS plus the six remaining inputs as combi sockets. Each channel has a nice set of illuminating buttons that scream quality and the gain pots feel just great. Possible input modes are detected automatically on insertion of a given plug and can be cycled through with the button on channels 1 and 2. This simplicity came as a welcome respite from many other modern interfaces that require a screen and tweaking of options several menu layers deep. If you need deeper control the AudioFuse Control Panel software does allow live monitoring mixes, metering options etc. This unit is a breeze to operate and really requires no user manual — I was up and recording within two minutes of opening the box.

Phase, Pad and +48V are all offered as buttons on the front panel for the eight inputs and there is a monitoring section that controls the dedicated rear speaker outs and front headphone sockets. The volumes are controlled with nice smooth pots and there are both sizes of headphone socket on the front panel, a really nice feature for a modern setup. Buttons for mono and an option to toggle the output between Main 1-2 and Cue for live latency-free monitoring are also present on the monitor

section. The internal headphone amplifier coped well in real world recording scenarios and offered plenty of output for tracking sessions.

ADAT preamp extension module

Option switches on the right of the front panel allow the unit to be configured as an ADAT extension module for your current interface or a USB device. Arturia have helpfully bundled both USB C cable and a USB A to C cable for those of us who are lagging behind the times a little. Options for the mode, wordclock sync etc. are found in the AudioFuse Control Panel software

Eight TRS outputs on the rear of the unit complement the two additional dedicated speaker outputs. These sounded good with plenty of headroom and no noticeable frequency response or transient problems. There is also an additional hidden pair of USB feeds that pass through the Cue mix as a stereo input to your DAW, I actually found this useful for non-critical live recordings and creation of an additional rough bounce feed. You could even work in a more console-like manner and print multiple mics to single tracks.

The technical specifications of the unit are impressive on paper and Arturia claim -119dB noise floor for the analogue input stages. The DiscretePRO pre stages are nice and clean, offering plenty of headroom above the internal noise floor for almost any scenario. Arturia don't make it clear if this 'DiscretePRO' is referring to actual discrete components vs operation amplifiers, or just the discrete mic and line paths. Either way they sound good and there is plenty of gain, ribbon mics did not break a sweat for the Arturia.

Clean sound

Transient response was exactly as it should be, and recording percussion, drums and acoustic guitar was accurate, retaining all the desired transients to deal with later in the mix stage. Frequency response of the mic and line inputs

offered no surprises, as one would expect from a modern preamplifier you get out pretty much what you put in. Impedance seemed high enough to behave with even awkward mics and I never found the preamps causing any unexpected mic behaviour. I couldn't quite measure the claimed -119dB noise floor on the test unit, but it was pretty close, and sounded very clean in practice. In terms of colour the AudioFuse is of course not designed to be overdriven in the analogue domain as the converters seem to clip below the analogue stage, but in reality the system handles clipping without getting too fizzy. Of course this does limit creative use of overdriving an input stage as one might employ in a console.

The two front panel instrument inputs would be ideal in anything from a project studio with a simple amp-sim to a commercial facility with an elaborate re-amping scenario. The inputs offer a high impedance mode that didn't stress even older passive single coil Strats, for example. The input can be easily pushed into clipping a little for heavier guitar parts which I always find delivers more realistic programme material for amp-sims.

The AudioFuse 8Pre comes packaged with the seven plug-ins of the Arturia Creative Suite — outside the scope of this article — but a very worthwhile and useful creative bundle. This could be a great solution for a new recordist who wants a music creation package, or an experienced pro who wants a few more channels in their rack. **i**

resolution/VERDICT

PROS Quality Construction. One button per function design ethos. Clean sound.

CONS No analogue clipping mode available.

www.arturia.com