

Black Lion
Audio
Revolution
2x2
 \$399
 blacklionaudio.com



By Jon
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Strengths

- + Solid build quality
- + Clean interference free audio
- + Quality headphone amplifier
- + Extensive visual feedback
- + Keen price
- + USB bus-powered

Limitations

- Fairly heavy

Quality audio is at the heart of this firm's ethos. We test the brand's first fully fledged audio interface

Black Lion Audio originally made its name customizing and upgrading other makers' hardware interfaces. Over the years the company also designed and built various hardware devices including mic preamps, compressors, converters and external clock units. Throughout, the vision has always been to squeeze the maximum sonic performance from the available components. Its latest venture, Revolution 2x2, incorporates this circuit design experience into the company's own 2in, 2out, 24bit, 192kHz, USB-C audio interface. What's more, it's more affordable than many of the upgrades. The interface is USB-powered with no PSU option and although at 1.4kg it's quite weighty, the half rack size means it's portable. The package is completed with software – PreSonus Studio One Artist, iZotope Elements Suite, Brainworx bx_digital and Lindell 6X-500.

Despite the keen price, Revolution 2x2 is packed with quality components and even includes branded USB cables. Meanwhile a new Macro MMC clocking circuit and their PG-I power filtering and decoupling system prioritize audio fidelity. Visually, the unit is understated and the feature set quite straightforward. Even so, nice touches include two identical mic/line/instrument inputs and zero latency monitoring with mix control and input mono-ing option. There's also stereo S/PDIF in/out and there's an Input selector to switch over from the analog preamps to S/PDIF (remember the unit is limited to 2in/2out). On the back there's one pair of

balanced outputs (1/4" TRS jacks) and on the front a single headphone output. The black design is nicely offset by backlit buttons, two-tone input level LEDs, a green USB indicator and multipart output level LEDs, so you have plenty of handy visual feedback and once you're up and running it really looks the part. I also really like the smooth controls, chunky Monitor output knob and mostly solid build quality.

You say you want a...

On Mac OS X Revolution 2x2 is class compliant so you simply plug up and make the necessary settings in Audio MIDI Setup. Meanwhile on Windows you'll need to download their ASIO driver. As for latency, Logic Pro X delivered a 79ms roundtrip at 32 samples, which is reasonable. Maybe more importantly, Revolution 2x2 was very stable at this small buffer size. Onboard zero latency monitoring means setup is easy and quick, and headphone output is clean and loud. The Direct control affects both the headphone and monitor outputs, which, although not perfect for all users, seems to be standard practice for a 2in, 2out configuration. In terms of audio performance it'd be nice to see maximum preamp gain above 55dB, although for a bus powered device this is acceptable and copes well with most sources.

I must say I'm mightily impressed by what Black Lion has achieved here. Revolution 2x2 looks unassuming, but is solidly built, is easy to set up, surprisingly portable and brings crystal clear audio. Extremely worthy of your time. ■