



**B**lack Lion Audio originally made their name customising and upgrading other makers' hardware interfaces. Over the years they've 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. Their latest venture, Revolution 2x2, incorporates this circuit design experience into their very own 2in, 2out, 24bit, 192kHz, USB-C audio interface. What's more, at £399, it's more affordable than many of their upgrades. The interface is USB-powered with no PSU option and although at 1.4kg it's quite weighty, the half rack unit size means it's also pretty portable. The package is completed by a decent software bundle including 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 prioritise audio fidelity.

When I turned everything up to full, true enough there was no unsavoury computer noise to fret about. Awesome stuff. Visually, the unit is pretty 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 analogue preamps to S/PDIF (remember the unit is limited to 2in/2out). On the back there's one pair of balanced outputs (¼" 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.

On Mac OS X Revolution 2x2 is class compliant so you simply plug up and then 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 7.9ms roundtrip at 32 samples, which is reasonable. Maybe more importantly, I found Revolution 2x2 was very stable at this small buffer

size. Onboard zero latency monitoring means setup for recording is easy and quick, and the headphone output is clean and potentially loud. It's worth saying that 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 they've 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. **FM**

## FM VERDICT

# 9.6

This mid-priced USB audio interface effortlessly gets audio to/from your DAW and runs rings around more expensive devices

## THE PROS & CONS



Solid build quality

Clean interference free audio

Quality headphone amplifier

Extensive visual feedback

Keen price

USB bus-powered



Fairly heavy