

Ashly digiMix24 Live Digital Console

By George Petersen

Ashly Audio has a long history building reliable analog mixing and outboard equipment for the professional live sound and installation markets. While the company carries a considerable legacy of analog expertise, Ashly is no newcomer to digital gear; its Ashly Protea DSP processors are world renowned for delivering top-notch sound and seamless integration with control technologies that users can easily navigate.

More than four decades later, the company returns to the console market, this time with an enviable track record in digital products. Clearly, this is *not* Ashly's first trip to the rodeo and knowing the importance of its digital mixing debut, the company spent more than a year working with beta testers to lock in on precisely the right combination of software, hardware and the user interface. So when production units began shipping earlier this year, the complete package was in place, not only the console itself, but also the optional Dante card as well as the free digiMix for the iPad. The mixer can record/play stereo to/from a USB drive, while an optional 32-channel USB recording/playback DAW interface card is offered at \$499.

» Hello, digiMix24!

The first product in Ashly's new range is the digiMix24. This versatile, compact 24-channel digital mixing console offers professional I/O, integrated signal processing and effects, user-friendly software and intuitive mixing via the control surface, with its 7-inch high-res touchpad. Additionally, a free digiMix iPad remote control integration app lets users remotely set stage monitor volumes, tweak parameters or to mix from different places in the venue. The unit has an eye-opening street price of \$1,249, with the Dante option adding another \$499.

The digiMix24 has 24 inputs — including 16 Class-A mic/line inputs; up to 14 mix buses (user-configurable); eight aux outputs, eight channel inserts; 33 channels of dynamics and equalization processing; and two stereo effects processors with reverb, delay, chorus and more. Its control surface combines a seven-inch LCD color touch screen and intelligent metering that's switchable to show input levels or relative fader positions. The system management software makes it easy to save, load, or copy mixer setups. A rear panel card slot supports field-installable cards for either Dante connectivity or a USB interface for easy 24-bit multi-track recording or playback.

The digiMix24 has a compact 20 x 14-inch footprint and weighs in at just under 18 pounds. Besides the card slot, the rear panel has 16 combo 1/4-inch-XLR line/mic inputs with TRS insert points on the first eight inputs. Inputs 17 through 24 are analog stereo line pairs fed through TRS jacks (17-20), RCA tape inputs (21-22) and USB (23-24). Outputs include stereo mains (on XLR and TRS jacks); eight 1/4-inch jacks for the four aux outs and four subgroup/aux outs; stereo RCA tape out pair; and stereo 1/4-inch control room outputs. In a live situation, the "control room" outs can be used to feed (via a separate level control) to a lobby, narthex or cry room or even to drive a set of monitor speakers when mixing in a booth or enclosed space.

Ethernet and USB control ports connecting the digiMix24 to a network for remote iPad control or loading any future "digiMix Utility" firmware updates. The ports for the USB 2-track I/O and a 1/4-inch headphone output are conveniently located on the top surface. And no wall warts here — the internal power supply accepts any voltage from 100 to 240

VAC and is fed from a standard IEC AC connector.

» Getting in Control

The user interface on the digiMix24 is distinctly different than most consoles. The single-fader interface does take a little getting used to, but after 15 minutes or so, you're pretty much an expert with all console operations. The mixer is designed for fast, easy operations, and virtually every mixer function can be accessed via the touch screen and/or dedicated controls. The top of the mixer has rotary trims for the channel inputs and bright 12-segment LED meters.

Below each meter is a select button that navigates that source directly to the 120mm Alps moving fader and that channel's control interface. The long throw on the fader is a nice touch, although there is some (but certainly not a lot of) mechanical noise. In situations where this might be an issue — theatre, very quiet sanctuaries, the fader speed (and resulting noise) can be adjusted within the system page. However, in any case the fader action was very accurate in reflecting any software mix changes.

Aux, sub, FX and main levels are all individually controlled via rotary controls. Bright colored buttons offer access to the six DCA groups, solo/mute/PFL/channel assigns, effects, switchable individual channel phantom power, the 31-band graphic EQ (on the main, sub and aux outs), and — on all channels — the 6-band parametric EQs, expander/gates and compressor limiters.

Two digital effect buses are available. Via tweakable parameters, customized effects can be assigned to each bus and include three types of reverb, delay, tremolo, flanger, chorus or combinations. User-defined effects can be saved to 104 presets.

» EZ Operations

The mixer's EZ-Mode offers a simplified and secure user control interface for a non-technical person to control the mixer with the same ease of use as if they were operating lighting dimmers.

One useful touch is that there are two EZ-Mode mixer types available. EZ-Mode Mixer #1 includes faders for DCA groups 1-4, aux outputs 1-4, and stereo main output level with mutes for each fader. The slightly more advanced EZ-Mode Mixer #2 includes faders for DCA groups 1-6, USB stereo input, tape/CD input, aux outputs 1-8, and stereo main output level, and fader mutes.

All signal routing, levels, EQ, FX, DCA groups and aux sends must be configured ahead of time in the main mixer before using EZ-Mode, but once there, operation by novice users becomes very straightforward.

Within the system control page, an admin user can also set a password, and prevent unauthorized access to any features in either full system or EZ-Mode, with only the input trims and AC power functions not subject to lock-out.

» Going Remote

Probably one of my favorite console features is the digiMix app, an iPad controller that offers remote access to nearly all console parameters. The app is simple to use, fast and is extremely well thought out and provides



remote interfacing whether in standard or EZ-Mode. The only downside here is that digiMix can currently only be controlled by a single iPad, so you can't set up multiple iPads for monitor mix access by several band members, for example.

» The Sound

Here's where the digiMix really shines. The preamps are a low-noise, discrete Class-A design. The DSP processing is 32-bit; the EQ's (graphic and parametrics) are smooth and musical and the dynamics and effects are useful, with the hall/room/plate reverbs particularly good sounding, with ample control opportunities (predelay, decay, brightness, room size, diffusion and wet/dry) to please the most ardent tweaker.

» Options and More

With the optional, field-installable \$499 Dante-32 module in place, the digiMix24 can be integrated into a Dante digital audio network, allowing the console to receive and transmit audio with other Dante devices, such as stage boxes, secondary mixers for monitoring or broadcast, etc. Dante stream configurations are set up via Audinate's free (Windows or Mac) software Dante Controller that uses an external router/computer combination to connect Dante audio receivers with transmitters. Once the console is set up with the Dante-source routings you prefer, the card retains those settings in flash memory, so if your configurations don't change, there's no need to use a computer again. The Dante Controller software is simple to use, employing a basic onscreen matrix to assign routings.

Another field-installable card option is a 32-channel USB digital audio module for interfacing the digiMix24 with other multi-track USB audio devices. Applications include multi-track recording or playback from a USB audio device, or interfacing directly to a multi-track DAW or playbacks for virtual sound checking.

As the console is well suited for either fixed install or portable applications, an ATA travel case is another option at \$229.

The digiMix24 has a street price of \$1,249. Like all Ashly products, the digiMix24 is covered by the company's five-year warranty (three years on the touch screen and moving fader). **FOH**

At a
Glance

Big Performance/ Low Price

Ashly enters the digital console market with serious, solid performer at a remarkably low cost.

Ashly digiMix24

PROS

- Rock solid build quality
- Dante and USB expansion options
- Affordable pricing

CONS

- Only 16 mic preamps
- Controlled by single iPad (for now)

STATS

Inputs	24
Aux Buses	8 (or four aux/four subgroups)
DCAs	6 DCA fader/mute groups
Sampling Rate	48 kHz
Dimensions	20.15 x 14 x 5.65 inches (WxDxH)
Weight	17.65 pounds
Street Price	\$1,249
Manufacturer	Ashly
More Info	ashly.com



The digiMix app offers full control of mix and DSP parameters



The rear panel is packed with I/O possibilities