



REVIEW

BY DARWIN GROSSE

Echo Indigo DJx and IOx

The Indigo experience—slimmer, faster, sexier

you can control the output mix before the audio gets to the card). The mixing software morphs based on the card that is in use, and significantly extends the capability of the Indigo interfaces.



How they play

The Indigo DJx is the perfect portable hardware setup for DJ-type performance, and seemed custom-made for use with software like Ableton Live. You can select the line-level outputs for use as the main audio output while using the headphone connection for cue mixing—all without needing a DJ mixer or other hardware. I used the DJx/Live combo for both performance and for mixing/programming, and I found the card both great sounding and convenient.

The Indigo IOx is probably more interesting to mobile engineers (vs. DJ/performers). It provides a pair of inputs and a pair of outputs, and is the ticket for portable mixing, tracking and location

recording. The inputs do not provide either mic preamps or phantom power (understandable in a device of this size). As a result, you will need either a small mixer or battery-powered preamp to capture miked field recordings. The IOx was great for capturing line-level hardware output—I used it several times for sampling and recording instruments for sequencing and compositing tracks.

The recording quality was uniformly great; it was much better than using the standard laptop inputs, and often rivaled my desktop-based interfaces. Because the interface literally fits inside the computer, it means that I am able to pack up for work at the drop of a hat, and be assured that the recording and playback quality will be up to snuff.

With both of the Indigo cards, I was very pleased with the audio quality and the flexibility of the driver/mixer software. Whenever I found myself needing to minimize my hardware setup, the Indigo cards performed exceptionally, and were vastly superior to the built-in audio of the laptop.

Conclusion

It was nice to again have access to an Indigo card for my laptop; I had one in the old CardBus days, and greatly preferred it to the built-in audio on my laptop then. While laptop processor speeds and hard drive space have gotten better, the built-in audio remains an afterthought for many computer makers. Adding the Indigo audio card that meets your needs will provide you with a much higher quality I/O system without having to add a tote-along rack or add-on interface, or sacrifice connections used by external hard drives, controllers, or copy protection keys. The quality is there, and all serious laptop users need to consider the Echo Indigo cards for their systems. ➔

Prices: \$229 each (street)

More from: Echo Digital Audio, 6450 Via Real Suite 1, Carpinteria, CA 93013. 805/684-4593, www.echoaudio.com.

Many recent articles in *Recording Magazine* have discussed mobile applications of recording. Given that most laptops are fully outfitted with USB and FireWire ports, the mobile engineer is ready for almost any mobile recording situation. However, there are occasions when we want to limit the amount of equipment we are carrying to a gig; we may have limited setup area at the recording location, or we may want to limit the equipment that will be flying with us.

Echo is well known for its compact audio interfaces; back in May 2003 we reviewed the Indigo PCMCIA/CardBus audio card, which was joined by the Indigo io (reviewed October 2004) and the Indigo dj. Echo now has produced the first series of audio cards that use the ExpressCard hardware connection. This provides a high-speed interface with the audio hardware without depending on other connections that might be used for other purposes. While not commonly used, these ExpressCard interfaces provide an excellent way to get high performance audio to and from a laptop.

Overview

Echo provided us with two new interfaces: the IOx, which has a pair of inputs and a pair of outputs, and the DJx, which features two pairs of outputs (one line level, one amplified for headphone use). These two cards mirror the two most common uses for portable audio interfaces: either simple recording (where the IOx would be your choice), or more complex live performance and/or computer DJing (where you would prefer the DJx). Both of the cards operate at up to 24 bit/96 kHz sampling rates, and use identical driver and monitoring software.

The software is important to note, since it provides high-level access to the hardware. It provides a basic mixing console that works as both a multi-application interface (allowing several programs to use the system simultaneously) and as a set of virtual interfaces (so