



Peavey

16FX

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 CHOICE

Even the baby of Peavey's new FX Series mixers manages to cram in a considerable amount. Mike Hillier gets on the buss.

KEY FEATURES

- 12 Peavey Silencer preamps
- 2 stereo channels
- 3-band EQ
- 75Hz low-cut filter
- Inserts on mono channels
- 4 group busses
- DSP engine with two effects sends and master processor
- Built-in .mp3/WAV/AIFF playback/record

16FX

Manufacturer **Peavey**Price **£591**Contact **Peavey 01536 461234**Web **www.peavey.com**

The Peavey FX Series is a range of three medium-format mixing consoles for use both in the project studio and for live sound.

The range comprises the 16FX (the model reviewed here), the 24FX and the 32FX. Each of the three models differs only in terms of its number of input channels, with the features present on each channel strip and in the master section remaining the same on each model. Highlights include 'Silencer' microphone preamps, dual DSP

engines, dual USB ports and built-in mp3 compression for exporting audio directly to a computer.

Tour of the strip

The 16FX is a 16-input mixer with ten mono channels and two switchable mono/stereo channels. Each of the ten

PEAVEY'S NEW 16FX IS ONE OF THE MOST WELL THOUGHT-OUT AND COMPREHENSIVE MIXERS WE'VE SEEN.

mono channels has both an XLR mic input and a 1/4-inch line-level input. The mic inputs connect to Peavey's Silencer mic preamps, which have a current source dual-feedback design to provide up to 60dB of gain while maintaining ultra-low levels of distortion (0.005% total harmonic distortion at the preamp and only 0.01% from input to output).

Figures will only tell you so much of the story, though – the only way to truly judge a preamp is to listen to it. We've tested a good number of small- and medium-format mixing consoles lately and comparing even the cheapest of them to similar mixers built ten years ago will reveal a considerable improvement in preamp technology. So long as you prevent the preamps from

distorting, you can almost guarantee that you will get a useable sound out of any mixer.

Peavey's Silencer preamps are no exception. As long as you ensure the preamp isn't distorting – which isn't difficult as the Silencer preamps have a fair amount of headroom – the signal will remain perfectly clean, with solid lows and sweet highs. Listening through headphones, with an acoustic guitar as the source, the upper-mids sounded a little brittle, but this can be softened with EQ. Each mono channel strip has an insert point, enabling you to connect external processors such as EQ or dynamics to the signal path.

For sound-shaping, each channel has a 75Hz low-cut filter and three-band EQ. The high and low bands are shelving EQs at 10kHz and 70Hz respectively, while the mid is a sweepable parametric EQ ranging from 100Hz–5kHz. Each band has +/- 15dB of gain, but in our experience it's tough to get away with much more than a few dBs on anything other than distinctly electronic sounds when using built-in EQs (especially if using the high and low shelving bands). The EQ on the 16FX has a smooth, musical character, and the mid band on the 16FX is a little more versatile thanks to its wide frequency sweep.

Group therapy

Each of the four group busses has its own insert point, enabling you to buss all your drum tracks to a single group

and process them with a single outboard unit. The most obvious use of this type of processing is for grouping drum tracks together to be compressed as a single unit, but there are countless other reasons to process tracks as a group rather than individually. Each of the four groups also has its own balanced TRS output should you wish to send the output from any group to separate outputs.

Digital process

For further processing or for configuring monitor mixes, each channel is equipped with four auxiliary sends and two further onboard EFX sends, which route the signal to the built-in digital effects unit.



The 16FX's 16 inputs are connected via XLR and 1/4-inch sockets at the rear of the unit. The mic inputs route through Peavey's Silencer preamps.

MEASURING UP

We've seen some huge leaps in small- and mid-size mixers recently, from the first signs of DAW integration on the Mackie Onyx series to more complete digital mixing solutions like the Allen & Heath ZED R16 (£1,819), which offers similar analogue functionality to the 16FX but with the addition of a fully integrated 18-channel audio interface over FireWire as well as a MIDI controller.

The effects unit has a much deeper interface than most small or mid-size mixers. There are two separate effects channels, each capable of loading three effects from a total of 11 processors.

The presets provide a starting point for the effects processing, but since you can go in and edit the parameters of each effect, you will soon find yourself using the User Bank to store your own presets. This level of control is usually reserved for digital mixers, so it's good to see it making its way into the digital FX section of analogue consoles, too.

In addition to the two effects banks there is also an output processor, with four further effects across the stereo output buss. These comprise a feedback suppressor, EQ, delay and limiter, which can be configured in stereo, split-mono or active crossover with the sub present on the left channel.

Finally, the digital processing on the desk can be used to play or record files directly from a USB memory stick, while a separate USB port makes it possible to use the mixer as a stereo audio interface when attached to a Mac or PC.

The Peavey 16FX is one of the best mixers in its class. It has a plenty of I/O and the digital FX provides access to all the parameters you'd expect to find on dedicated processors. It might not have the flexibility of a fully digital desk, but it doesn't have any of the disadvantages either, as it is immediately apparent what every knob, fader and button controls. As an added bonus, Peavey is so confident of the build quality that the company is offering a five-year warranty instead of the usual two years. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Very clean preamps
- Easy-to-follow routing system
- Flexible I/O options
- Powerful DSP system

WALK ON BY

- Only stereo digital I/O to USB key or DAW
- DSP effects introduce latency

VERDICT

The 16FX is one of the most well thought-out and comprehensive mixers we've seen.

