



## Mytek Digital 8X192

**Eight channels of bidirectional conversion bundled together with some useful tricks and additions. JON THORNTON says this is a box from a brand that is not as well known as it deserves to be.**

In the world of high end A-D and D-A converters, Mytek may not be as well known as brands such as Prism or Apogee, but it has been in this game for some time now, and gained quite a following. About as boutique as you can get in pro audio (how does 'Designed in the USA, manufactured in Poland' grab you as a tag-line?) the 8X192 is the most recent offering from a company whose aim is to make this most critical component as 'straight-wire' and uncoloured as possible.

Housed in a 1u rackmount, the 8X192 (Euro 3120) offers eight channels of A-D and eight channels of D-A conversion, at (as the model number suggests) sample frequencies up to 192kHz. Look a little closer though, and you find that some neatly thought out options and features makes this box more than just a basic convertor.

As standard, the Mytek box ships with AES-EBU I-O. This appears on the rear panel on a single DB25 connector following the pin-out conventions established by Digidesign. Also on the rear panel are eight channels of balanced analogue I-O again on a DB25 connector. Operating level for input and output comes off the assembly line set to +4dBu = -15dBFS, although this can be adjusted if required by lifting the top cover and getting busy with a tweaker.

In addition to the standard AES-EBU fare, users can install option cards to allow different flavours of I-O. Currently available choices are the fairly generic ADAT and TDIF standards, and also some DAW specific options allowing direct interfacing to Pro Tools HD and Sonic Solutions systems. The most recent addition is a FireWire card that allows the transfer of eight channels of audio to and from a Mac or PC, but also allows multiple 8X192s to be cascaded together to increase this channel count (although this does require each unit to have its own FireWire card). A DSD I-O card is also available.

Up to two DIO option cards can be fitted to each unit, and the review model came with the Pro Tools HD and FireWire option installed. Initial testing was carried out using the Pro Tools HD option, with the 8X192 as the only connected interface to an HD5 system. The Mytek unit appears in the Pro Tools software as a Digidesign 192 interface in common with other units that allow direct connection to HD systems.

Turning for a moment to the front panel this has a number of pushbuttons with a vast array of status LEDs allowing a number of different configurations. First up is clock selection and sample rate for the internal clock. Mytek recommends that where possible the unit runs from its own clock, which has a quoted

jitter of <10pico-seconds — Mytek is fairly serious about this, witnessed by no less than six buffered Word clock outputs on BNCs on the rear panel. A DIP switch on the rear panel also allows these to be set to output Super-clock if desired — handy if using the unit simultaneously with Digidesign peripherals.

Sample rates for the internal clock range from 44.1kHz to 192kHz, but if an external clock source is desired, this can be selected from an external BNC input on the rear panel, from the AES inputs or from the inputs on either of the two interface cards. Sample rate has to be manually set, even if an external clock source is selected, and another switch allows the Word clock (output and input) to be a division (half or quarter) of the sampling rate. In short, there are enough options here to allow the 8X192 to be successfully integrated with the most complex of scenarios.

Normally the output of the A-DC feeds all available digital outputs, but any of the digital input options can also be selected as an alternate source, allowing a degree of digital format (but not sample rate) conversion to be accomplished. In a similar vein, the D-AC stage can be fed from any of the digital input sources, or directly from the output of the A-DC if minimum signal path/latency is important in monitoring. A bank of LEDs gives some crude but useful metering of the eight channels at the A-DC or D-AC stage. Finally, the 8X192 features a simple stereo mixer. This feeds the outputs of the D-AC to a pair of balanced analogue outputs on the rear panel and to a high quality headphone monitor on the front panel. The headphone output routes via a stepped attenuator and the rear output can also be selected to route via this attenuator if required — the knob for this looks a little out of proportion with the rest of the unit and sticks out quite a way, which would give me some concern for its longevity in some environments. Sources for the mixer are either individual logical pairs of D-AC outputs or all eight of them summed logically to stereo (i.e. odd numbered outputs all feed the left bus, even numbered outputs feed the right bus).

Once you spend a little time with this box it's very straightforward to use. There are a lot of options to consider though so a thorough read of the manual is recommended. Aside from the usual issues when using a non-Digidesign peripheral with Pro Tools HD (you have to double check that the sync and sample rate settings are set correctly on hardware and software), set up was pretty painless. First impressions of the unit are that it sounds quiet and solid when tasked with some basic tracking duties for drums and bass guitar. To get a slightly better

comparative feel, a Digidesign 192 I-O was added to the system to record sources simultaneously using the two units; there are a number of options in terms of clocking here but eventually I settled on keeping the Mytek as the master clock for the system.

After compensating for level differences (my 192s are set to work at a slightly hotter reference level), A/Bing individual sources showed some subtle differences. The 8X192 is best described as sounding a little bit harder than the 192, not in unpleasant way, but in the sense that there seems to be a little more definition to the attack of sounds. This was even more obvious when a stereo mix was played into both convertors and the results compared. The Mytek box has a clear edge in terms of absolute imaging, and percussive sounds that are competing in a fairly dense mix seem to have much more definition.

Having said that, 24 channels of the Mytek solution is going to be an expensive proposition for a tracking facility but where the 8X192 scores is in the flexibility it offers in terms of clocking and signal path options. As a result, I can see it proving extremely popular as an alternative A-D/D-A solution that will play very happily alongside other devices, with the added bonus of working as something of a digital audio problem solver. ■

### PROS

Great sounding A-D and D-A; good choice of additional interfacing options; extremely flexible options for Word clock selection and distribution; built-in mixer useful in minimalist tracking environments.

### CONS

Not cheap; clock source and distribution options take a little thinking about; protruding knob on stepped attenuator looks like a rackmount accident waiting to happen...

### EXTRAS

Mytek's stereo 192 D-AC with 192kHz PCM and DSD features USB and FireWire in addition to AES, SPDIF and Toslink inputs. The box will be available early next year in industrial and 1/3-rack formats.



### Contact

**MYTEK DIGITAL, US:**  
Website: [www.mytekdigital.com](http://www.mytekdigital.com)