

Allen & Heath Xone:DB4 | £2,042

Roy Spencer pops the bonnet and finds out if this flagship really is the Rolls Royce of club mixers

WHAT IS IT?

Allen & Heath's latest flagship DJ mixer

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Great look, feel and functionality
- 2 Limitless on-board effects potential
- 3 World-beating R&D that shows under the hood

FutureMusic

Platinum
Award

Objectophilia. You might have stumbled across the term on the internet by accident when searching for exclusive

Flickr snaps of Richie Hawtin's live Plastikman setup. It's a term used to describe people that have emotional attachments to inanimate objects.

There was a recent case of a woman

marrying the Eiffel Tower, for instance. You might have once scoffed at these nutters and their unrequited love for lifeless belongings. Scoff no more.

I wouldn't be at all surprised if you caught a DJ or two fleeing in the dead of night to Gretna Green, with the Allen & Heath Xone:DB4 tucked lovingly under their arm.

Feast on features

To be honest, this mixer is a little sauce pot. After you pop it out of its tight-fitting carry case and bring it to life, your face lights up. Thanks in no small part to the beautifully lit rotary faders and digital display menu. Then, like a fat man at a buffet, you don't know where to start first on this feature-packed minx.

Picture a Rane Sixty-Eight or a Pioneer DJM-600, but with no gag reflex.

She's light, so perfect for the DJ on the move and sturdy as hell. The build quality is barely worth mentioning. As soon as you see the Xone logo, you know what you're getting.

DJs familiar with the layout of the Xone:92 will feel at home, and then get a twinge on when they fumble around the redesigned EQ section, and spot the new Quad FX Core DSP effects engine. This is the heart of the machine. It's powerful and delivers stunning effects. Each of the four channels has its own FX bank and BPM detection system,



automatically adjusting all time-related FX and loops to the BPM of your beats.

Something for everyone?

A quick fiddle about with these studio quality tweakers and you're in heaven. You could spend the night tickling the customisable delays, reverbs, modulators, resonators and damage functions, before exploring each one's patch library of different effect variations. Also, the effects can actually be chained so each one has its own dedicated filter. You've also got dedicated expression controls and a fat-knobbed rotary dial to freak out between wet and dry.

As the resonance knob rightly points out, it takes you a journey from 'mild' to 'wild'. Those schooled on the Pioneer DJMs should be in their element. Fans of the famous Allen & Heath filters will be pleased to know that that wonderful scope found on models like the Xone:92 is still up for plundering.

The DB4 also benefits from a built-in 24-bit/96kHz, multi-channel, fully patchable USB 2.0 soundcard and MIDI compatibility. The soundcard means that this hybrid mixer will sit nicely in a club booth for most of the night if DJs with certain mixing software or DAW preferences are on the bill. Rocking Ableton Live or Traktor? No worries – stick in the USB cable and



Completely Loopy

All styles of DJs are gonna want to get to grips with the :DB4's looping functions. Each channel has a built-in looper, with lengths on tap from 1/16 beats to 4 bars.

Lock a groove and jog between fractions of bars to bump loops, or build up fat rolls for climatic drops. The inbuilt

memory means that you can whip on vinyl, catch a loop, then take the record off as the beats keep on rocking. Then get creative, and assign the same record to any channel with the built in Input Matrix. Sampling snippets off the same record, adding a plethora of effects to any or all,

and then cutting between them. It's live remixing, and it's a joy to experiment with.

The only gripe is loops drift out of sync, and there isn't an easy way to nudge back into phase. A little jog wheel, or cue punch might have solved that, and leant itself to some funky stabbing.

beforehand. With buttons activating channel FX sitting snugly next to the crossfader, chances are you might just activate a cavernous echo by mistake as you're crabbing merrily away. Plus, the crossfaders, although robust, high quality, dual railed and fitted with an integral dust shield, don't really feel battle-ready. The adjustable cut might have three settings, taking you from

leakage, but being in it's presence just causes goosebumps. It really is all that and a bag of chips. Top Dance bods like Pete Tong and Dubfire have been all over this like a cheap suit since they got their sweaty mits on it. Lord knows what they can do with it now.

The surface has just been scratched on the potential of the Xone:DB4. With so much functionality and this level of

multi-layered sound architecture at your fingertips, it really (no, really) could be the one to change the game. No wonder it picked up a Nammie this year

“With this level of multi-layered sound architecture it really could be the one to change the game”

you're up and running. With Traktor, all four decks are routed to all four channels on the mixer. With Ableton you can also route your audio to any of the four channels on the mixer. It's like the days of fiddling with phono cables are coming to an end. Pioneer CDJ heads can also plug their decks into the DB4's Digital inputs, while Serato or vinyl jocks get analogue inputs round the back. Bouncing between the two is easy, with a simple switch at the top of each channel.

If top-end MIDI-laden four-channel mixers teaming with effects, knobs and lights baffle you, then you're gonna need to sit down with the manual for quite a while with this one. Quick mix turntablists might do themselves a mischief if they try and rock out on this with a DMC-style set and no dry run

blending to scratching, but it still takes a few mm to get sound, which is vital for twiddles and other scratches. Those types of DJs need a two-channel mixer with simple kills and a clean, uncluttered plate. Those wanting to punch in samples or bounce around cue points are best off sticking with your Dicer. The DB4's target market is the club DJ... with a few quid to spend.

Oh, and the sound quality on this thing... On a decent club system this mixer booms. Not since rocking out vinyl (remember that) will you have heard such a quality loudness and range in both dynamics and frequencies.

The next level

The grand curtain-dropping reveal for this next level mixer might have been slightly undermined by some internet

leakage, but being in it's presence just causes goosebumps. It really is all that and a bag of chips. Top Dance bods like Pete Tong and Dubfire have been all over this like a cheap suit since they got their sweaty mits on it. Lord knows what they can do with it now.

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FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD [Progress bar: 10/10]

VALUE [Progress bar: 8/10]

EASE OF USE [Progress bar: 9/10]

VERSATILITY [Progress bar: 10/10]

RESULTS [Progress bar: 10/10]

Pretty much the ultimate mixer. Once you've mastered it you can really steal the show.

SPECS

Analogue/Digital conversion: 24-bit
Analogue/Digital Line-up: +12dBu = 0dBFS
DSP processing: 24-bit I/O + 48 bit EQ
DSP core sampling frequency: 48kHz
USB soundcard sampling frequency range: 44.1kHz to 96kHz
SPDIF input sampling frequency range: 32kHz to 192kHz
SPDIF output sampling frequency: 48kHz
Operating Levels Specifications:
Main outputs: 0VU = +4dBu
Monitor: 0VU = +4dBu
Record: 0VU = +4dBu
Maximum output level: +16dBu balanced
Mic Sensitivity: -20dB to -50dB
RIAA input sensitivity 1kHz: 70mV = 0VU (200mV max)
Frequency response Line in to Mix out: 10Hz – 20kHz +0/-0.5dB
Distortion at 1kHz Line in at +0VU out: 0.003% (-90dB) un-weighted
Equalisation: +6dB boost/-26dB or Total Kill 3 Band
Dimensions: 320 x 88 x 358mm
Weight 5.1kg

ALTERNATIVES



Pioneer DJM-900
£1,599

The 'Nexus' is the latest in the ubiquitous DJM line.

pioneer.eu



Rane Sixty-Eight
£2,099

Perfect for Serato DJs with inbuilt SL boxes.

rane.com



Pioneer DJM-800
£1,149

Forward-thinking mixer that has fast become the industry standard club workhorse.

pioneer.eu