

Yamaha DM2000 v2

Yamaha has updated its DM2000 software to v2. Simon Leadley loads it in and offers us his thoughts.

I've always been impressed with the Yamaha range of mixers, starting with the DMP1. The 02R has become the de facto standard by which all other digital desks are judged, and it's still working well for many people years after its original release. In fact, we have two of them that work 24/7 in our post studio at Trackdown Studios, and a friend has just updated to the 02R/96 after years recording music for top-selling albums and TV shows with the 02R.

Yamaha has a solid reputation for audio and build quality. In the old days you generally gave a desk five

shipping software. Even so, the desk never crashed or behaved erratically. There are many enhancements, so let's take a look.

The major developments most people are interested in are the new plug-in effects. As the DM2000 has a considerable amount of DSP to devote to effects, it seems natural Yamaha would expand the suite of effects for the mixer. Although v2 doesn't come with the effects bundled, you can choose which plugs will be best suited to your needs and buy only those you really want. And there are some beauties. There's a new EQ and various modelled compressors as well as a tape saturation emulator. The new reverb, Reverb-X, is particularly smooth and dense with plenty of parameters to tweak. If you use the bundled Studio Manager v2 to edit the new effects parameters you'll be greeted with some very nice graphic GUIs for each of the units (see accompanying screen shots). As any of the effects can be used as normal send-and-return or as digital inserts on almost any input or output (analogue or digital), you begin to see how powerful this desk is.

Added Functionality

You'll either love or hate this next feature... as you touch each fader on the DM2000 running v2, the scribble strip that normally shows the name of the channel displays the fader level in tenths of a dB until you let it go (even then, it lingers for a second or so). Personally, I don't see the point. You could already see the level on the legend under the fader, while losing the name of the channel you're focusing on the instant you touch the fader can be quite disconcerting. I'd prefer an option that allows this to be turned on or off at the user's discretion. In fact, I believe this is now in the works after feedback from users worldwide. [It's true, a minor update will be available soon – AS.]

The surround management system now allows for stereo to have a bass management applied to it for mixing in stereo with the added grunt of a sub. The inclusion of the surround monitoring management system puts the DM2000 and 02R96 in a league of their own. Some surround speaker management systems retail for around \$4-5k alone, so this feature represents great value. There's also an added 6.1 surround monitoring option.

Speaking of great value, being able to use the surround panner with ProTools makes the DM an ideal companion to this workstation. The DM2000 uses the MCS panner to control the surround panner in



Version 2's channel view.

years before thinking about new faders and throwing money into the black pit of console maintenance. Our 02Rs are going strong after well over five years, and one reason they've stayed current is that Yamaha has made good on its promise of upgradeability.

Speaking of upgradeability, Yamaha has just provided the DM2000 [and the 02R96] with a facelift in the form of a software upgrade – v2. This is a substantial update in terms of features and operational refinements as well as delivering a host of great-sounding effects (at extra cost) from reverb to mastering tools. So you thought software plug-ins were the domain of the personal computer? Not so. The plugs that accompany the v2 upgrade are loaded into the software of the desk to provide added functionality and better-sounding effects.

For the purposes of this review I was using a Beta version, so there may be differences in the final

ProTools, and connection is via USB or Midi. I tested the system with the latest release of ProTools (v6.4) and it worked flawlessly. Mixing within ProTools has never been easier. Considering the cost of the DM2000 includes a control surface for a number of popular workstations (ProTools, Nuendo and Cubase), you'd have to say the console represents extraordinary value for money.

The aux sends have also had a bit of a renovation, and now include a 'mix-minus' mode, where channels can be excluded from the aux sends. If, say, you have a narration or dialogue track you want to listen to in the control room – but you don't want it going to the musicians' headphones, you can easily mute that channel in the aux send while it continues to play over the main monitors. Channel levels can further be copied to the aux sends or to a nominal setting simultaneously; what a timesaver that is when you're trying to replicate a mix in the cans!

You can now also solo the aux sends so that setting up a mix for musicians is a simple matter of a button press. Speaking of soloing, there is a very neat function that allows the user to specify that if a fader is moved from $-\infty$ it will un-solo the desk. This allows you to check that mics are live before bringing the faders up for TV broadcasting. On that note it's also possible to send the soloed signal to another output that might be connected to a small solo speaker so you can still hear the main mix and the soloed channel for broadcast use as well. Yamaha has been listening to the users!

A major improvement is the addition of a pre point before the On Button so it's possible to mute the main monitoring of a channel but still bus it to the aux send for headphone monitoring. I use this all the time for click monitoring. Now we can monitor the click in the control room or mute it without fear of muting it in the performer's headphones.

The main surround monitoring volume control now has a reset to 85dB button that will snap the level to reference, regardless of the setting of the surround monitor. This is very handy when you're mixing music and have the level at non-reference to hear some subtle nuance, then need to return to reference level quickly.

The graphic equaliser always used to be a pain to program with the data entry wheel and cursor controls, but no more. Each of the faders in the graphic can now be mapped to the physical faders on the desk. This makes setting the levels a simple affair, and it looks cool as well.

Finally, you now can assign 214 functions to the user-defined keys. Things such as snap to 85 (ref. level) are now a button press away.

Stable Table

In the time I've been using the v2 software it has never once crashed or behaved oddly and this was not even the release software. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the upgrade to all users (unless you think the dB display might drive you crazy... I've learned to live with it now). The v2 software update makes the DM2000 a formidable console and DAW controller rolled into one. It's equally at home in the studio, broadcast arena or live theatre shows. It sounds sensational and the new effects are simply stunning.

However, there are still a few areas that bother me. For instance, the bundled DM2000 Studio Manager is still based on the older Studio Manager software and feels slow and clunky. It doesn't support multiple monitors or multiple users in OSX. Often it's difficult to get it to see a connected DM2000 (this could be a multi-user bug), the fonts are hard to read and it seems optimised for a 15-inch screen. Even

The new optional effects and processors include new modelled compressors, a tape saturation emulator, 'vintage' equalisation, and the new RevX reverb.



typing names into channels so the DM Scribble strip shows the correct name is clunky and buggy. You have to 'select all' in the name field to edit the name and there's no tab key to get you to the next channel, so there's too much keyboard and mouse work involved.

The graphics for the new effects editors are great and the general layout of the windows is good too, but they need to be made scaleable for large monitors, as on large monitors all windows have to be within the bounds of the desk display; windows can't be dragged to other monitors for quick selection. Window updates are slow (even on fast computers), and the patch editor is difficult to use, as it's hard to read the names of the sources and see the whole patch at a glance. Insert point editing did not seem to correctly reflect what the desk was showing either and the logic of some of the insert patching is complicated at the best of times.

On the whole, I think the Studio Manager software, for Mac OSX at least, lets the side down. It feels very Beta and could do with some serious testing on various configurations. However, the upside is that it's free, and even with its faults, it's a very useful program. I've even used the software offline on my laptop to set up the names of the desk for a large session the night before, so I could be at home having dinner rather than sitting on my own in the studio. This feature alone is worth the price of admission. I don't wish to dump on the software, but the whole experience with the desk

versus the computer editor is so vastly different that it needs to be addressed in the future.

Just a note on the effects for the desk; they're loaded from a software app and after installing them you go on the web to authorise their use on the connected DM2000/02R96. A friend recently purchased an 02R96 and went through this process painlessly, which was nice to know. The app that authorises the desk works on both Mac/Win platforms via USB.

I have immense respect for Yamaha products. In a climate where even the mighty have fallen, Yamaha keeps producing the goods and expanding the usefulness of existing products with timely and functional software upgrades. Maybe this is why the company continues to thrive.



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Price

- DM2000V2K/02R96V2K v2 upgrade: \$500

AE011 channel strip package: \$795

AE021 master strip package: \$795

AE031 reverb package (including REV-X): \$795
