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iZ Technology iZ ADA II

■■■ MULTI-CHANNEL HIGH-RESOLUTION CONVERTER

By Nigel Palmer

iZ Technology's RADAR multi-channel recorder was the first device to win many engineers over to digital, at a time when tracking to a computer was almost unheard of. As that became more the norm, some engineers incorporated RADAR into their DAW rigs as the system's A/D and D/A converters. Reacting to that, iZ announced its ADA A/D and D/A multi-channel converter systems in 2008. Reviewed here is the second-generation ADA, the ADA II, unveiled last autumn at the AES Convention.

FEATURES

The 4U iZ ADA II is a customisable, made-to-order multi-channel A/D, D/A high-resolution converter available in 8-, 16-, or 24-channel configurations with customisable I/O ratios (for example, 8-in/16-out, 24-in/8-out, and so on). It comes with either iZ's Classic 96 or Ultra Nyquist converter technology, both of which are identical to those offered in iZ's latest generation RADAR 6. The Classic 96 offers sample rates up to 96kHz; the Ultra Nyquist operates up to 192kHz. Each converter card provides eight channels of I/O.

The ADA II is controlled via the front-panel's vibrant 10.1-inch LCD touch screen (a significant upgrade from the ADA's 7-inch screen); the screen provides single touch commands as well as access to all ADA II functionality via seven user screens – Main, Setup, Route, Meters, System Configuration, About, and Debug. A full screen mode displays high-resolution metering for all 48 channels of I/O.

To date, MADI digital I/O is standard on every ADA II. Additional digital I/O options include ADAT/Lightpipe, AES



The iZ ADA II at Russ Long's Nashville studio. Photo: Keoni Keur.

"It comes with either iZ's Classic 96 or Ultra Nyquist converter technology, both of which are identical to those offered in iZ's latest generation RADAR 6."
Russ Long

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multi-channel, and dual Pro Tools HD connectivity. The ADA II Motherboard I/O includes onboard Gigabit Ethernet (for software updates and network control), four USB 2.0 connectors, two PS/2 connectors, and one Serial remote port. Balanced analogue I/O is via six female 25-pin D-Sub connectors.

The ADA II interfaces with virtually any native DAW via its low-latency, low-jitter MADI digital I/O and a compatible MADI interface card installed in the host computer. Pro Tools HDX and Pro Tools HD users connect with the iZ Dual Pro Tools HD Option Card that connects up to two ADA II units (48 channels) to a Pro Tools HDX or Core Card via DigiLink cable.

IN USE

I first used the ADA II review unit provided by iZ with a Pro Tools HDX rig. The only thing that caught me off guard was that the Optical MADI I/O between the ADA MADI card and the iZ Dual Pro Tools HD Interface has to be connected for the iZ Dual Pro Tools HD Interface to operate. Also, a Pro Tools session running at a different sample rate than the previous session

requires users to manually change the sample rate on the ADA II. However, once I was up and running, this Pro Tools 10 HDX/ADA II combo operated flawlessly. After mixing for several days with the ADA II, I was truly ecstatic about its sound quality and routing flexibility.

The touch screen is beautiful and easy to use. For users who keep computer and converters in a separate location iZ provides a free Java App that allows full remote control of the key front panel settings such as sample rate and sync source, as well as full metering.

I tracked a full band at Nashville's Brown Owl Studio (thebrownowlstudio.com), simultaneously recording to two Pro Tools rigs (HD Native systems, this time): one through the iZ ADA II and one through a pair of Lynx Aurora converters.

After the session and back at my own studio, I combined the two sessions into a single session, allowing me to listen to any combination.

To my ears, the sonic differences between iZ's and Lynx's converter systems were easily discernible. I found the ADA II to be warmer than the Lynx, with more of a difference between the D/A converters than between the A/D converters. The ADA II's D/A was slightly smoother – with more high-frequency detail and more low-end clarity.

CONCLUSION

One of the most important things I remember about the first time I used an iZ RADAR multi-track recorder was that the company's toll-free support number was visible on the unit's main screen at all times. I love working with a company that wants to help its users (rather than hide from them), and I'm happy to report that the iZ tech support toll-free number is still found on the main screen of the ADA II!

In conclusion, iZ's ADA II is the converter-based solution for anyone in love with the sound of the RADAR, though relatively deep pockets are required. A fully loaded 24-channel Ultra Nyquist ADA II with MADI can cost around \$12,000 (excluding the Dual Pro Tools Interface). However, considering the ADA II's sound quality plus iZ's proven record of supporting its customers at all times, this price could be considered a bargain.

INFORMATION

Feature Set

- Configurable (at order) 24 channels of A/D and/or D/A
- MADI I/O standard
- Touch screen or Java App control
- Classic 96 or Ultra Nyquist versions

iZ Technology

www.izcorp.com

Prices: \$6,700+ (£4,415) (depending on I/O configuration and choice of Classic 96 or Ultra Nyquist converters)