# Focusrite ISA C8X for the Red Couch Show




Brooklyn-based producer, engineer and songwriter Nico Pagni, executive producer and co-founder of the YouTube series Red Couch Show, has made Focusrite’s ISA C8X interface a centerpiece of his studio setup. Born in Argentina and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, Pagni began his career playing classical piano before expanding into drums, guitar, production and songwriting. His path led him to New York City’s hip-hop studios, including The Cutting Room Studios, where he has been a core engineer for the past four years. Today, he brings that experience to Red Couch Show, recording and mixing more than 300 live sessions across genres to capture artists at every stage of their careers in their most authentic form.

The Focusrite ISA C8X is a 26-in, 28-out USB-C audio interface designed to serve as the centerpiece for professional, project and home studios. Released in 2026, it represents the first time Focusrite has built its legendary, transformer-balanced ISA microphone preamps directly into a standalone audio interface. The ISA C8X combines the trademark ISA sound with comprehensive remote control and all the analog and digital I/O, routing and recallability you need to run an entire studio, plus switchable impedance, balanced inserts and high-pass filtering. The first two channels feature ISA preamps with classic Lundahl LL1538 transformers plus Console mode and 430 Air mode for new tonal options. All eight are fully



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controllable from the front panel and via Focusrite Control 2.

Pagni comments, “Before adding the ISA C8X, our setup was functional with the help of a Focusrite 18i20. However, we had an issue with expansion and wanted to have better routing options and opportunities to add more outboard gear to our setup. The vast amounts of in/out opportunities, as well as the two ISA preamps included, were a key attraction. This solved a lot of problems for us.” “Incorporating the ISA C8X into our studio,” he adds, “was seamless. We were immediately able to hook up gear via ADAT and route all the outputs to our patch bay to connect all our equipment. The digital software made this even easier.”

On deciding which preamps to use for different instruments, vocalists or sessions, Pagni explains, “At the Red Couch Show, we have a variety of different performances that come through the door. This can range from a simple vocal and acoustic guitar session to full bands. We’ve opted to use the ISA preamps for the main vocal mic, and the guitar they may be using. They’re always front and center, so having two amazing preamps with different impedance options allows us to fine-tune and adapt to make sure they’re captured flawlessly.”

“The six additional Focusrite preamps have been perfect for filling in additional elements in the performance, especially with line/mic switching and digital preamp control. Also, isolated 48V phantom power for each channel has dramatically improved our sound quality, as we’re now able to take advantage of more condenser mics.”

Commenting on the sound quality of the preamps, Pagni remarks, “An ISA preamp is smooth, balancing analog character with transparency. At Red Couch, we’re walking that line, introducing a touch of vintage color while still giving an honest, transparent representation of the music on camera. The ISA preamps have a huge impact on the detail of the vocals and guitar. The impedance gives us unique options for whatever artists bring through the door.”
“Since moving to the ISA C8X, we’ve noticed a real step up in our overall recording and playback quality. Our recordings are coming back at a hi-fi level, which has been a major goal of ours since starting the Red Couch Show. Our clients have been blown away by how close their live performances sound to a studio production.”

He continues, “Furthermore, since we have a huge range of artists on a regular basis, selectable impedance, insert points, and air mode have been incredibly useful for us. It’s important that we can tailor our recordings to the tonality of every unique voice. Being able to accommodate this saves us a lot of time when we have loads of mixes to finish up before we get to video. Digital control makes it easy to quickly try different impedances and air modes to lock in the right sound early into the session.”

“Using the ISA C8X has significantly improved the speed and simplicity of our workflow,” he notes. “We’ve been able to tailor our normal setup around the vast number of inputs and outputs, and the digital controls. We can quickly monitor the

inputs to the DAW while also having a completely isolated artist-monitoring mix sent to the wedges for the performers. Having more than enough outputs gives us all kinds of options without having to make sacrifices. The digital controls make locking in the sound incredibly easy."

"We typically send the artists the live monitoring signal out from the DAW, but sometimes that creates latency, or varying level output from live mixing," he adds. "But now, with the ISA C8X's digital controls, we can make a digital mix that immediately sends the microphone inputs straight to the artists before even hitting the DAW, which has been both easy and reliable."

Pagni offers an example where the ISA C8X had a particularly noticeable impact: "We recently had a session where different musicians needed different headphone mixes. This has always been particularly difficult with our previous setup. But thanks to the unique digital mix sends, we were able to get them exactly what they needed to hear without using the DAW at all! This simplified our live monitoring setup dramatically. We no longer need to use the DAW to configure live monitoring for the artists."

He sums it up: "Anyone who's looking to simultaneously improve their day-to-day sound quality, while also looking to build or expand their studio in the future, would greatly benefit from using the ISA C8X. The two ISA preamps can cover 90% of your everyday recording, but having the two ADAT inputs means that you'll have a place to connect new gear when the time comes. I would confidently say to any engineer, producer, or studio owner who is considering the ISA C8X but has not yet made the move, that the ISA C8X isn't a temporary solution for your studio. It will become the brain of your entire setup. It's a total problem-solver and will have you spending more time recording and less time troubleshooting."

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