Tascam Studio Bridge

Compact digital multitrack recorder

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With the Studio Bridge, Tascam introduces a digital multitrack recorder that is part of the Model Series.

Concept

Tascam Studio Bridge is a 24-track audio recorder and a 24-channel USB audio

interface with a MIDI interface. Unlike other devices in the Model Series, however, the mixing console has been excluded. The device is not least of all interesting for users who already have a mixing console without recording capability but want to continue using it and don't need a new mixing console. If you think of Studio Bridge as a modern tape machine, you are not far from what Studio Bridge can do in the studio. Innovative tape machine concepts from Tascam have a long tradition in the history of the company.

Studio Bridge has the necessary inputs and outputs, but it takes up only the space and weight of a small mixer. Optionally, Studio Bridge can be used to create connections between the digital and analog worlds.

Studio Bridge is in the format of a desktop device. With a separately purchased kit, Studio Bridge can also be mounted in 19-inch racks. To do this, you have to remove the visually appealing side panels with a wooden finish. On a table or stand, the Studio Bridge stands at a slight angle. With dimensions of 446.5 x 114.6 x 269.5 mm, it weighs 4.5 kg.

Technology/connections

The Tascam Studio Bridge has 24 analog inputs and 24 analog outputs. However, special cables are required for the connection, which are not included in the scope of delivery. At the rear, there are only Sub-D25 sockets that use the Tascam standard with the corresponding pin assignment for analog signals. There are three sockets for the 24 inputs and another three for the outputs (each for channels 1-9, 10-16 and 17-24). Breakout cables with 25-pin Sub-D connectors are required. The inputs and outputs are balanced. It must also be noted that the line level is expected and serves as the input level. The maximum input and output level is +24 dBu, nominal +4 dBu at 10 kiloohms or more input impedance and 200 ohm output impedance.

Furthermore, there is a DIN MIDI input and output, a Click Out 6.3 mm jack socket, a 6.3 mm stereo jack footswitch (suitable for two foot pedals thanks to a separately available Y-cable), and a USB-B socket for connecting a computer on the back. The following software is supported: Windows 10 and 11, Mac Sonoma and Ventura, iOS 16 and 17. For Windows computers, there is a note that functionality is not guaranteed with ARM CPUs. Above the display, you will find a phones/local monitor output, a 6.3 mm stereo jack socket for headphones (16... 600 ohm connection impedance, 2 x 80 mW at 32 ohms), and the SD card slot.

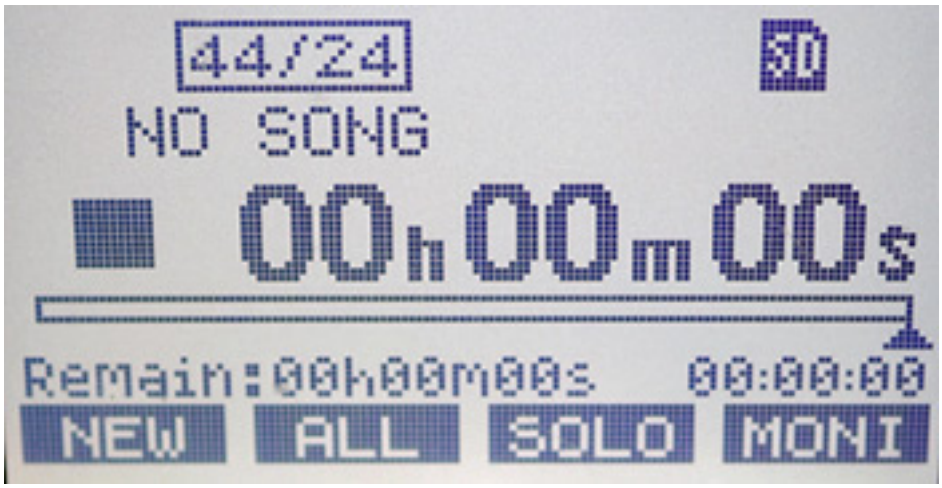
Recordings are made in WAV format (BWF) with a resolution of 16 or 24 bits and sample rates up to 44.1 and 48 kHz on SD cards. The frequency range is specified by the manufacturer as 20 Hz to 20 kHz (+0.3/-0.7 dB). The maximum size of an SD card (at least Class 10) is specified in the manual as 512 GB. Studio Bridge also has 24 inputs and outputs to match. For each input, you can selectwhether an analog signal or a USB signal should be used per track.

Internally, it is possible to amplify incoming analog signals by up to 12 dB with an input gain boost. Optionally, the phase can be inverted for each input. Punch-in recording is possible for up to ten tracks simultaneously, both manually and automatically, via auto punch. Inputs and tracks are fixed. It is not possible to

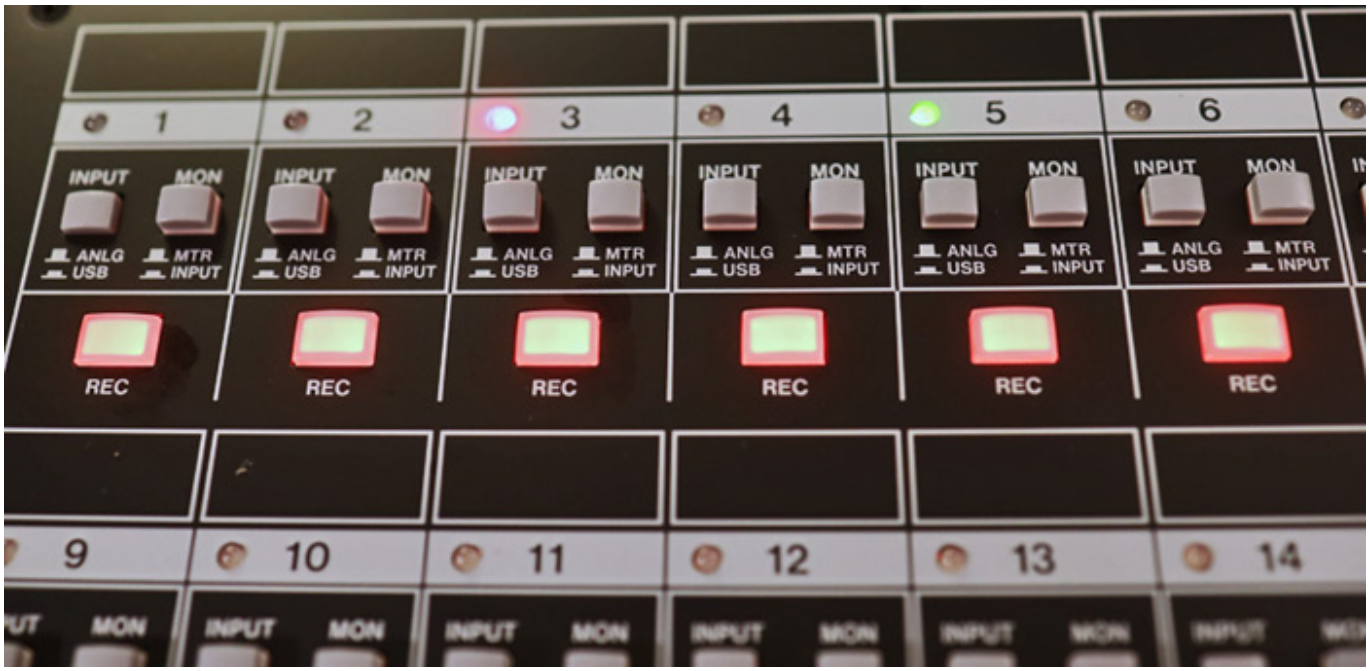
record the inputs of tracks 1-8 to tracks 9-16 or 17-24. However, it is possible to swap track content or import audio files.

Operation

The menu navigation on the display has a lot in common with the Model 12 Mixer that we have already tested, the other mixing consoles in the series, as well as the newer Model 2400. The latter shares the Studio Bridge's shift key, which is not yet available on the Model 12. This helps you to access an additional main menu. Among other things, you can start a new project here. There are also entries for All, Solo and Moni.



With “All”, you can quickly activate all tracks - this is very helpful in practice. You also get to the “Solo Monitoring” and the headphone monitor area (see below). A repeat option on the first main menu page allows you to repeat the playback of a song. The jog wheel is useful for navigation tasks. Also worth mentioning is an undo option that allows you to undo the last recording.



A push button switch can be used to set whether an analog or USB signal is to be applied to each input or channel. Another switch next to it allows you to switch between “MTR” and input. MTR stands for multitrack recorder. So you basically switch between a playback signal from the recorder and the input signal for all outputs. Below that is a recording button that you use to arm the track for recording. During recording, the button lights up red, and in standby mode, the button flashes.

Applications and practice

The following are some examples of how Studio Bridge can be used. Signals applied via “Analog In” can be quickly recorded in the DAW. If a mixing console with direct outputs is in the studio, Studio Bridge can be easily connected to it and expanded to include recording functions. This way, the mix can be routed through the analog console first and recorded digitally in Studio Bridge or the DAW – so it can also be recorded twice, for example, for optional data backup. TASCAM's Model Series mixers don't have direct outs, but they already have a multitrack recorder built in.

For a mix that is to be done in the DAW or on the computer, Studio Bridge can also be used as a 24-channel input instance without an external mixer. However, a microphone preamplifier may be required. For other sources, there is an internal input boost that allows for amplification of up to 12 dB in 0.5 dB steps.

The Studio Bridge outputs can be connected to the tape return inputs on an inline mixer and, alternatively, routed to a mixing console channel via a switch. If 24 tape returns from the Studio Bridge can be connected in this way without any further rewiring, the recording from the Studio Bridge or the DAW can be quickly mixed on the analog mixing console. If the analog mixer has 22 channels, the stereo mix can

be recorded on channels 23 and 24.

Signals arriving via USB In (for example, from the DAW) can also be recorded or output and mixed on an analog external mixer. This method can also be used to archive a mixdown made in the DAW as a multitrack recording. However, if you want to record the mix made on the external mixer via Studio Bridge, it is recommended that you first record it from the DAW to Studio Bridge (the channel inputs are then set to “USB”). Then, in the next step, the recording could be played and routed to Studio Bridge via Analog In before being recorded again in Studio Bridge or in the DAW.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to transfer the Studio Bridge recording in real time to the DAW without an external mixer. The latter is only possible if you connect the analog outputs to the external mixer and send its direct outs back to the analog ins. Alternatively, you could connect the D-sub outputs directly to the D-sub inputs for this scenario, or you could just import the files from the SD card into the DAW.

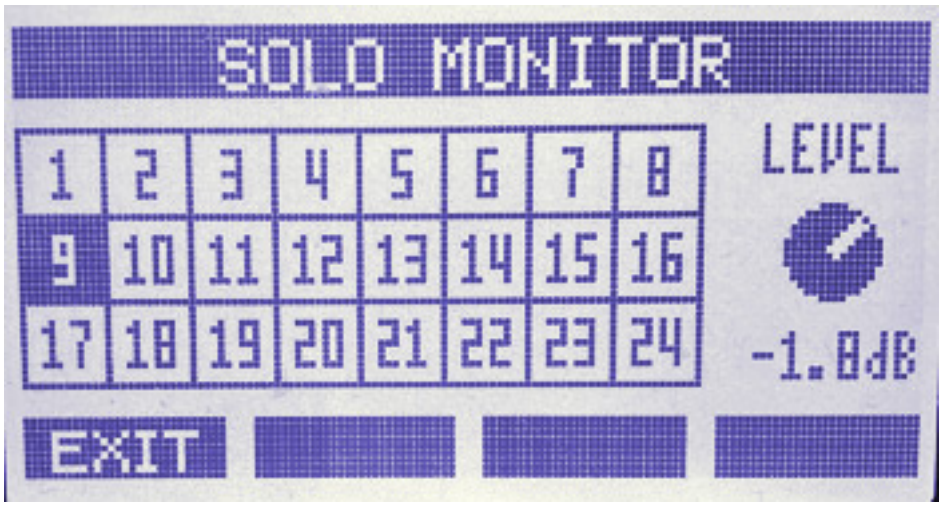
Summing

For the summing function, we give the following example: A stereo mix can be recorded on channels 23 and 24. Unlike the Model 12, however, this is not always the case. For example, the Model 12 has only ten mixer inputs, but a dedicated mixer function. When you record, the sum is also recorded on tracks 11 and 12. Studio Bridge is not a mixer. The instructions only suggest leaving tracks 23 and 24 empty, connecting Studio Bridge to an external mixer after recording, and then recording the mix on tracks 23 and 24. Mono recordings of these tracks can then be converted to a stereo mix. However, there is no option to mix the tracks down to an internal mix. Incidentally, when importing Model 12 projects, Studio Bridge places them on tracks 23 and 24.

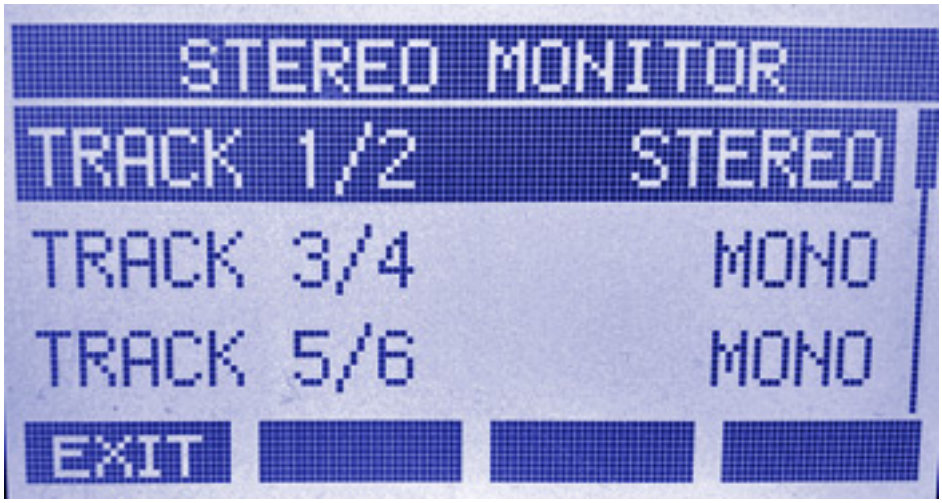
Monitoring and routing functions

A small graphic on the device also shows the effect of setting an auto monitor parameter (if the switch is set to MTR). If it is set to “On” (default setting), both the incoming signal and any playback from the SD card can be heard in Play mode. This applies to both the headphone monitor and the track outputs. The volume ratio of the two signals to each other cannot be controlled. Typically, when monitoring via the Studio Bridge monitor, both signals are equally loud.

In the monitoring section, the overall level can be lowered by -6 dB, -12 dB, or -18 dB using the pad function. The “Mix Mode Rec Selected” option can be used to monitor the armed tracks. Alternatively, you can select channels for solo monitoring from the main page by pressing Shift + Rec. When you leave the solo monitor menu page, the set solo preview functions remain active.



Clicking on the Solo entry will also take you quickly from the second main menu page back to the solo monitor display, where soloed tracks are marked in black. Adjacent tracks can be switched to stereo in the stereo monitor menu to listen to them in stereo. Alternatively, all tracks with a center stereo panorama setting end up in the mix as mono.



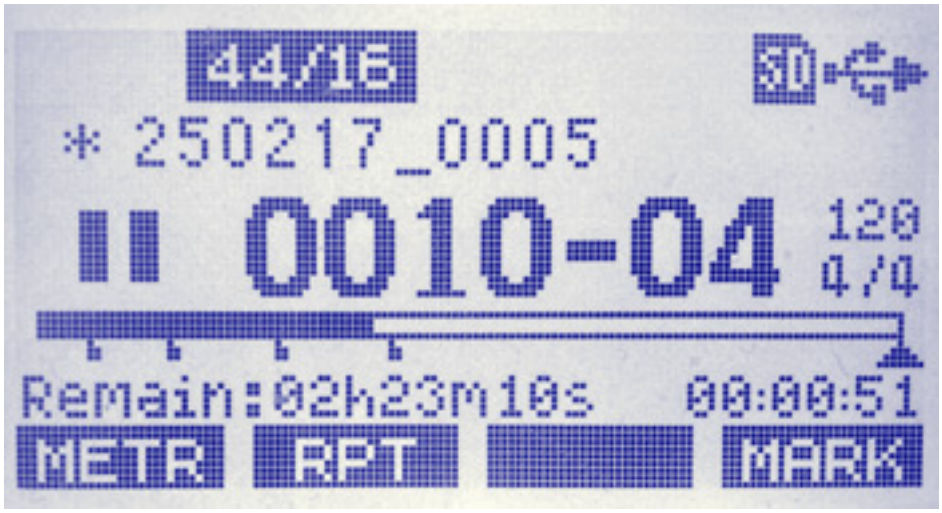
The routing of USB channels 1/2 at the mixing console can be changed.

Click and Clock, MTC, foot pedals

The Click Out outputs the click of an internal generator. Its level can be set in a separate section above the display. The tap start/stop button in the click section above the display, or a suitably configured footswitch, can also be used to set the tempo. Other optional footswitch functions for the two lockable foot pedals next to “Tap” are Punch I/O, Rec/Stop, Marker, Mark Skip, and Load Next Song.

MIDI Timecode (MTC) and MIDI Clock with SPP (Song Position Pointer) can be output via USB and MIDI during recording and playback. However, Studio Bridge cannot respond to incoming signals as a slave.

Edits

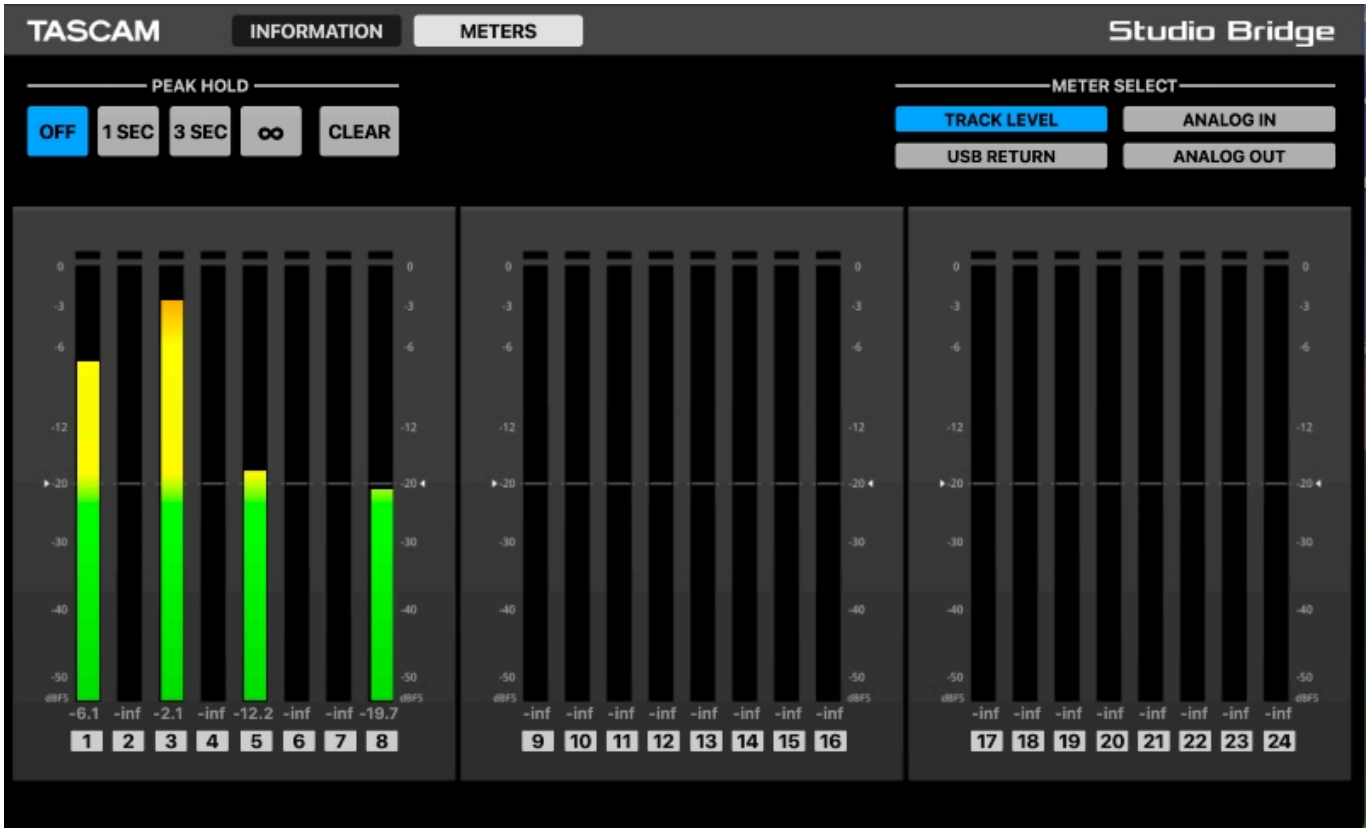


Markers can be set to quickly navigate between parts of a recording. Pressing the Ffwd/Rewind buttons will cause the playhead to jump to the markers. Markers are also visible on a line representing the length of the recording. Unfortunately, the repeat function does not yet work with markers. Model 12 offers the “Vamp” option for this, with definable points for playback, which may also be found in Studio Bridge at some point. It is also possible to normalize recordings. This feature was introduced with an update for other model mixers.

DAW controller and model mix software

To configure it as a DAW controller, you switch to a corresponding mode that changes the way the device works so that it emulates a Mackie Control. Then, you

don't need to use the mouse when arming tracks or when using transport commands, including scrubbing. Many DAWs are supported and there are additional options. For example, in Ableton Live and Cubase, you can select tracks and activate Cycle on a track display page, jump between markers and set them on a marker display page.



This supports remote control of Live, Pro Tools, Cubase/Nuendo, Cakewalk, Logic Pro, DP, Reaper, Studio One, and Cubasis. The Model Mix software, which can be downloaded for free, optionally displays input and output levels.

Conclusion

The price of the Studio Bridge is around €1,000. This is an absolutely reasonable price for a professional 24-track multitrack recorder.

Compared to the mixing consoles in the Model series, it offers the advantage of being able to output each individual recorded channel for later mixing, either analog or via USB. As a user of an analog mixer with direct outs and/or inline technology, this is particularly useful. But some digital mixers also lack a recording function.

Thanks to its compact size, the recorder is also well suited for portable use. In the studio, the recorder can also be used as a compact connection option for 24 line signals, which can then be accessed in the DAW. Despite the obvious simplicity, there are quite a few complex application scenarios and configuration options.

However, the operation is straightforward, and options for settings can be quickly found using the menu navigation. Here, you benefit from Tascam's experience in recording and the continuous optimization of the Model mixer series.

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