

UREI 1620 LE

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Urei 1620 LE

Think this baby looks familiar? It should: Soundcraft have taken the classic disco mixer used in such legendary venues as the Paradise Garage and Studio 54, and re-engineered it for the 21st Century

With a look and layout that is completely unchanged from the original, the most obvious characteristics of the Urei 1620 LE are that it's a rotary input mixer, it doesn't have a crossfader and sports the bare minimum of additional features. In short, it's a six-channel mixer with multiple inputs (we'll return to the input framework shortly) and has an extensive output section catering for a wide range of installation and recording eventualities. However, what really stands out on the Urei 1620 LE is the sound quality, for it truly is sensational: we plugged it into set-ups of differing quality and it made even the least punchy system sing. This is something that you really do have to hear for yourself, but try it out with another mixer as a control, and you will instantly hear the warm, full-bodied difference.

The input framework of the 1620 is particularly individual and extremely versatile. Five of the six channels have primary inputs on stereo RCA connections, as you would find on any DJ mixer, but, unusually, all have ground terminals. Only the two channels labelled phono are equipped with phono pre-amps as standard, but there is the option to install these parts into auxiliary channels one, two and three, so allowing more than two turntables to be attached – hence all the ground terminals. The remaining channel (labelled Aux 4/Mic) comes with an XLR connection, as, incidentally, do the other Auxiliary channels, but in the same way that just two channels come with phono preamps as standard, only the fourth auxiliary input has a mic preamp.

That's just the first part of the input section, for the trick up the 1620's sleeve is its additional bank of five line inputs, each of which can be assigned to any of the four auxiliary channels. This is particularly useful for two reasons. Firstly, because unlike the majority of mixers, you can only connect one input to each channel on the 1620 LE – there are no top panel input switches to select between, for example, turntable or line on channel 1. Secondly if, for example, you install phono preamps on the first two auxiliary channels and have a mic on auxiliary four, if it weren't for the additional input bank this configuration would only leave you with one remaining input for a CD player.

As it is though, the Urei 1620 gives you the flexibility to connect another five line level sound sources (obviously you can still only mix between a maximum of six channels) and this also leaves plenty of scope for DJs arriving and wanting to hook up their own equipment. The cynics might say that this still only gives you roughly the same number of input options you would get on a five- or six-channel mixer with twin stereo inputs, but by being able to freely route these additional inputs to any of the four auxiliary channels (similar to matrix input

systems on some current mixers) the Urei 1620 LE offers a degree of flexibility in this area that few mixers of its type can match.

In action, the channel rotary controls are wonderfully weighted, with a super-tight movement, allowing for the most intricate adjustments; and likewise the pan rotary feature, which you get on every channel. The problem with a mixer like this is that it's really only going to suit a certain type of DJ, though it's probably easier to say who it won't suit. So, if the crossfader is an integral part of your DJing then the 1620 LE is not for you; and because there are no input toggle switches, quick cuts aren't achievable in that manner either, so you're pretty much restricted to blending your mix.

With this in mind, it is also notable that the 1620 LE only has a two-band master EQ. Interestingly, this comes with individual high and low band controls for the right and left stereo fields, but it's still a bit disappointing. Obviously in this respect it remains true to the original model, but this is one area where the original could definitely have been improved. To be honest, though, it wouldn't surprise us at all if Urei bring out a separate EQ module in due course to partner the 1620 LE, and if that does happen then it's a case of problem solved!

MONITORING

The monitor section, while eminently useable, likewise doesn't pander to the modern developments you find on most high-end professional and installation mixers. The main drawback here is that you can only listen to one cue channel at any one time and likewise only monitor the cue channel or the live program (master output) independently. This means that you can't ensure a tight mix by blending the master output with the cue sound in your headphones, either by listening to multiple cue channels or with a cue/pgm slider.

Despite these drawbacks, the thing that blew me away about the Urei 1620 LE was the sound quality, for it is absolutely stunning, and with this being such a major issue when choosing an installation mixer it is one department where this mixer ticks every box. The other major plus point on the 1620 is its connectivity, for it provides the quality and flexibility that clubs, installations and sound engineers require.

Overall, then, the Urei 1620 LE is a real connoisseurs mixer – fans of the original, and any club that's interested in the ultimate in sound quality will be dying to get their hands on it. For the rest of us, we'll be waiting for the all-new 1601 model that (if our preview at the NAMM show is anything to go by) should combine the legendary Urei sound and build quality with a whole host of modern and innovative features. The rebirth of Urei is an exciting development in the DJ tech market, and we can't wait to try out their upcoming models. **DJ**



The Urei 1620: legendary sound but lacking more modern features

FEATURES

- Six channels
- Six primary phono or line inputs
- Five additional line inputs
- House, booth and two record outputs
- Pan on each channel
- Two-band master EQ

VERDICT

A legend is reborn, but this model is strictly for the connoisseur

★★★★

ALTERNATIVES

There are a handful of alternative high-end rotary mixers available, all with slightly different features, specs and price tags. The most direct alternative is the **HEMI HP2016A**, which comes with an optional EQ and crossfader rack. The **VECTRA R-1** is close behind, while boasting valve circuitry and rotary knobs is the **ALLEN & HEATH XONE:95**. Other mixers, including the **ALLEN & HEATH XONE:67**, are available with optional rotary input controls.