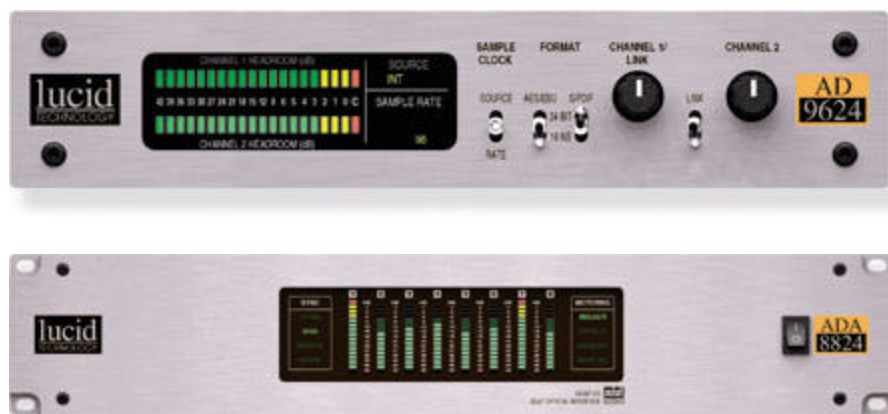# LUCID AD9624,DA9624, ADA8824

Lucid Technology's line of converter products continues to expand, JUSTIN NIEBANK, tries out the new, high-resolution two- and eight channel units in the studio and FRANK WELLS adds a benchtest.

(i) INFORMATION

I get a real kick out of all the new developments in digital audio technology. It's interesting that some gear, which just a few years ago was top-of-the-line, killer stuff, is now well on its way to becoming antiquated. I don't think that this is any more apparent than in the current boom of 24-bit/96kHz digital equipment and systems. I accept that it's important to always try to improve the sound of digital and, at least when mixing, that one should always try to use the highest resolution possible. I hope, however, that those folks who are recording great performances of great material don't worry that their stuff is lame if it's a 16-bit /48kHz recording. Whatever works, right? Instead of droning on, I should talk about some new A/D to D/A converters, which are designed to make everybody happy — at least for a while we hope.

While mixing a couple of projects recently, I had the pleasure of testing out the new 96/24 A/D to D/A converters from Lucid Technologies. I also tested the ADA8824, their eight-channel, 24-bit converter, which is primarily designed as a DAW or ADAT front end. Let's take a closer look…

Stereo

The Lucid AD9624 and DA9624 are designed to be fairly straightforward, no-frills boxes. The A/D converter features standard XLR analogue inputs and a choice of three digital outputs: AES, SPDIF coaxial and TOSLINK optical. In addition, they were kind enough to include a BNC word clock input. The front panel has 20 segment LED meters with a clip indicator, hold feature, and individual volume controls for each channel. One nice feature is a link switch, which allows one knob to control both channels. In addition, there are toggle switches to select clock source (internal, external) and sample rate (32,44.1, 48,88.2 and 96). Finally, there are the format switches, which determine output as either 24-bit or 16-bit with 'noise shaping'.

The D/A converter accepts the same digital formats as inputs while providing analogue outputs on both XLR and TRS quarter-inch connectors. This unit's front panel also has the 20-segment input meters as well as indicators to display sample rate and digital lock. There is also an output volume control, as well as a headphone output with its own volume pot. The only switch included

selects the digital input format.

I found the Lucid 96/24 converters very simple to operate, and I was impressed with their clear, honest audio image. They sounded very open with wonderful detail and width. If you're looking for converters that add some degree of tape or tube emulation, these are not the units for you.

At the same time, if you're looking to get a solid, uncoloured picture of your mix, these are very good. I found them particularly useful when transferring my one-half analogue mixes. (They kept all the goodness). Finally, when making CD mixes, I found the Lucid converters folded down beautifully to 16-bit. If you're mixing to DAT look into these units. They will definitely beat the converters in many DAT machines. If I were to have any complaints with these boxes, it would be that they use those dreaded external power supplies, and I wish the meters could store peaks until I choose to clear them.

Add Six More Channels

As I mentioned earlier, the ADA8824 is an eight-channel 24-bit converter, which is basically set up to get analogue and digital sounds in and out of your DAW. The 8824 has eight analogue ins and outs, eight AES/EBU ins and outs, and SPDIF in and out, all of which can connect to your computer (or whatever) via an ADAT lightpipe in and out. So, if you're running digital music software and have a card like the Korg 1212 or Motu 2408, and so on, this unit can become your ticket to the big-time world of 24-bit recording. This is a solidly built, well conceived unit with some great features.

In addition to all the audio connections, the 8824 also has the ever important word clock in and out, as well as ADAT sync connectors so the unit can receive lock if it is part of an ADAT system. We also find MIDI in and out which provides control from your computer. Lucid includes a software utility (Mac or PC), which via MIDI allows for internal audio and clock routing. If you choose not to use your computer to do this, there is a bank of dip switches on the rear of the unit which can set-up routing as well.

The front of the 8824 is very simple with eight LED meters displaying either the analogue or digital inputs or outputs. A sync window displays the digital source choices: 44.1 internal, 48 internal, word clock or AES/EBU. Once you get the signal and clock paths worked out, this unit can become the hub of a small studio system.

I found the 8824 to be fairly straightforward and, like the 9624 A/D to D/A converters, it features a very true, open, uncoloured sound. I suppose this is the best way to go, since most of the audio mangling these days goes on inside computers.

Conclusion

I enjoyed testing and using these new Lucid converters. They are built to withstand the rigours of professional applications, and they sound great as well.

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(i) INFORMATION

Lucid Technology AD9624 £699; DA9624 £599; ADA8834 £2696.63. All prices include VAT.

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