



Teenage Engineering TX-6 mixer £1199

The Swedes have created a mind blowingly compact mixer but, as **Si Truss** asks, does the fact they can mean they should?

CONTACT WHO: Teenage Engineering WEB: teenage.engineering **KEY FEATURES** 6-channel stereo mixer with built-in equalizer, filters, compressor, aux send, cue and digital effects. Can be used as an up-to 12 input or 12 output USB-C audio interface

THE PROS & CONS

Very high
build quality

Sounds excellent

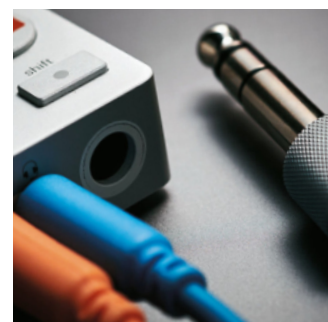
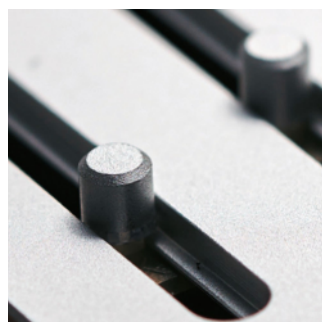
Highly portable



**Cramped interface is
unpleasant to use**

Placement of inputs
means many
common leads can't
be used side-by-side

That price



For one thing, it looks and feels great; the unit itself is sleek and incredibly rugged, with components that respond smoothly under the fingers without feeling either delicate or too stiff. From the moment of unboxing it's obvious that the TX-6 is – in terms of its build quality – a seriously high-quality bit of kit.

The TX-6 can function in a variety of ways too, making it far more flexible than a straightforward 6-channel mixer. On the mixer front, the TX-6's six inputs – all line level – are each stereo and can be used in mono, stereo or split modes, the latter allowing two mono inputs to be summed to each channel. There are three analogue outputs: a quarter-inch main out, plus mini-jack cue and auxiliary outputs that can be used for headphones, creating an effect loop or even hooking up a headset mic. What's more, there's a USB connection that allows the TX-6 to act as an audio interface with up to 12 inputs or 12 outputs (although not at the same time, and currently on macOS only). It can act as a Bluetooth MIDI interface too, both sending and receiving MIDI data, allowing it to act as an adapter or handy little controller.

This digital mixer offers a lot under-the-hood too. There are channel effects, with a three-band EQ, a compressor, bi-directional filter and a gain control. These are joined by a pair of master effects, one set up as a send, the second as an insert that can either be placed on one mixer channel or the master output. Each offers several effect types, with slot one offering variations on chorus, reverb and delay, then slot 2 crush/distortion, virtual tape effects, filtering and tremolo.

A simple instrument tuner is a nice addition for a portable bit of gear like this too. There's even a basic drum machine and synth engine onboard, that can generate kick, snare, clap, hi-hat and basic sine, square, saw or triangle tones, all based around preset patterns. It's fun, but nothing to write home about.

Sticking to the positives, it sounds fantastic – the digital effects are top class and the way each channel distorts as you push the gain and compressor is a genuine cut above. Unfortunately, there are some fairly major issues too, most of which come as a byproduct of the mixer's size.

The TX-6 is small. It literally fits into the palm of your hand, and it's

Teenage Engineering have long been known for their bold choices. For better and worse, one of the more eyebrow-raising aspects of their output tends to be the price point of their products, ranging from the satisfyingly cheap Pocket Operators to the latest iteration of the OP-1, which has jumped from the original's £799 to an eye-watering £2k.

The portable, rechargeable TX-6 mixer sits alongside that latest OP-1,

being the first two products in TE's new 'Field' range, so it's perhaps unsurprising that it lands at an equally high-end price point of £1200. At first glance, that sort of price tag appears downright alarming for a piece of music-making hardware that is small enough to fit into the palm of your hand, especially considering that compact mixers over £200 are generally seen as top-end. There is, however, considerably more to the TX-6 than meets the eye and there is some justification for why it costs so much.

THE ALTERNATIVES



Akai MPC Live 2 £899

If you set aside the size factor, Akai's beatmaker offers better connectivity, a similar level of wireless portability, and full DAW-level features – at a cheaper price

akai.com



Sound Devices MixPre-6 II £1070

A pro-level mixer, interface and recorder beloved by the film and TV industry. Similarly-priced but with 32-bit float recording and quality mic pres

sounddevices.com



Allen and Heath ZEDi-10FX £270

If you can live with the extra size and lack of battery, Allen and Heath's compact mixer is great, with quality preamps and effects for the price

allen-heath.com

fairly amazing that Teenage Engineering have fit so much functionality into such a small package. However, this has the effect of making the mixer feel incredibly cramped, resulting in a confusing and rarely enjoyable user experience. While the quality components are responsive, given the lack of UI real estate, many features share buttons for navigation, meaning that numerous, poorly-labelled button combinations are required to access most features.

The manner in which the rotaries function is a little inconvenient too. By default these control high, mid and low EQ bands, but they can be switched to control other parameters too, including the synth engines or a variety of custom destinations. However, jumping between modes means that the current positions of the knobs are immediately applied to the new parameters. Effectively this means you can't change the function of the pots back and forth within a single project without mangling settings that you've already input.

Most troubling of all is the placement of the inputs. The ports are placed incredibly close together, to the point that many standard mini-jack leads simply won't fit side by side. I have a variety of leads in my studio, including stereo splitters, mini-to-full-sized jack leads, modular patch cables and basic stereo 'aux leads', and I struggled to use all six inputs simultaneously (for the purpose of our photoshoot we dug out patch leads previously supplied with the PO modular range). This would be more tolerable if the TX-6 shipped with custom leads or adapters, but it doesn't; you can buy custom leads from Teenage Engineering, but a set of six will cost you upwards for £60, before you even consider multiple stereo/mono/splitter combinations. Frankly it's just bad design, as if nobody considered how the TX-6 might actually be used.

Combined with the lack of musician-friendly features like any preamps or instrument/mic inputs – common on mixers a fraction of the price – it makes the TX-6 feel like something that has been created as a piece of sleek design rather than a practical tool for musicians. Then there's the price. Sure, the build and sound are excellent, but does anyone need a mini mixer that costs more than an MPC Live or Macbook Air?



CHASSIS: Made of CNC aluminium with 2k molding, custom-made encoders and faders, build quality is high

ROTARIES: Despite being sturdy, the manner in which the TX-6 switches rotary functions is somewhat inconvenient

INTERFACE: A lack of button real estate means navigation can be a painful process

The TX-6 is obviously very portable, but I struggle to envision situations where it'd be worth sacrificing the saving and usability of something twice the size and a quarter of the price. You can fit it in your pocket, sure, but are there really musicians out there serious enough about their craft to spend £1200 on a mixer but not carry a backpack? The TX-6 doesn't record by itself anyway, at which point you have to ask if a pro-grade field recorder – even top-end devices are well under £1000 – isn't a better option. **FM**

FM VERDICT

5.4

While high quality in places, some poor design choices and an eye-watering price make it hard to entirely recommend the TX-6