

The ONE is Apogee's latest Mac-only, low-cost portable single-input-channel recording solution, which nevertheless maintains the company's legendary commitment to audio quality. STEPHEN BENNETT shares his experience.



I've been using an Apogee Duet extensively over the last few years and can confirm that the One is, to my ears at least, almost half a Duet – albeit with a few features missing like the ultra – high sampling rate. However, the ONE has with few of its own tricks up its diminutive sleeve – although why it's not call the 'Solo' is anybody's guess.

Going For The ONE

Housed in a black, plastic case about the size of a fat mobile phone, the only physical control on the unit is the central silver knob. LED indicators and the internal microphone complete the front panel, while the top of the unit sports a USB interface and a socket to connect the microphone and Line/Guitar inputs, which are both on flying leads. This is my only concern with the physical nature of the One; if you lose or break the lead or socket, you're basically stuffed. As you have to carry this lead around with you at all times, I'd have preferred it if Apogee had made the unit fatter and stuck in a combo quarter-inch XLR

APOGEE ONE

Single-channel recording solution

combo socket – although there are a few advantages to having a small extension lead effectively built in. Otherwise, the ONE looks like it'd take the knocks of a life on the road in its stride. Usefully, the microphone input also provides 48V phantom powering. At the bottom of the interface, a single 3.5mm socket can be configured

to output signals to headphones or studio monitors and, although the ONE is a single input-channel device, it can, of course, output stereo when playing back from any software on the Mac's. Apogee also provides a range of accessories for the One, including a microphone standmount, a tabletop stand and a carrying case available to buy from www.apogeedigital.com.

ONE's Installation

After downloading a Snow Leopard compatible driver from Apogee's website (as the one supplied was Leopard only), installation went smoothly – although it did annoyingly require a reboot of my Macbook Pro – but, to be fair, Apogee's software is not alone in this regard. Plugging in the ONE to a spare USB port causes it to flash into life. Unless you've turned the feature off on subsequent connections, plugging in the One causes a pop-up window to appear which asks if you want to make it your default audio device – which could be useful if it's your only interface. To select inputs and outputs you'll need to run Apogee's installed Maestro software (image). Here, pull-down menus allow you to select input types (including phantom power) and where you can choose if the output is to be routed to amplifier or headphones. Once an input is selected, pressing the front panel knob swaps between inputs and outputs and turning it sets their respective levels. The mixer section in Maestro, can be used to provide hardware based latency free monitoring, while the unit itself performed happily at buffer settings of 128 samples in Logic Pro 9.

ONE's Usage

The internal microphone is brilliant for capturing those inspirational moments and the quality is enough to even use the recordings in non-mission-critical situations.

Comparing the microphone pre-amplifier to my Duet only enhances the impression that the ONE is its direct sibling – the results are clean, un-coloured, and only a spit away from the ones from my Metric Halo UL-N, even on critical sources such as acoustic instruments or voices. Maximum sample rate is 48kHz, but this shouldn't pose too many problems amongst the One's intended user base and, more importantly, the bit depth can be set to 24. The Line input also acts as a guitar pre-amp and I found that it provided the correct resistance load for my Stratocaster. I've often noticed that a lot of the complaints that people have of computer-based guitar processing are actually posted by people who are using standard line inputs on their interface – having the correct impedance available for guitars at an input improves the sound of amplifier simulations enormously. The same quarter-inch input socket also takes line level sources, such as a keyboard or CD player, in its stride.

ONE's Conclusions

Apart from my concerns about the physical nature of the audio inputs, the ONE is a sterling performer, providing the audio quality we've come to expect from Apogee in an extremely portable package. At around half the price of a Duet, the decision on which interface to have will depend on whether you need to record stereo sources or not. Although you may be able to buy a USB interface with more features at a comparable price point, you're unlikely to get the same quality of microphone pre-amplification or digital converters as the ONE. The QuickStart guide concentrates on getting the ONE up and running in Garageband, which may lead the casual observer to conclude that Apogee doesn't consider the ONE as a contender for serious recording duties – however, they'd be wrong in

these assumptions, as a more thorough look at the full Users Guide gives you a much better idea of the full capabilities of the ONE. Having an interface with a single channel of Apogee pre-amplification along with a reasonable quality on-board microphone may be all you need to complete that magnum opus, that dialogue, or that effect, before the inspiration gets frittered away by all the faff that accompanies setting up a more extensive recording system. In those situations, the ONE may be the one for you. 🎧

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INFORMATION

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THE REVIEWER

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