



mic pre/line inputs), a 4x4 MIDI patch bay, an 18-channel FireWire computer interface (with eight 24-bit/96 kHz analog converters / 8 channels of ADAT and two channels of S/PDIF), and a DAW/MIDI control surface (with 9 motorized 100 mm faders, 8 pan/send controls, 24 dedicated function buttons, transport controls & more), all wrapped up in a desktop enclosure with a 22.9" x 18.9" x 5.4" footprint.

**1082 controls**

At first glance the FW-1082 looks like an 1884 that has been hit by a shrink ray (19.1" x 15.2" x 3.25"). Gone are the 1884's 24 dedicated function buttons and row of pan knobs, but the rest is all still there (albeit mostly smaller).

# TASCAM

## FireWire interfacing and control for every taste and budget

# & FW-1082 & FW-1804

A little over a year ago TASCAM introduced the FW-1884, a feature-packed DAW control surface and audio/MIDI I/O device that uses the FireWire protocol for connectivity. We reviewed it in April 2004 and were quite impressed by its feature set, quality and ease of use. At an average street price of \$1300, however, we found the 1884 to be a serious investment for the recording musician who may not need some of the included features.

Now TASCAM has introduced not one but two leaner yet focused siblings, the FW-1082 and the FW-1804. All three units are similarly colored in TASCAM's distinct brown-gray scheme, and most of the buttons, knobs and jacks are similar as well.

Since we'll have to reference the new units against the flagship FW-1884 to put all three units in perspective, here is a quick overview of the FW-1884: There is an 8-channel monitor mixer (with eight balanced XLR

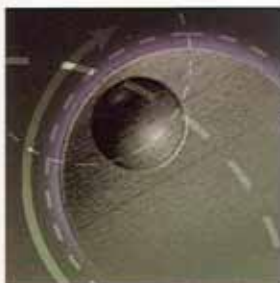
The 1082's topside is divided into 6 sections. In the top left is the "input control section" which has a row of 8 trim knobs, 8 green signal LEDs and 8 red overload LEDs. Below that is the "channel/DAW control section", with 8 channels of 60 mm motorized faders, three lighted function buttons (select, solo & mute) and a recording LED indicator. There is also one master fader and a record-arming button.

The next section in the top middle of the 1082 is the encoder/control section. This bank of knobs, lighted buttons, and small selection keys controls the eq, panning and aux sends for each of the channels (they also have a sub function for digital clock setting). Clockwise from here are the monitoring indicators, with two volume knobs (monitor/phones) and LED indicators for MIDI, digital sync & phantom power. Below this are nine lighted buttons for "mode control", where you choose what functions the 1082 will be performing (monitor mixing/DAW control/MIDI).



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### TASCAM FW-1082 & FW-1804



The last section below that contains the transport controls and is complete with a full-scale jog/shuttle wheel, tape transport controls (much smaller than the 1884's), and bank, locator and navigation buttons.

#### 1082 inputs

Around the back in the input section is a top row of 1/4" I/O jacks. The outputs are on the left, with a headphone jack & balanced L/R monitor outs. On the right side are 8 balanced



line inputs. Channels one and two also feature an additional 1/4" insert jack and channel 8 can be switched to accommodate the direct connection of an electric guitar.

The input section continues below the 1/4" ins, with 4 balanced, phantom-powered (switchable) XLR microphone preamps. Moving right to left there are a 1/4" footswitch jack, two 6-pin IEEE 1394 (FireWire) ports, 2 coaxial S/PDIF phono jacks and a 2x2 section of MIDI I/O.

There is also a power switch and a small 12 V DC power jack (Note: the 1082 uses a DC connection with an external transformer vs. the 1884's 3-prong AC cable). Be aware that the 1082 does not have any ADAT connectivity or BNC word clock connectors.

#### 1804 controls

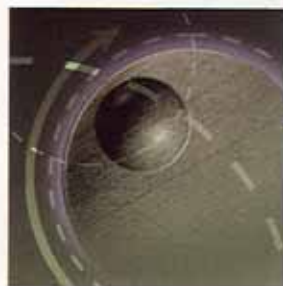
The FW-1804 is a 2-space rack-mountable box that includes a combination of I/O features from both the 1884 and the 1082. The 1804 loses the control surface features of the other two, but like the 1884 has the ability to accept 18 simultaneous inputs and includes a 2x4 MIDI patch bay.

The front of the 1804 looks just like the input section of its siblings, with 8 input trim knobs, overload and signal LEDs. On the 1804 this section also contains the phantom power switch and a front-panel 1/4" guitar input jack and corresponding switch.

Next to that on the front panel is the monitoring/indicators section, which is similar to that of the 1082, with headphone and monitor volume knobs and LEDs for MIDI/Clock and Digital I/O. There is also a convenient 1/4" headphone jack on the front. Since there are no control modes on this unit, three buttons for choosing the monitoring source have been added to this section as well.

The back of the 1804 contains a hybrid of features from both the 1884





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### TASCAM FW-1082 & FW-1804

and 1082. The right side is dedicated to the analog I/O with 4 channels of either balanced XLR or 1/4" inputs courtesy of 4 XLR/TRS Neutrik Combo jacks. Each of these channels also features a 1/4" insert jack. Below these are an additional 4 balanced 1/4" line inputs and a pair of L/R 1/4" outputs.



The back left side is dedicated to the digital and MIDI I/O of the 1804. Along the top is a 2x4 MIDI patch bay and the bottom again contains two 6-pin IEEE 1394 (FireWire) ports, 2 coaxial S/PDIF phono jacks as well as a pair of lightpipe ADAT jacks and 75 ohm BNC connectors for managing word clock connection. There is also a 1/4" footswitch jack in this section. Power is supplied with a 12volt external DC power supply, as with the 1082.

#### The softer side of the FW units

Both units include ASIO, WDM and Giga drivers and support for both Windows (XP/2000) and Mac (OS X 10.3 or later). You must also have a 6-pin IEEE 1394 (FireWire) jack on your computer.

Again, if you read our review of the 1884, you will know that driver and software installation was troublesome due to some Windows issues, etc.. While we had Windows issues with the installation on the original 1884, this time around the FW series drivers installed flawlessly. FW-1884 users should note that there are new drivers available for that unit at TASCAM's web site.

Both new units offer support for a variety of host applications such as Steinberg Cubase SX/LE and Nuendo, Cakewalk SONAR, Apple Logic, etc.. Both units have a fully functional software control panel (tailored to each unit's features) for control of clock source, sample rate, and routing and control protocols.

Additionally the 1082 ships with a bonus application called "Soft LCD" which compensates for the unit's lack of physical LCD screens and adds

"scribble strip" functionality to your computer screen, out of the way of your DAW applications.

Both units also ship with a copy of Cubase LE recording software, a copy of GigaStudio LE, and demos of TASCAM's new Nomad Factory plugins. Not a bad deal in the least.

#### In use

While the 1082 and the 1804 may have been slimmed down from the 1884, we found absolutely no difference in the sound of microphone preamps or

the 24-bit/96kHz digital converters, and the build of these units was equally as solid. In other words, the quality remains the same.

As strictly I/O devices, both units work well; we had no problems streaming/recording eight tracks of 24/96k audio from either unit.

A nice feature of these units is their use as zero-latency tracking devices. Setting up monitor mixes that do not affect the recording levels is a breeze. In fact it is important to note that while the 1804 has no external mixer controls, its software panel includes a "soft mixer" for setting monitoring levels and panning.

As a control surface the FW-1082 works almost exactly like the 1884 and comes with protocols for both HUI and Mackie Control as well as its native protocols for most DAW programs.

In fact the newly ironed-out and implemented native support for Cubase LE/SX, which works for Nuendo as well, was awesome (can you tell which DAW app this reviewer uses?) It was great no longer having to control limited functions through HUI, and the native support worked great with no zippering or artifacts.

Controlling MIDI devices such as soft synths and effects worked fine, too, and was simple to set up with the FW software control panel. Both units were exceptional for remote recording—the 1804 in a rack, the 1082 fitting great under your arm.

The only negative we can mention is that none of the devices in the FW family work together. It would be nice to chain units together for greater I/O track count, especially in the case of the 1804. There's an optional 8-fader

add-on available for the 1884, but that's not quite the same thing.

It would also have been nice to have a full set of 8 XLR/TRS combo jacks on the 1804, especially as a live tracking device, although we are not sure how that would affect the overall cost.

#### Conclusion

The performance of these units was rock solid. TASCAM has worked hard to create a varied line of FireWire I/O control surfaces with decent features in three price brackets. Check out our sidebar and TASCAM's web site for more info on choosing the best model for you. ☺

**More from:** TASCAM, 7733 Telegraph Road, Montebello, CA 90640. 323/726-0303, [www.tascam.com](http://www.tascam.com).

#### Choose Your Weapon

Which of the FW devices would work best for you? There are a number of configuration and feature choices to consider:

**Input number:** Both the 1884 and 1804 have up to 18 simultaneous inputs (8 analog/10 digital), the 1082 has 10 (8 analog/2 digital).

**Output Number:** The 1884 has 18 outputs (8 analog/10 digital), the 1804 has 12 (2 analog/10 digital) and the 1082 has 4 outputs (2 analog/2 digital).

**Analog Connectivity:** All three units have eight channels of analog input, with the option of choosing between balanced 1/4" line inputs or XLR mic preamps. The difference is in the number of mic pres available: the 1884 has 8, the 1082 and 1804 each have 4.

**Channel Inserts:** The 1884 has 8, the 1804 has 4 and the 1082 has 2.

**Digital Connectivity:** All three units feature 2 channels of S/PDIF, while both the 1884 and 1804 add eight channels of ADAT as well as BNC word clock connectors.

**MIDI:** The 1884 has 4 in/4 out, the 1804 has 2 in/4 out and the 1082 has 2 in/2 out.

**Console Controls:** The 1884 has 100 mm motorized faders, the 1082 has 60 mm motorized faders and the 1804 only has faders in software. The 1884 also has dedicated pan knobs on each channel.

**Miscellaneous Controls:** The 1884 includes 24 function buttons and full-size transport buttons and a jog wheel, the 1082 has mini transport buttons, a jog wheel and no extra function keys. The 1804 has none of these.

**Expansion:** The 1884 can accommodate the addition of FE-8 8-channel fader expanders, while the other units cannot. —PV