


PC  What is it? An audio interface designed for laptops PRICE: £350  
 CONTACT: E-MU, 0800 901 2168 [www.emu.com](http://www.emu.com)

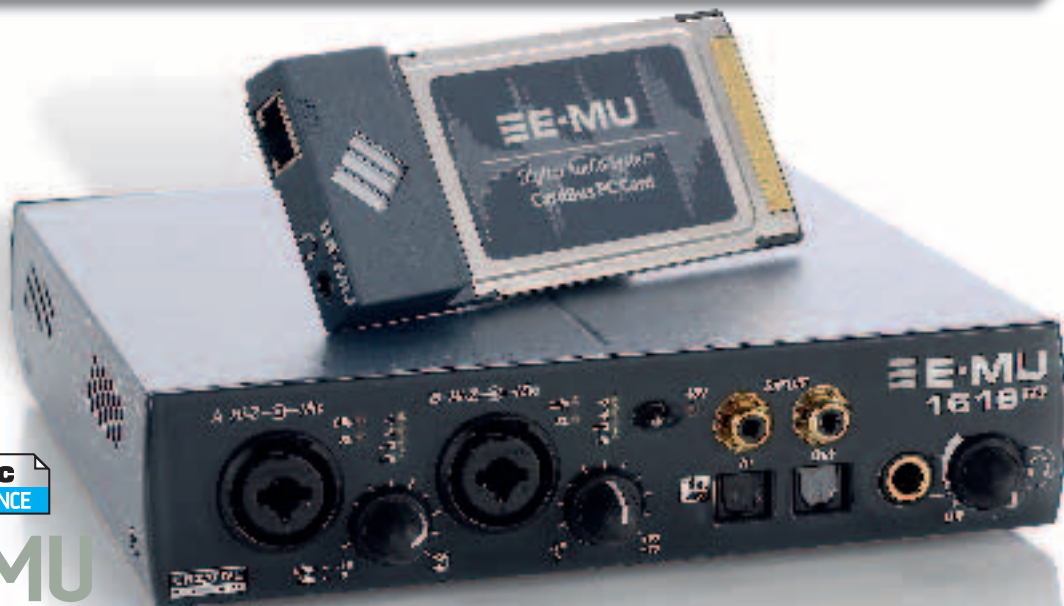
► **SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

PC: Intel or AMD 1GHz processor, Windows XP (SP2) or 2000 (SP4), 256MB RAM, Type II CardBus (PCMCIA) slot

► **TEST MACHINES**

PC: Intel Pentium 4 3.4GHz laptop, 1GB RAM, Windows XP

PC: Intel Celeron 2.6GHz, Windows XP, 1GB RAM



► **ALTERNATIVELY**

**RME Hammerfall DSP**  
 cm54 >> 10/10 >> £Varies  
 Superb PCMCIA system with a range of interface options

**Creative Audigy 2 ZS Notebook**  
 cm89 >> 9/10 >> £149  
 A budget PCMCIA card with plenty of power



# E-MU 1616M

There are loads of quality interfaces out there for the mobile musician, but this one truly sets new standards for laptop audio...

**VERDICT**

FOR

- + Astounding sound quality
- + Oodles of connections
- + Great preamps
- + Ethernet-cable compatible
- + Incredibly versatile
- + Excellent value
- + Good bundled software

AGAINST

- No Mac support

The 1616M sets a new benchmark for mobile audio interfaces. It'll take some beating

RATING



## No laptop? No problem...

This is such a fantastic bit of kit that we've installed a PCI CardBus port (£40) in one of our studio PCs and now use it there too. Apart from the superb sound (which easily surpasses that of nearly all the other audio interfaces in our studio), the Ethernet connection means that we can place the breakout box wherever we want, and all the additional outputs make it handy for multiple monitor setups. The main outputs of the unit can be duplicated no less than four times, allowing you to run them into three sets of monitors and still have a headphone jack to spare. This also allows for multiple headphone monitoring – up to four different people could monitor a live player via headphones without any additional hardware.

So, if you have a laptop and a desktop PC with a spare PCI port then the 1616M becomes an even more versatile and attractive purchase.

**O**K, let's make one thing clear right from the start: the E-MU 1616M is far more than 'just another quality interface'. The package includes a CardBus card and the sturdy MicroDock M (not to be confused with the conventional MicroDock) breakout box.

The card has two connectors – an 1/8" headphone/line-out jack and an E-MU EDI interface (which houses an Ethernet-type port) for connection to the MicroDock M. This means you can use relatively cheap Ethernet cables to place the box wherever you like.

On the front panel of the MicroDock are two E-MU XTC Hi-Z Neutrik preamp inputs with phantom power and analogue soft limiting. These accept two balanced line, guitar or microphone signals. Just below are the gain pots – which can give a whopping 60dB of boost – and above are level meters and separate LED indicators for clipping and soft-limiting.

Next come the digital S/PDIF phono in/out (switchable to AES/EBU) and ADAT optical connections (offering eight additional digital ins and outs). Finally, there's a 1/4" headphone jack.

Around the back of the MicroDock M are two more sets of balanced 1/4" jack inputs, each of which boasts an impressive 120dB signal-to-noise ratio. Also onboard is an RIAA stereo turntable input and ground connector (deactivated when jacks are inserted into the second pair of inputs), and then there's a MIDI breakout cable port that gives 32 channels of MIDI I/O over standard MIDI connectors. Below these are three stereo pairs of outputs on 1/4" jack connectors, each of which boasts that staggering 120db SNR.

Next along is an incredibly handy trio of 1/8" stereo minijack outputs – these can be configured to service a 5.1 surround system. Last but not least is the Ethernet connection port.

## Top performer

So, how does it all sound? Truly sublime! The converters are the same as those found in Digidesign's Pro Tools 192 I/O interface – they operate at up to 24bit/192kHz resolution and sound fantastic. The mic preamps are excellent too; there's no audible hiss or noise added to the signal, even when you apply the full 60dB of gain.

In terms of software, you get E-MU's renowned DSP Patch-mix software and light versions of Sonar, Cubase, Live, WaveLab and AmpliTube. These all serve to add even more value to an already great package.

This is one of the best mobile audio interfaces we've ever seen. It sounds incredibly good and offers so many connections and features that it'd be worthy of a place in most studios, never mind out on the road. Buy one. Now. **cm**