



CTA Review: myMix Personal Mixing System

May 13, 2013 / Mike Sessler

Sixteen channel personal mixers are not new, nor is there a shortage of them. However, the myMix offers an interesting take on the concept. Introduced a few years ago, I was initially excited about the system. But then I learned that the only way to get inputs into the system was to plug into each individual mixer, two channels at a time. I liked the interface, but that mode of inputs just didn't work.

The folks at myMix heard that, and set off to develop an input module. Now that it's possible to get 16-32 channels on the network using a module, now we have something to talk about. So to start off, let's consider the components of the system.

System Components

To get signal into the system, you can use the IEX-16L or IEX-16L-A input expansion module. Both feature 16 analog inputs on DB25 connectors; the -A model adds two ADAT inputs. You can mix and match input types in groups of 8; so 8 channels analog, 8 channels ADAT or all 16 via the same type—unless you don't have the -A model, then it's all analog. myMix sells some cool DB-25 break-in cables that conveniently include both TRS and XLR inputs on the ends. It makes for a slightly messy install, but having both cable ends eliminates a lot of adapting issues.





THE BIG GREEN LIGHTS MAKE IT EASY TO SEE SIGNAL FLOW INTO THE A/D CONVERTER.

Once you have your 16 channels on the network (you can actually combine two input expanders on the network to put 32 channels on the digital network), the next piece of gear is a POE Ethernet switch. myMix offers a nice, 8-port Cisco version with two gigabit ports as part of the system. Finally, you use a Cat 5 cable to connect to the myMix mixer. At NAMM this year, they also introduced the myMix Control, which is a software that gives you networked control over all the input modules and myMixers on the network. More on that in a moment.

myMix took a whole new approach to the personal mixing interface. Instead of a blank panel punched through with encoders, there is a nice large LCD screen with a single large knob at the bottom. Four buttons along the right side select various menu elements, and two buttons below the screen mute or start and stop recording. That's right, you can multi-track record your 16 inputs to an SD card using the built-in card slot.

Initially, I suspected the single-knob approach would slow the user down, and make it harder to use. But when I played with it at NAMM, I actually found it to be fairly quick to get around on. That was confirmed when I set it up in the Palatial Studio. After configuring the 16 inputs, it didn't take long to build a mix. Each input has level, tone, pan and effects send options. To use the mixer, spin the knob to select the input you wish to adjust. A single press brings up the volume. The four buttons on the right select the other options. When finished, a second press of the knob returns you to the overview screen. It's all fairly intuitive and easy to use.



The only criticism I have up to this point is that the type on the screen is pretty small. We have some older musicians on our team and I suspect some would have an issue reading the channel labels. Since I lost my progressives a few weeks ago, I've noticed that small type is a bit of a challenge, so I put myself in this category. Thankfully, the screen is illuminated and sharp. You can also select a list view of the input channels, which makes the type a bit bigger. You do end up with a little more scrolling, however.



Each myMix mixer also has two XLR/TRS combo jacks on the back. These are inputs, that can be used for each musician's channels, and/or sent out to the network. One model for use is to have each musician plug their instruments into the myMixers, then everyone on stage can select from everyone's inputs. A "FOH" mixer could be used to dial up a house mix. In this set up, you wouldn't even need an input module. It also assumes you're not mic'ing the full drum kit with 8-10 mic's.

I suspect that club bands would use this feature more than churches, so I didn't play with it much. However, for a smaller student or kids venue, that might be useful... Another very clever design feature is the mic-stand mount. It neatly integrates into the bottom of the unit using a single captive thumbscrew. Once the mount is in place, you screw it to the top of any standard mic stand. If you want to set one on a desk, you remove the mount, and four rubber feet protects the surface.



So that gets us through the initial set up and basic components. Next time, we'll see how it works, and more importantly, how it sounds.

Pt. 2

May 15, 2013 / Mike Sessler

Last time, we looked at the basic components of the myMix system. Today, we'll put the system together and see how it sounds.

Configuration

Once I had the system wired together (which was very easy—no manual needed), I wirelessly connected to the myMix PLUG for configuration. The PLUG is a small computer and wireless access point that serves as the interface between the user's browser and the myMix network. I did need the single page "manual" for this step, but only to get the IP address to hit with my browser, and to learn the username and password. Once connected, configuration was pretty easy. myMix uses a straight HTML interface for configuration, which is both good and bad. It's good because no additional software is needed; you can hit it from any browser.



The downside is that you're limited to HTML-accessible controls, which means buttons and drop downs. The layout is not the prettiest, and it takes a little bit to get the lay of the land amongst the rows of similarly sized buttons. Once you get it, it's pretty easy to get around on.

I got into the input expander and quickly named the channels and set the stereo pairs up. That took about 3 minutes. I then started configuring the myMix mixers. It didn't take long to get my inputs assigned; the biggest challenge (which wasn't really that hard) was figuring out where to turn off the built-in inputs so I could access all 16 inputs from the input expander (hint: it's in preferences; select "None" for the built-in inputs). With that done, I put on my headphones and built my mix.

Sound Quality

I noticed this at NAMM, and it was confirmed again in the studio—these sound good. The headphone amps are very, very stout, and easily drove my Heil ProSet 3 headphones very loud. I tried my Ultimate Ears UE900s and UE7s, and had to turn the unit down. So volume will be no problem. The sound is also very clean. The audio is 48KHZ, 24-bit, and it sounds like it. Even when I clipped the inputs (you see clipping when the channel names turn red), I heard no distortion.

The sound quality gets a two thumbs up rating from me. It's easy to set up different configurations on the unit, and save them as Profiles. This can be accomplished through the Control software interface, or on the units themselves. One feature that was very handy was being able to set up a profile on one unit, then quickly copy it via the web interface to another. You can also save profiles, and upload those to other units via the web interface. It would be very easy to build multiple starting configurations and upload them for each musician as needed.

You can also adjust the individual mixes on each unit using the web interface, but you probably won't want to. This is one of the big limitation of the HTML interface. To set the volume of a mix channel, you select from a drop down menu that gives you volume values in .5 dB increments. Panning is the same way, only you select items like "72% L / 18% R." And once you set all the levels, you hit apply to make the changes stick. Building mixes on the mixer is much, much faster.

On the other hand, the cool thing about Control is that you can put it on a network and access it literally from anywhere. In fact, if you visit mymixaudio.com, you can log into their myMix network and see that input expanders and myMixers they have plugged in. This could be useful for troubleshooting.

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You can also select various parameters to lock the user out of. For example, if you don't want the user changing channel selections, you can lock that feature out. The list of lockable parameters is quite extensive, so you have very granular control, which would be nice for keeping musicians out of the configuration pages.

Conclusion

As I said at the start of this review, I was initially not that impressed with the concept of myMix. But as it's grown up and more features have been added, I think it's a solid system. Price-wise, you're looking at just under \$800 each per mixer. The input expanders run about \$1,000 (add \$300 to include the ADAT ports). The POE switch will set you back \$200-800 depending on model and number of ports (they recommend various models from D-Link, Cisco and Netgear). Finally, the myMix PLUG is just under \$700.

So it's not a low-budget option, but it's a highly flexible one. Cost-wise, it's on par with Aviom, but it's far more capable and sounds a lot better. You can save and pre-build mixes like we do on the Roland M-48s, though it doesn't have the channel count or mixing ability (the M-48s can mix 40 channels into 16 stereo groups).

And we didn't even talk about the ability to record multi-track audio of all 16 channels on the system at any or all of the mixers on a simple SD card. What a great way for musicians to be able to listen to and critique their playing (and hopefully get better).

Overall, I'd say it's a pretty robust and capable option.

