Lighting&Sound
America

Entertainment, Presentation, Communication

$10.00

plasa media

Eurovision

A new kind of spectacle in Malmö

ALSO:

Muse's *2nd Law Tour*

Rosco GAM Plexus

Movek myMix

Movek myMix Personal Mixing and Recording System

By: Mark Johnson

In live sound, personal mixing systems have largely existed under the radar. You don't really see them being used in large-scale touring, which, for better or for worse, is the standard-bearer and model for contemporary sound system design. In fact, however, houses of worship, Broadway and other theatre pit orchestras, and many mid-level tours have made these systems extremely popular. There isn't a proliferation of manufacturers producing them like there are for, say, line array loudspeakers—there are probably fewer than a dozen manufacturers overall.

Movek LLC is one of those manufacturers, and its contribution is the myMix networkable personal audio mixing and recording system. MyMix provides a lot of functionality in a compact system (W x H x D is 5.3" x 6.7" x 2.4"), and the net weight is a scant 1.1lb. The majority of the I/O is on the back panel of the unit; and it features two mic/line balanced inputs (with switchable phantom power) with Neutrik Combo connectors, which will accept either XLRs or 1/4" plugs. Outputs are balanced 1/4" connectors. There is also an RJ45 Ethernet connector and an input for an external power supply. Input gain controls and a 1/8" headphone jack are on the left-hand side. On the right-hand side is a slot that accepts SD/SDHC cards. The top surface includes a color display that is approximately 3 3/4" x 2 1/4", two input signal LEDs to the left of the display, and four soft keys to the right of the display that correlate to the various functions shown on the screen; below and to the left of the display is a master mute button, and below and to the right of the display is a record

button. Front and center just below the display is a large (1 1/4" diameter) jog wheel and encoder button. On the bottom are four soft feet for using on a desk or tabletop. There's also a "bay" that fits the accessory mic stand adapter. And that's about it on the surface. But it's what's underneath that counts.

Solo or ensemble

MyMix can be used singly. Two units can be connected via Cat 5 cable. Three or more require the use of a 100MB Fast Ethernet switch. The capacity of the Ethernet switch (or switches on larger systems) will ultimately be the deciding factor in how many units can operate in one system.

Of course, the main idea for a personal mixing system is that everyone in the ensemble gets his or her own unit and then has the ability to custom-tailor the monitor mix (regardless of whether he or she is listening through in-ear devices or some type of monitor speaker).

What I received for the review wasn't strictly what you'd get when you purchase a system. A purchased system includes a myMix unit, an external power supply (wall wart), a mic stand adapter, and a hard-copy owner's manual. I appreciate the latter because I like the convenience of referring to it rather than having to fire up my computer to download the manual from the manufacturer's website (www.mmxaudio.com) or off of a disc. (The manuals are also available to download via the myMix website.)

Movek provided a demo system with four myMix units, an IEX-16L 16-channel input expander, an Ethernet switch, and all necessary I/O cabling. The myMix sys-

myMix system.

tem is unique in that no master unit is required; the units are interconnected using the Fast Ethernet switch and Cat 5 cables. Although the unit is supplied with an external power supply, when used in multiples with the Ethernet switch, power for the myMix units is derived via Power over Ethernet (POE) from the Ethernet switch. The IEX-16L provides the ability to add 16 more inputs to choose from. These could be direct outs, stems, or auxes from a mixer. Each myMix on the network can then select whatever input is available, up to 16. Multiple IEX-16Ls can be used for an increased selection of available audio channels in the network.

I had the opportunity to check out an individual unit as well as set up a system. I loaned the system to a colleague who set it up for the worship band at his church.

It's true that, in just about every case, a personal monitor system will be used in multiples, whether it's outfitting a worship band or a pit orchestra for a musical stage production, but, even solo, this is one powerful system. Each unit incorporates an SD/SDHC card slot for recording or loading multitrack songs. Imagine you're the guitar player in a steadily working ensemble, but you need to take some time off. The myMix can record up to 18 tracks (24-bit, 48kHz time-stamped .wav files), so you can record the group along with your part and give the unit to your sub. He or she can then listen to the songs and then set up a mix minus (in this instance playback of the recorded tracks without the guitar part) and practice the set without having to call an actual rehearsal with the rest of the band. The SD cards can also be used in other myMix units, and the session(s) saved on the card can be called up as needed.

It's also possible to send the mix of a myMix unit to the network, so other myMix units in the system can select this as a source—this can be done to create submixes, allowing the front-of-house

engineer (for example) to listen in, or sharing playbacks with others.

Plug and play

As soon as you apply power to the myMix unit, either with the included power supply or via POE, the system boots up with the myMix logo on the screen, and the buttons and jog wheel on the control surface light up with a blue light that illuminates the perimeter of each control, which increases visibility in situations where the lighting is dim (most performance situations). The myMix units have small internal fans, and, while they do emit a noticeable noise, it should not be an issue in a live setting. For application in a studio environment, Movek offers the myMix Studio Mod version.

The display lets you know if there are any other myMix units on the network and shows your local inputs as well as those coming from other units on the network. The right side of the display shows the functions for the adjacent soft keys (master volume, solo, mute, and settings). A status bar at the bottom of the display provides information based on the configuration of the unit. It also indicates if an SD card is loaded and how much remaining recording time the card has.

The Settings function offers a selection of: profiles, local inputs/outputs, effects, master equalizer, sessions, remote channel select, remote devices, preferences, and administration, all of which you can choose from to set up the unit.

Profiles are the stored settings of a given mix including input mode, name, level, effect, and EQ. The myMix unit provides a choice of stereo effects (small, medium, and large reverbs and halls and an adjustable delay) from which one can be selected and applied to the channels in the mix. The inputs screen allows selection of input mode; dual mono (for two independent sources), mono, and stereo; the naming of inputs (which will show up on the other myMix units in the network); and switching on or off of phantom power. The master equalizer is a four-band parametric stereo EQ applied to the output of the myMix. Sessions provides for recording or playback of up to 18 channels of a rehearsal or set directly to the SD card. Preferences allow the per-

sonalization of the myMix unit, screen brightness adjust, and date and time set. And administration provides access for resetting the unit to factory defaults, formatting SD cards, and basic information relating to the individual unit.

Since the user interface is just four soft keys and the jog wheel, it's pretty easy to figure out and set the unit up, though scrolling through the menu items or soft key selections with the jog wheel can get a bit tedious at times. And naming a unit or a channel with the jog wheel can take some time as well.

myMix with SD card loaded.

Channel level controls.

myMix IO.

Enter myMix Control

MyMix Control is web-browser-based software that provides the ability to configure and edit individual units and manage a system of myMix units wirelessly via a laptop and the myMix PLUG interface. Since it is web-based, it can be used with PCs or Macs. However, this was not part of my demo system, so I didn't have an opportunity to check it out.

Physically, interfacing myMix is a breeze, and it doesn't matter if it's a single unit or multiples. Since the power for each unit is derived from the Ethernet switch, you don't have to worry about extra power drops wherever you want to place a myMix unit. The number of switches available is the only limitation to the number of units in a given system.

How you operate the system is both a strength and weakness of myMix. The big jog wheel and soft keys keep the controls to a minimum, meaning the interface is simple, very approachable, and easy to figure out. However, accessing some of

the functions sometimes requires navigation through a few tabs. If adjustments are required in midsong during a performance, dialing through the menus requires that you focus on the unit, which can divert your focus from the music. The trick is to set up the system during rehearsals and use that time to dial it in. Once the gig starts, you're good to go, and it is relatively easy to make minor tweaks. Of course, as you become more comfortable with the work flow, it will be easier to operate under any condition.

Powerful and flexible (you can even configure a system to mix a small ensemble and drive a main PA using just myMix units and an Ethernet switch), the system provides a comprehensive set of adjustable parameters for each channel including level, pan, effects, and tone control as well as solo and mute. MyMix also provides master level control and parametric EQ. The ability to record and play back up to 18 tracks is a great feature and worth the price of admission, which, by the way, is a $679 list price for a single unit (including the mic stand adapter); the Studio mod is $779. List prices for the ancillary products are: $999 for the IEX-16L input expander, $1,299 for the IEX16L-A (analog and ADAT), and $679 for the myMix PLUG Interface that hosts the myMix Control software.

As I mentioned earlier, however, all you need to get going is a myMix unit. And for any system with more than two units, just add a Fast Ethernet switch, which can be had for less than $50. If you are in the market for a personal monitoring system, this system is definitely worth considering. 🔊