

ALISTAIR MCGHEE discovers fond feelings for Aeta's little Mixy.

It's inevitable that location sound recordists will annoy the camera operator, it's sad but it's true. At some point it's certain that your coily cable will apply too much tension, your mic will be in shot, your pole will

which he neither knew nor cared.

Given the almost universal trend towards more channels, the three-channel market is a surprisingly tough niche. Sound Devices has the 302, which is a big

## AETA MIXY

### Multi-Track Mixer/Recorder

#### THE REVIEWER

ALISTAIR MCGHEE began audio life in Hi-Fi before joining the BBC as an audio engineer. After ten years in radio and TV, he moved to production. When BBC Choice started, he pioneered personal digital production in television. Alistair is now Assistant Editor, BBC Radio Wales, but is allowed out occasionally.

cut the corner, you'll be standing in the light or if you're me, all of the above. So given this sad state of affairs, you may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb and add a few optional niggles. On a recent shoot I chose the subject of three channel mixers, bombarding the poor camera operator with a barrage of facts, figures, and feature dilemmas about



hitter for such a small box, and SQN and Sonosax have high quality mixers in this area as does Audio Developments.

However, maybe the most innovative three-channel

option comes from France in the form of the Mixy from AETA.

The Mixy is a hybrid product, offering a wide range of analogue and digital facilities. Its design promises a package of features that is truly unique. So you get three analogue XLR inputs with mic amps. Nothing unusual there. But you also get a stereo line-in and an SPDIF in – interesting – then individual direct outs and an onboard USB interface and AES digital outputs.

The control interface is mostly digital control via a menu system on the front panel display. Mixy can be powered externally but comes with a built-in NiMH battery that adds heft to the very small package that Mixy comes in. It's great to have a built-in battery and it's a very well engineered solution, but my preference though would have been to do without. For a couple of reasons. One: most pro sound recordists already have a battery system they have invested in, and two: the reduction in weight and cost would make Mixy even more attractive.

#### Sense Of Spartan

On first use the front of panel of Mixy is almost frighteningly barren. Where are all the knobs and switches so beloved of sound engineers everywhere? Well the answer is of course they are 'soft'. On the front panel you get three pots for inputs, a headphone volume, a joystick and three soft buttons, and of course a display.

So what about using a mixer with menus for most functions? Well first off, Mixy has nine memories (about three more than I can muster) so you can go from pole plus two radios to MS plus spot mic in a few seconds, and if you have set your memories up carefully you need not worry that you have misconfigured something. Secondly there's a front panel short cut to the gain settings, the place you will most likely have to do some speedy work.

Input channels can be routed to Left, Right, Centre, or not routed. Powering offers all the usual features including T powering. Gain is added at up to 50dB at the mic inputs, and with 40dB of gain available at line level you have a whopping 90dB of gain available.

Just to check that, I grabbed a couple of Coles PGS ribbon mics and plugged them in. And hey presto – plenty of gain and nice and clean with it. I've not often had to resort to ribbon mics on a location job, but it's nice to know you can and with the new rise of the ribbon who knows? AETA is very proud of its mic amp/limiter

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combination and so it should be, it's very high quality and with a little care in the set-up, very difficult to overload.

Alongside the main mic/line inputs you also get a balanced analogue input on five-pin xlr. This can be configured as a normal camera return for monitoring or as an extra input to the mix bus. So if you were able to sacrifice your return you could in theory stick a couple of radio mics on the main bus and get a five-ish channel mixer. It's sheer greed, but I'd love to see Aeta put a mini-jack option on there as return so I could have both. But the facility as it stands could be a life saver for that sudden requirement with no other way of solving the problem.

On the output side there's a five-pin xlr carrying balanced analogue, but you have a wealth of options, direct outs from channels one to three (excuse the pun) on a Hirose, a 3.5mm mini-jack that follows the xlr, and an independently controllable output on a 12-pin mini-con. And if that's not enough, how about USB and toslink and AES? It's almost too much!

### On The Go

I slung the Mixy over my shoulder and set off for some location recording. Sadly I didn't have a camera operator to hand to annoy so I just had to mutter madly to myself. The Mixy mic input/dynamics are well designed and you would really have to work hard to get the gain structure wrong. I soon found myself operating the mixer with a degree of confidence, and after a couple of days I grew very comfortable with the ergonomics.

I would have preferred a bit more space between the knobs for mixing with gloves, and though the controls were nice and easy to use they didn't quite inspire the confidence of some other devices. The rotary control surrounding pot 2, which balances in stereo or controls width in MS was a bit fiddly in use.

I know that sound recordists are conservative people. And to be honest you are so exposed in the field that taking a risk with a bit of kit can mean taking a reputational risk that we can ill afford. However, having said all that, at the end of using the Mixy I was more enthusiastic than at the beginning. I don't think it's like the sorely missed Coopersound that you could pick up and instantly love, but it is a compelling little mixer nonetheless. AETA has other goodies in the pipeline, but I hope the Mixy doesn't get forgotten because it's a product that deserves to mature. **AM**

### INFORMATION

① €1,500.00

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