



Audient ASP520

Developing themes introduced with its ASP510 surround monitor controller, Audient's latest box is a companion product that concerns itself entirely with the business of bass management.

ROB JAMES

MULTICHANNEL HAS ARRIVED. Whether you view it as a threat or an opportunity, it's here and it's now. But multichannel monitoring arrangements can pose problems and assuming that six speakers are present and can be controlled, there remains the question of bass management. At this point it is important to highlight an area of possible confusion and make the distinction between the bass management functions included in such proprietary formats as Dolby 5.1 and DTS and the sort of supplementary bass management that may, or may not, be required for studio monitoring. Audient's ASP520 is solely concerned with the latter, whether the source is discrete 5.1, conventional stereo or the output from a proprietary decoder.

The ASP 520 is a logical extension of the ASP510 monitor controller. For those with five satellite speak-

ers and a sub-woofer or perhaps three identical full range speakers in front and two or more smaller speakers in the rear, some kind of bass-management, becomes a necessity.

Surround monitor set-up is a non-trivial exercise but Audient has managed to retain the operational simplicity of the ASP510 while including a great deal

of functionality. Simple set-up instructions and a CD with line-up signals are included although the manual sensibly directs users to more comprehensive information on surround monitoring from a variety of on-line sources.

Proper alignment of a surround monitoring system really requires a decent RTA with SPL meter. While reasonable results can be achieved using a budget SPL meter, their calibration and bass response may be dubious so it really is worth doing it properly. That being said, set-up with the ASP520 proved to be straightforward and logical. For optimum results repeating the exercise several times with small adjustments is preferable to major changes. A ruler flat bass response is unlikely to be achieved and is seldom possible even in high-end rooms. As with so many things in the audio world we are looking for a good compromise. If this can be achieved, mixes will be transportable with no nasty surprises when played elsewhere.

Matching the sub-woofer, or sub-woofers, to the room can be something of a black art. Placement is fundamental and critical especially in smaller rooms.

The 1U ASP520 follows the house style of the ASP510 monitor controller, both visually and electronically. The inputs are carried on a single 25 pin D-sub. Channels 1 through 6 carry Left, right, Centre, LFE, Left surround and Right surround, while the remaining two follow through from the ASP510 with Left Alternate and Right Alternate for nearfields or a second stereo pair. Outputs are also carried on a 25 pin D-sub with the extra of XLRs, which also provide two identical sub-woofer outputs.

Front panel controls are latching keys with LED indicators and 15 screwdriver operated monitor trim pots with a range of +/-10dB. By default, the (Linkwitz-Riley) high and low pass filters are set to 24dB/octave. Internal links allow for 12dB/octave slope (Butterworth), if required. A 12Hz high-pass filter is included in the Sub-bass output for driver protection.

Four selection keys determine whether LR, C, LSRS and L alternate, R alternate signals will have their bass content redirected. A key selects crossover frequency between 80Hz or 120Hz (useful for decoder emulation) and the +10 key provides gain make-up for mixes produced to film standards. Three Destination keys send the summed LF and LFE channel signals to LR, C or Sub-woofer speakers.

An Invert button produces a 180-degree phase shift of the sub and a pot allows for variable phase shift from 0 to around 160 degrees. Two identical bands of parametric EQ provide +/-10dB over a range of 20Hz-250Hz with Q variable from 0.4 to 8. Individual Monitor Trim preset pots enable fine adjustment of the output gain for each channel over a +/-10dB range.

The ASP 520 achieves its objectives. For any studio that has mixed monitoring or expects to accommodate 'guest' monitors for 5.1 working, the ASP 520 will prove indispensable. The control provided is logical and adequate without complexity or overkill. Even where there is no intention to change the monitoring set-up on a regular basis the ASP 520 is a sensible 'fit and forget' addition to the monitor rack. □



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PROS Simple to understand and set up with sufficient flexibility to suit many speaker configurations.

CONS Limited to 5.1 (or 7.1 if the Alt inputs are pressed into service); no memories for alternative set-ups.

EXTRAS Audient founders David Dearden and Gareth Davies were the 'DD' in DDA and between them have 50 years experience in design. Audient launched with a range of outboard equaliser products and these were followed by the ASP 8024 analogue recording console - one of the very few all-new, lower mid-priced, 'proper' analogue desks still available.

This was joined last year by the ASP510 surround sound controller, a companion product to the ASP520 looked at here. Whether used as a standalone monitor controller or as a more comprehensive addition to a console's routing, the ASP 510 offers a total of three 6-channel and three 2-channel sources, a 6-channel speaker output and 2-channel and 6-channel recorder outputs.



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