

Aeta Mixy

Nicely engineered and nicely presented, Aeta's little mixer fits well into the manufacturer's product range. **NEIL HILLMAN** gives it a detailed examination and asks if it fits the bill.



ACCORDING TO THE font of popular knowledge — Wikipedia — the Aeta are the indigenous people of the Philippines, whose communities are scattered around isolated parts of those mountainous islands. A fact which I have to confess had me scratching my head and wondering how it was that they eventually settled and came to be designing audio codecs in a sleepy French town, reached from Paris via the métro line 13 and a number 295 bus? In the end I dismissed this as mere coincidence; because these Aeta are better known for their Scoop audio codec range, delivering radio contributions to studios via leased lines, Ethernet/IP or ISDN circuits. But their Mixy is, however, somewhat of a departure — it's a tiny analogue location mixer that also offers digital I-O.

The Mixy is a 5-channel device with three Neutrik female XLR balanced mic inputs, located on the left hand side, alongside a 12-pin MiniCon connector that carries the device's analogue outputs. All three mic inputs have switchable powering, set by the software-driven user-menu, and are chosen between dynamic, T12 Tonader, P12 or P48 phantom power. Each input has its own high-pass filter, with a choice between off or roll-over frequencies of 15Hz 'sub', 120Hz at 18dB/octave or 300Hz at 6dB/octave. The input sensitivity can also be adjusted within the software menu in 10dB steps between 0 and 50dB giving a maximum level, before activating the additional -20dB pad, of +19dBu. Each input also has a phase inverter.

On each input, and starting at -12dB, a LED mounted at the zero point of each channel's rotary fader on the front face glows green to warn of approaching overload and triggers the switchable limiter, shown by a red LED situated at the maximum point of each fader.

Inputs 1&2 work independently, if required, or as a stereo pair, or in M+S mode; by default Channel 1 routes to the Left output, Channel 2 to the Right. In stereo and M+S mode, the limiters on channels 1 and 2 are coupled to maintain the stereo image, although the gain on input 2 is adjustable by a further +/-5dB for M+S operations via an external ring around Channel 2's rotary fader. This allows the 'width' in M+S mode to be increased or decreased and at its central point it corresponds to a width of 110 degrees.

Input 3 is an independent input; and although it has the same gain range as inputs 1 and 2, the addition of a 20dB pad that can be punched-in through the Pad pushbutton alongside fader 3, allows it to cope with signals higher than +38dBu.

The front face, as well as being home to the rotary faders, also houses the metering display window, which doubles as the set-up menu screen, accessed through the Esc pushbutton to the right of the window. Navigating through the OLED display menu is delightfully straightforward, using the prominent joystick-mounted centrally below the screen to select and scroll settings as required in the configuration of the mixer. Depressing Esc opens the Inputs menu and pressing the joystick accesses channel 1-3's

settings for Gain Sensitivity (between 10 and 50dB), Mic Powering, Limiter (In/Out), HPF and phase; the routing for the Aux inputs (the feeds from the XLR5 Line input, the USB input and the SPDIF input); and the setting Mode for inputs 1 and 2. Then there's the main Outputs: Line (Left/Right or M+S), Pads in the Left/Right outputs and the sample rate of the digital out (44.1kHz or 48kHz, with Pro or consumer set in the AES flag). Miscellaneous settings include Battery Charger state and Screen Brightness. Memory allows nine configuration settings to be stored and recalled; the 'Function Key' can be allocated to generate tone, open the slate mic or provide a 20dB Boost for the headphone feed; and finally Monitor allows the meter to show the two output channels, with a warning light at -3dBfs, in Standard mode, or in Multi mode, three extra bars are added to the meter scale, showing the three input channel levels post-fade. The meter scale is selectable between PPM or VU ballistics.

The monitoring is selectable through the joystick: side to side for the monitor source, and up and down for the monitor mode; with choices that include M/S, M+S, M-S, L+R, R/R and L/L; and Input 1, Input 2, Input 3, Output, Return, USB and Inputs 1&2.

The front face also has the monitor volume pot, below which discretely sit two LEDs showing a DC input connection and internal battery charging. The locked-away internal battery lasts for about 10 hours of normal usage, and recharges from the DC input in about 4 hours.

The right hand side of the unit houses the two line inputs within a male Neutrik XLR5 connector, with the line outputs alongside in a female XLR5 connector. The Line input can also be routed to the Mix Bus, or it can be left unrouted, but still be available for monitoring. A 3.5mm socket to the left of the female XLR5 also offers a line out feed, but with its output level permanently pegged at 6dB below the main line output of the mixer. A 16Ohm, 3.5mm headphone socket is situated directly below the unbalanced line out socket. To the right of the male XLR5 are sockets for the SPDIF digital input on a phono, which also acts as a clock source for digital functions within the mixer; direct digital out from channels 1 to 3 on an HR10 6-pin; and a Hirose 4-pin for the DC in.

The rear face houses the USB1.1 stereo I-O socket that translates the mixer's analogue outputs to digital. The host computer determines the sampling frequency, given the choice between 44.1 kHz or 48 kHz, however the signal remains at 16-bit in both cases. An optical Toslink connector is also available.

Designed primarily for seamlessly interfacing with their Scoop codecs, the Aeta Mixy also happens to be a well thought through, robustly engineered and substantially built location mini-mixer; and at a gramme for every quid it costs, the 1.2kg unit is both deceptively weighty and reassuringly pricey. ■



PROS Nicely engineered in a heavy, no-nonsense metal box; its starkness is cleverly softened by soft, tactile rubber over-riders top and bottom.

CONS Perfect as a companion to equipment such as an ISDN codec in a semi-permanent or outside broadcast installation, it's not really an over-the-shoulder contender.

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