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ROLLS STEREO MINI-MIX VI MX28 Mixer

By Steve Burtless

Most keyboard players still dream of toting one board that will do it all and just plugging the thing directly into the PA. No amp. No big rig. Just a board, a stand and a couple of cables. It would be the next best thing to being a lead vocalist. But, unless you play just a couple of basic sounds during a gig - or are willing to make massive compromises - you likely carry either a second board or a couple of modules., which means you'll need some kind of mixer. I used to carry a cheap Radio Shack line mixer, but it was just too noisy. I started to consider hauling my Mackie out of the studio and putting it on top of my rack. But the MX28 allowed me to avoid carrying (and unhooking) the Mackie for every gig. And here's the really good news: it costs less than a C-note.



The Stereo Mini-Mix VI MX28 is a small, blue box (4.25" x 1.75" x 4.5") that houses a high-quality line mixer with three stereo channels. Each channel has individual volume and pan control, and there is a master level control and two headphone outs with individual level controls. I like the large white labeling on the unit, which makes for easy operation in low light conditions. Of course, because of its size, the inevitable wall wart power supply is included. An internal power supply is obviously impractical, but a battery option would be nice. The bright blue metal casing - something of a departure from the standard Rolls black - is impressively hefty, and the sturdy rubber knobs provide a good, tight turn. The weight provided by the steel (1.2 lbs.) means you can put this on top of your keyboard and be assured that it won't slide around on your rig.

But how does this little gizmo perform live? Very well, thank you. I got a good, clean sound using a keyboard and a sound module. Using it with headphones and in gigging situations, the MX28 performed admirably. My only real criticism is the lack of an on/off switch. You accomplish that function only by plugging in or unplugging the wall wart.

Another thing that makes the mixer a plus is that you can use it to jam with another keyboard or guitar, with each player using headphones for these late-night times when the housemates or neighbors are asleep. Also, if you are doing a solo gig, you could hook up a tape or CD player to play through an amp during breaks. *Voila!* No PA!

The MX28 is one of those rare pieces that does an important job without hype or spending a ton of dough. The review unit is sitting in my gig bag and it will stay there. Attention, Rolls folks: Send me an invoice. This one's mine.