

ROADTESTED

Ashton MXL8 Mixer

reviewed by Keith Munro

These little mixers have become quite popular over the past few years and I remember using one for a number of years in my home studio, and still use it as my on-stage mixer for all my keyboards and samplers, as it really simplifies things for both myself and the engineer. Carrying 8 DI's around and expecting there be enough channels or lines just for my setup alone at any venue started to become a hassle, as more often than not this couldn't be accommodated, so the songs and set list would always be compromised and I would always end up slightly to significantly annoyed, depending on the week I had had prior. The Ashton MXL8 is similar in design to the model I had and the features that the MXL8 are a saviour to any artist who finds them in a similar predicament.

The Benefits

As I mentioned before, the MXL8 will eliminate the need for you to have to use numerous DI's on stage. The MXL8 features four XLR/Jack mono inputs and each input channel has an associated input gain dial making it very easy to get the best input level from your microphone or keyboard. Each of these mono channels also has a 100Hz roll off switch to eliminate unnecessary or unwanted low end rumble from microphones or perhaps from your DJ console if you run a deck for dropping samples as I have recently begun doing. The roll off is great because the samples I use the deck for are just simple scratching and vocal drop-ins so I don't need any bottom end, and as many of you will know, when on a loud stage with no padding under your deck the thing really starts to

take off at about 50Hz. There is also Treble, Middle and Bass controls on each channel making tonal control over your instrumentation very easy. Each channel also features a Monitor and an Auxiliary output (although both are one of the same really) so you can patch in effects like reverb or delay and run a monitor wedge for foldback. I carry a powered wedge with me as many venues don't have that many sends of folback, so I simply patch my wedge into the monitor output and I have no problem hearing myself on stage, I can easily adjust my own volume on stage. I even patched a feed out to the drummer for his click tracks which I controlled, making our stage setup very concise. There are pan controls and volume dials (not faders unfortunately) for each channel as well.

Stereo Heaven

So many times I have had to compromise live when it came to whether I could run my keys and samplers in stereo and due to line restraints I had to go everything in mono. The MXL8 features two stereo channels so no more mono keyboards for me. Each of the two stereo channels has all the features of the mono channels, so if versatility is what you are seeking then this mixer is worth checking out. There is also an RCA in and out so you can simply patch you MD or CD backing sections into your mixer without chewing up additional channels or record your set.

Master section and Other Great Things

The master section provides some pretty useful features. Sometimes some of my samples will jump



out dynamically a little more than I had wished for when performing live, but I simply patched a compressor across the main outputs via the main out insert points and this controlled any of those samples that were a bit too loud. There is also a stereo auxiliary return as well so if you want to use an external effects unit you can bring it back through these inputs or perhaps as in my case I simply returned a keyboard that I don't play that much in the set through the Aux return. Very handy.

Conclusion

Quite a simple layout when it comes to these types of things, making its operation in a live and immediate situation a breeze to operate. The simple peak LED's on each channel as well as the master LED's give accurate indications of your signal level and because

the MXL8 doesn't have all these extra insignificant dials and meters to confuse you, live performance is a breeze. Even if you want to use it as your home studio mixer it works great in this aspects as well. I would sequence all my tracks in the computer, use all my out board samplers and synths then send the stereo mix back into the computer to record the audio. This worked really easy. There are similar units on the market but for the price of the MXL8 and the fact that it is so basic to use, I think this one stands out for me.

RRP: \$159

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