

BATTLE-TESTED MIXER & SPEAKER

This month, we look at a scratch mixer and an upgraded powered speaker system. Nate Sherwood takes on the Rodec Scratchbox mixer, while Jody Amos tests out Mackie's SRM450v2 speakers.

Rodec Scratchbox

Belgium's Rodec recently rolled out its highly anticipated Scratchbox, a full-featured battle mixer designed for advanced turntablists. Right out of the box, it's obvious that this mixer is built like a tank. There are two heavy-duty metal handles on the front of the mixer which provide easy transportation, while protecting the fader adjustment knobs from being disrupted.

Distributed by Ossining, N.Y.-based Ortofon (ortofon.com), the 2-channel mixer is full of enough bells and whistles to make any DJ drool. Each channel has a 3-band linear EQ, a fully adjustable fader slope, and a reverse switch. The mixer comes shipped with analog

TKD "Profaders," which can be upgraded to Infinium optical faders. The crossfader is also full adjustable, reversible, and already comes upgraded to an optical fader.

The unit boasts a third channel, which is controlled with a smaller linear fader on the left hand side of the mixer. This channel has a 2-band EQ controlled by knobs and a selectable line level or mic input switch. The signal to this channel can also be routed to either of the primary faders, so the user is not forced into working with a smaller fader. In addition to this third channel, there is a SESSION/AUX input, which gives the DJ the ability to run a fourth line level into the mixer. This is a tremendous feature for battle DJs who want to link several mixers at once.

The Scratchbox also incorporates an effects send/return section for jocks using an external effects unit. Each channel has selectable effects, controlled by an FX-Insert button, while the level

of the effect is controlled by a vertical linear fader in the middle of the mixer.

DJs get plenty of inputs and outputs. The two primary channels provide switchable line and phono inputs. There is one mic input, and the AUX input can be upgraded to an S/PDIF input for digital sound. You have two 2 master RCA outputs and one pair of balanced XLR outs.

Now, onto the test drive: First off, this is one of the best sounding mixers that I have ever heard. The highs sparkle, the kicks punch, and the bass gets deep and rich. DJs can easily adapt to the mixer's layout—plenty of room between all of the knobs and buttons and the mixer's face isn't crowded at all. The controls are very intuitive. The faders are loose but sturdy, perfect for scratching. The third channel gives the user added flexibility.

For the price (\$999 MAP), the Rodec Scratchbox is a solid investment for any turntablist looking for precision control and the best sound quality available.



Rodec's Scratchbox: Super sound, superb features.

Mackie SRM450v2

After a decade of success with the original SRM 450, Woodinville, Wash.-based Mackie (mackie.com) has released a second version of the popular powered speaker. The 450 became known for its portability, sound clarity, reliability and versatility. It's a 12 inch, 2-way, bi-amplified system. The 450 features a 300-watt amp, which powers the lows, a 100-watt amp that powers the highs and a precisely tuned crossover to provide superior, fool-proof sound.

The cabinet itself is a molded polypropylene composite, which is lightweight, but very strong. It is designed to sit on the floor, a tabletop, or to fit on a standard speaker stand. It can also be suspended in the air by its built-in rigging points, or you can lay the cabinet down on its side and use it as a floor monitor. The asymmetrical trapezoidal design provides a perfect angle for aiming up towards performers from the front of the stage.

So, what features differ from the original? First off, the v2 speakers are midnight blue—the original 450 was light grey. Secondly, the new units will strain your back less. At 40 pounds each, the v2 units are 11 pounds lighter—a major plus.

But most importantly, I found the performance of the new unit to be much better overall. The sound quality has been improved

with a punchier low end, but I am most impressed with their stamina. While using the v2's at a small local bar, we got a much larger crowd than we expected. I was thinking I was going to be underpowered and possibly fry these new units, as we did not have subs with us. To my surprise, they held up like champs, as we ran them close to red all night long—very impressive.

To achieve all this, Mackie has redesigned its amps for improved efficiency and cleaner power, so they maintain low distortion and stability to quickly recover when driven into clipping. They included a new neodymium woofer's magnet, which is lighter in mass, therefore faster than ceramics, giving the bass more punch. The longer 3-inch voice coil allows the woofer to handle heat more efficiently, so it produces a consistent full dynamic range—even at maximum output. So you get full, thumping, detailed lows, even after long hours of use at near-peak volumes.

If you ask me, Mackie has made some major improvements to an industry favorite. The unit (\$749 MAP) is a worthy investment.

Mackie's SRM450v2: Less stress, more stamina.

