



Jim Ebdon
FOH Engineer

Kyle Cook
Guitars

Royers On The Road With MATCHBOX TWENTY

"Live guitars sound amazing with R-121 Live mics on the cabinets, and they stand out well in the mix. Royers are warm, natural, present and uncolored - not at all harsh like several of the other mics we auditioned, and the band loves the natural sound they get in their in-ear monitors.

"I've used Royers on Aerosmith for a few years and currently on Matchbox Twenty, Aerosmith, Annie Lennox

Jim Ebdon
FOH Engineer - Matchbox
Twenty, Aerosmith, Annie
Lennox

Royer Ribbons
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once over

Mackie 402-VLZ3 Mixer

How small can quality mixing get? **BY NICK CASARES**

The Mackie 402-VLZ3 is a 4-channel mixer in the compact (and recently revamped) VLZ3 series. Sporting a small footprint (5.8"W x 7.3"H x 1.6"D) the 402-VLZ3 weighs in at a miniscule 2.5 lbs. and streets for just under \$100. The 402-VLZ3 includes 4 inputs (2 mic/2 line), balanced 1/4" outputs, RCA tape inputs/outputs, and a 1/4" headphone output. Mackie has also released the 802-VLZ3, a larger mixer that includes 8 inputs with 3 mic preamps, an aux send/return, and 3-band eq with a sweepable mid.

The 402-VLZ3 includes an external power supply, user manual and a copy of Mackie's Traktion 3 Basic recording software. The 402-VLZ3 is constructed of steel and finished in a black/silver combo. True to Mackie form, the 402-VLZ3 is built like a tank and feels like it could take a substantial beating.

The 402-VLZ3 features two of Mackie's new XDR2 preamps which offer up to 60 dB of gain range. Channels 1 and 2 are full-featured channels, each with an XLR microphone input, 1/4" line input, high pass filter, DI selector, and high/low shelving eq; channels 3 and 4 are simple 1/4" line inputs. Channels 1 and 2 can be panned hard left and right via a stereo pan switch (useful for stereo recordings), but there are no dedicated panning controls per channel. Due to the small size of the 402-VLZ3, level controls are on rotary pots instead of faders.

Connections to the 402 are straightforward and the well written user manual will have new users up and running quickly. Recording with the 402 is as simple as connecting the RCA tape inputs/outputs to your computer's audio input and headphone output. When used in this configuration the tape input (mix from computer) can be disconnected from the main monitor path and routed to the headphones to avoid any feedback surprises.

Sounds passing through the 402 are clean and noise-free with plenty of gain available at inputs and outputs. I tested a handful of microphones with the 402 including a Shure SM57, Neumann TLM103, Oktava MK012, and a Samson VR88. The XDR2 preamps handled dynamic, condenser and ribbon microphones with ease. Phantom power is available on channels 1-2 and globally switchable. Channels 1 and 2 each also feature an "instrument" button which eliminates the need for a DI when connecting guitars and basses.

The XDR2 preamp is an update to the XDR preamp found in the workhorse 1604-VLZ



mixer; it's Mackie's second best installed preamp design, just below the well-established Onyx preamp used in the company's high-end mixers and interfaces. I happen to have a trusty 1604-VLZ, so I decided to compare the preamps side by side. To my ears, the most significant improvement in the XDR2 seems to be a lower noise floor and slightly more fullness in the low midrange. The difference isn't drastic but it's enough to make me prefer the XDR2 over the older XDR preamp.

The eq controls on channels 1-2 are simple high/low shelving controls at 80 Hz and 12 kHz. They're not exactly suitable for surgically crafting tones, but can be useful for basic tonal "tilt" adjustments.

The simplicity of the 402-VLZ3 makes it a good fit for singer/songwriters who are looking for an inexpensive recording mixer. Since the 402-VLZ3 lacks any real panning controls or aux busses, it's not really designed for "mixing", but it works well as a simple front end for recording and an easy way to monitor audio. A single recording output means that it's not ideal for multiple input sessions, but if you're recording one track at a time there's a lot worth looking at in this small package. Considering what's included—2 quality preamps, a basic line mixer, a headphone amp, and bundled recording software—the 402-VLZ3 is a bargain box that won't take up a lot of space on your desktop.

Price: \$129.99

More from: Mackie, 16220 Wood-Red Rd. NE, Woodinville, WA 98072.
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