

APB DynaSonics ProRack-House Mixer

By Mark Amundson

On first impressions, the APB DynaSonics mixing console cosmetics appear 1960's retro with the tan paint job. However, you have to be blind to not notice the colorful control surface features upon that tan surface. I was able to acquire the APB DynaSonics ProRack-House compact mixing console for this road test review. It boasts a remarkable density of features stuck in a 10-rack space form factor.

The Gear

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At the top level, the APB ProRack-House mixer has 16 channel strips, with 12 mono channels and four stereo channels. But crammed in the two-strip-wide master section are four subgroups, and mono, center and left-right (L-R) main faders; all with group-assign switches for master signal routing. Nothing seems to be missing, as far as what a pro user would want in an analog mixing surface for channel strips. Starting with the inputs, you get individual phantom power, line/mic, pad and polarity switches; all before the preamp stage which is +10 to +65 dB in adjustment. And an adjustable highpass filter control for 20 Hz to 400 Hz bottom filtering at 12 dB/octave is something that most mini-consoles would never include.

Going from the red/gain and green/hpf knobbed sections to the blue and purple knobbed eq section, the four band equalization has fixed frequency high (10 kHz) and low (80 Hz) bands, plus two mid-bands with adjustable frequency control with easy-to-read legends with lighter tan backgrounds and black lettering. Each EQ section has a green LED and a blue switch for on/bypass control to remind us dim-witted operators to turn on the EQ before twisting the controls. And the mid-band sweeps are from 80 Hz to 2 kHz (Lo-Mid) and 400 Hz to 8 kHz (Hi-Mid), which pretty much covers what most of us need in a swept EQ midsection.

Metering for each mono channel strip is done pre-fader by a six LED bargraph, with increments of signal present, -12, -6, 0, +6 and peak indications. And the peak indicator can also be lit by the mic preamp, before the TRS insert jack. Six auxiliary sends are provided in groups of two, each with pre/post fader switches and a stereo switch for the last two sends. These tan, orange and dark green knobbed auxiliary sends are enough for most front-of-house duties, as well as modest combo (FOH/monitor) duties for those "tight" gigs.

Rounding out the mono channel strips are the grey pan/balance control, a lighted large red mute button, a quality 100 m fader, a large yellow PFL button, and five switches for assigning the channel to the groups and/or the M/C/L-R masters. Like most good consoles, the top -10 dB to +10 dB range on the fader consumes half the travel, leaving the -10 dB to -50 dB or more at the bottom.

The four stereo channels are like the

mono channels, except that you get two XLR inputs plus two TRS phone inputs, and individual gains (red knob) for +10 to +65 adjustment. The EQ section still has high-pass filtering, but only a three-band system of equalization, with the mid-band swept from 200 Hz to 5 kHz. Besides green slider caps for the stereo faders over the black caps for mono faders, the 6-LED metering is kept stacked, but with dual signal present, 0 dB and peak increments of indication.

Besides what I earlier mentioned the master section, by necessity the six aux send masters each get a control, a large yellow AFL button, and a multi-colored LED for basic signal activity. And basic monitor/headphones capability is included with master send selections and both 3 mm and 1/4" stereo headphone jacks (nice touch). And, of course, no pro-console would be without at least one 4-pin XLR jack for littlelite gooseneck provision and trimmable intensity feature.

The APB DynaSonic ProRack also features a four-position rear jackpanel, which is adjusted by removing two #10 screws on each side and swinging the panel until the proper pair of threaded holes line up. I preferred the vertical, or fully tilted-back position, but a rackspace-conserving bottom position is great for rack installs. On the console's bottom, there is a nicely oversized switcher power supply unit attached, with the IEC inlet and on/off power switch co-located for ease of use. All in all, the ProRack-House mixing console gives off an aura of utility and professionalism.

The Gigs

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I put the APB ProRack-House into two gigging scenarios to test the real usefulness of this console. The first was a small club gig, with modest mic requirements and a couple of monitor mixes from front-of-house. The second was a full rock 'n' roll show in a medium club with a four-piece band that fit the 16-channel limitation of the console. In the first scenario, the small club better tests all of the ProRack's flexibility, especially on the auxiliary sends. The big show was more of a patching fest, putting the stereo channels on tom-tom inputs and a multi-FX unit to preserve the mono inputs for vocals and lead instruments.

Looking for niggles, I found very little when taking into account that APB is doing a "cram fest" into a rackmount form factor. The only find I could protest to is the small push-button switches that are difficult to detect an up or down position without taking both a good look and a finger-feel under reduced lighting conditions. Most consoles also suffer from this niggle, so it is not a major problem. In summary, the ProRack-House console is a spendy mixer, but true professionals will not balk at the price tag when the feature set is fully appreciated. And I can hardly wait until the bigger channel count desks come out with this same channel strip feature set. **F•H**



APB DynaSonics ProRack-House Mixer (front view)



APB DynaSonics ProRack-House Mixer (side view)

What it is: APB DynaSonics ProRack-House Mixer

Pros: Compact, crammed with capability, decent ergonomics.

Cons: Small switch throw detection.

How much: \$3490 MSRP

Web site: www.apb-dynasonics.com