MACKIE „Big Knob"

INTRO

It is inevitable that in lots of studios conventional hardware equipment along with synths, mixers and external effects are disappearing and following the current trend to work computer based this trend is going to carry on unabated. One problem whilst mixing on a computer is how to control the levels, how to switch between monitors and how to create a personal headphone mix.

Mackie have listened to musicians and granted them their wish for a practical, small machine that can sit on your desk and called it (for the British amusingly) the „Big Knob". The inner sanctum of musicianship has now decided that this is the ultimate monitor control unit. So, let's have a look at this big member and see if it lives up to its reputation

Big Knob front view

INSTALLATION

The installation and setup is done and dusted quickly with some good diagrams and short and precise instructions in the English manual helping the user along the way. It's a pity that MACKIE along with a lot of other companies do not offer multilingual instructions and considering the price this wouldn't go amiss. At the least a section on their website would be enough.

Anyway back to the matter in hand and the setup and integration into my system took less than five minutes. Here's a good Tip: if you turn all the knobs and switches to zero before switching it on then nothing can go wrong.

USABILITY

Big Knob's design is good on the eye and professionally done. It is pretty obvious from the layout of the controls and range of connections on the rear that the people behind the design have a lot of experience in the pro audio and music industry and are quite rightly market leaders in this segment.

Using the „Big Knob" is fairly self-explanatory and I really like the large silver volume control that gives it it's name. Accurate and exact level control is absolutely no problem and far more comfortable than using a mouse/software combination on a monitor.

Big Knob rear view

PRACTICALITY

To start with you cannot hear any noise and Big Knob delivers an excellent sound. Brilliant! I also really liked the numerous connections. By using the input choice it is possible to connect lots of machines with each other and create numerous setups. Whether it be a sampler, guitar, second computer or even a record player anything is possible and easily integrated. The possibility to connect three different monitor pairs for playback is also very sensible as this allows you to compare different mix downs and if you have done much mixing you will know the importance of this and never want to do without again.

The talkback function works like a dream and is extremely practical for working on projects via the DML with other users.

CONCLUSION

The „Big Knob" is great fun and size really does matter! The only negative points I can think of for this amazing product are the lack of translated handbooks and the relatively high price.

Our test systems:

PC : Processor P4 3.26 - 1 GB RAM – Intel Board - WIN XP Home SP2 - Nuendo 3.1 – Cubase SX 3.1 - RME Digi96/8 PST

MAC: Mac mini – 1,42 GHz - 1 GB RAM - OSX 10.3 – Cubase SX 3.1 - Logic 7.1