



Sonifex RB-MTV1

Place commentators or correspondents in front of equipment that they need to interact with and you better make it simple. **ROB JAMES** assesses a contribution monitor with talkback that's well bred and red.

To long-term fader pushers (pullers, if you're old-style BBC) there is something more than faintly disturbing about the idea of a device with preset fixed gain microphone preamplification. However, there are many situations where such a device is not merely desirable but essential. Add a limiter, headphone monitoring of the mic output, programme and cue feeds plus talkback and you have a box that ticks a lot of boxes.

Finished in the signature Redbox series satin anodise, the anything but unassuming UK£499 (+ VAT) RB-MTV1 is housed in a shallow, 110mm deep, 1u rackmounting alloy case. As with several of the other Redboxes there are also horizontal mounting points for bolting the unit in place to a flat surface. Rear rack ears to provide extra support are an optional extra for installation in, for example, OB vehicles or mobile rigs. Once set up, the emphasis is on simplicity in operation. Front panel controls are minimal and several functions will differ depending on application and set-up.

A quiet red LED indicates that the unit is powered. The two buttons are big and friendly: Mic is latching and lights up in red to indicate that the mic is live; Talk is momentary and lights green. Pressing the Talk button when the Mic is live temporarily mutes the main mic outputs and routes the mic signal to the 'Lazy Output'. This is intended to be used as a talkback send to a control room or colleague. Five LEDs form a bargraph meter with -12, -6, 0, +3 and +6dB trigger points. The range

is well chosen for the intended purpose. A further blue LED indicates limiter activity when the built-in limiter is inserted. Four pots, Mic, Talkback, Cue and Pgm (Programme) determine the headphone monitor mix along with dip switches on the bottom and rear of the unit. In the usual place, last on the right, is a ¼-inch headphone jack.

Typical examples of applications where the RB-MTV1 will be of use include in a voiceover booth for a commercial radio or TV station, using the microphone amplifier in the feed to a recorder with the guide-track for the voiceover applied to the stereo PGM input and the talkback from a producer/recording engineer fed to the talkback input.

Major broadcasters frequently provide their own sports commentary and graphics for incoming foreign sports feeds. Using the RB-MTV1 a commentator can sit in a voiceover booth with the main live audio feed from the sports event coming through the PGM input and with the Cue input used, for example, for another audio track such as the referee's comments or effects, plus talkback to and from a producer. The commentator is able to adjust the monitor levels of all these inputs in the headphones to suit.

A third and highly significant application is for a correspondent, reporter or voiceover artist in a private studio or commercial radio station (or even under the stairs if that's the only available space), connected directly to an ISDN/IP codec link for injecting remotely into a broadcast or for recording reports, using the microphone amplifier fed to the

codec unit and with the return feed from the link fed to the PGM inputs for monitoring. Since the Programme feed can be routed to the main outputs, the unit can also be used standalone to mix voice onto a feed for direct output. However, this function would be more useful if a stereo programme feed could be passed through the unit. On the other hand, this would bring extra complexity since you would most likely want to pan the mic in the mix. Maybe Sonifex will produce an RB-MTV2 stereo version if there is sufficient demand.

The joy of a unit such as this is that it can be configured to be as idiot-proof as possible. Always provided that the voice is reasonably consistent, careful adjustment of the multiturm mic gain and limiter threshold pots will result in consistent, decent levels leaving the artist to concentrate on the job in hand. The multiturm gain pot and switchable +20dB of gain accommodate an unusually wide variety of mic output levels. In situations where close control of levels by a professional is just not an option the unit makes a good case for itself. The remote control GPI/O extends the reach into more managed situations and the monitoring options cater for pretty much anything the presenter could wish for. Coupled with a decent codec unit the RB-MTV1 is also a very strong contender for home contribution set-ups. Sonifex has built a solid reputation for designing and constructing boxes aimed squarely at specific tasks. They do a job and do it well at a sensible price. This unit is no exception. ■

Short back and undersides

Back panel left to right has a ¼-inch headphone jack in parallel with the one on the front panel. Apart from this, audio connections are all XLR. Outputs 1 and 2 (mono) with Mic/Line latching push switches are first up. Next is the Talk (Lazy) output, ProGraMme inputs Left and Right with +10dB push switches for domestic sources and Left and Right Cue Inputs also with +10dB push switches. This is followed by the Limiter on/off switch with multiturm Limit Level trimmer, Mic input multiturm gain trimmer adjacent to the Mic input XLR. A 9-pin D-sub socket offers remote control of the Mic switch with a tally and a further mic tally. Both tallies have simple switch and NPN emitter outputs.



An 8-way DIP switch sets a number of useful options. Switch 1 adds an additional 20dB of gain to the mic input for a maximum of +80dB, Switch 2 turns the LF filter off, 3 turns phantom power on, 4 Mutes the mic in the headphones when the Talk button is pressed, 5 Switches the mic on permanently, 6 keeps the mic meter on permanently (i.e. when the Talk button is pressed), 7 selects whether remote Mic switch operation is latched or not, and 8 sends a mono mix of the Cue Input to the Mono Outputs.

On the underside of the unit two further 8-way dip switch banks determine what will be heard in the left and right headphones. Switch 1 is Mic, 2 Talkback, 3 Cue Left, 4 Cue Right, 5 ProGraMme Left, 6 ProGraMme Right, 7 & 8 have no function currently.

PROS Presents a simple face to presenters; well thought out set-up options; accommodates a wide range of mics.

CONS Stereo outputs might have been a good idea; not a lot else.

EXTRAS The new version of the Reference Monitor can decode a Dolby E or Dolby Digital audio stream allowing you meter 8 or 5.1 audio channels respectively and listen to any two of those channels. There are three Reference Monitor products that can decode Dolby E and Dolby Digital signals and these are available as rackmount units or as add-on cards to existing RM-4C8s. The cards can decode Dolby 5.1 audio from an AES audio stream or de-embed an AES stream from an HD/SD-SDI source and then decode a Dolby encoded AES signal.

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