

Yamaha PA Package

Quality, portable PA on a budget? Just like Medibank's be-stubbled taxi driver, Trevor Cronin got a package deal.

The Yamaha name has been well respected in sound reinforcement circles for more than 20 years. They have a huge range of no-compromise live audio products that grace some of the world's more notable concert halls, and most successful production companies inventory.

This is not that type of 'hang the expense' product. On offer here is their entry-level, easy-to-use, basic PA system. As our friends in the USA would say, it's a 'no brainer', meaning it's easily set up and used by a person short on experience with audio systems. It comes with an easy to read 17 page user's guide, with instant 'how to' information for the novice user. It's a perfect package for where

maximum portability and simplicity are called for. Fine for corporate speeches or a quartet in a restaurant or a pop covers duo with minidisc backing in a noisy bar. It's low power consumption of 110w will

make it suitable for use in certain low power applications. The system consists of an amp head, and a matched pair of speakers. The head looks much like a traditional guitar amp, having rotary pots rather than traditional faders for channel volume.

I bribed busy Melbourne-based session singer Amanda Glew to help me with this review. We put the system through its paces at Yamaha Australia's impressive new South Bank complex, in their volume friendly Demo Room.

Speakers

The new SE Series is Yamaha's most affordable range of PA speakers yet. It covers 10-, 12-, and 15-inch two-way enclosures with a 12-inch floor monitor wedge. Sub bass enclosures are also available from the more expensive 'Club Series' if required. They are conventional robust looking units. The boxes are made by computer controlled woodworking machines and are covered in a visually soft black carpet. The front is protected by a pressed steel grille. There is a pole socket for stand mounting. Internally, there is a heavy-duty two-way

passive crossover, a one-inch HF compression driver with attached constant directivity horn and a 15-inch heavy duty LF speaker with large magnet.

The 15-inch boxes we used had a 90° by 40° coverage characteristic and 60Hz to 14kHz frequency response, 250w power handling (program)/500w peak, at a loud 98dB @ 1w/1m sensitivity. The outside dimensions measure 486 x 667 x 367mm, and weighs in at (a not back breaking) 20.3kg.

Powered Mixer Head

The powered mixer head is also lightweight at 13kg and has easily luggable dimensions of 497 x 275 x 275mm. Add speaker stands, a few mics, stands and leads, and your complete rig could weigh less than 80kg. The EMX620 is Yamaha's basic mono, entry level model, and there is also the EMX660 and EMX860 stereo models which provide more power and functions in the same size package.

The input section comprises six inputs – each with two-way EQ, a monitor send and an effect send. The first four channels can accept either a XLR mic lead or 6.5mm guitar lead jack input. Then there's two channels of two more jack inputs that are capable of handling whatever line or mic level that acoustic guitars, keyboards and the like, can supply. There's a pad button available for extra loud sources such as active bass signals and loud Samoan singers. (love your work Amanda!)

There's also a pair of RCA inputs for connecting a CD player or cassette deck and an additional line input using a 6.5mm jack – in total, allowing for a total of 11 input sources. An on-board effects unit (a DSP processor) provides three Reverb types – small hall, large hall and vocal plate – with no adjustable parameters, just an effects level control. The effect can then be sent to the mono mix as well as to the monitors, to give that big reverb sound so attractive to singers.

The main output to the speakers is via two jack sockets located at the rear of the unit. You can connect one 4Ω speaker or two 8Ω speakers. Using jack plugs for speaker connection isn't ideal, as they're quite easily accidentally unplugged or damaged, I'd like to have seen XLR or Speakon connectors, which naturally lock into place. Also at the rear is the power button.

The main output has a seven-band graphic EQ, allowing you to alter the sound of the speakers and to help control feedback. We cut a little at 250Hz and 4kHz to get a big vocal sound with a Shure SM58. Rounding off



the I/O is an effect output jack for connection to external devices, a headphone output and a two-track send on RCA connectors for recording. Under the green power LED there's a phantom power switch (globally sending 48v to the four mic inputs) for powering condenser lectern microphones and other devices.

The unit incorporates a 200w amplifier. This amplifier uses Yamaha's patented EEEngine technology, providing lighter weight and cooler operation than past units of this type. The amplifier is protected from damage by a built-in limiter with associated red LED that will also protect the speakers should internal meltdown ever occur.

Speaks Volumes

All the controls are laid out in a straight forward manner. After I did a nice version of the traditional 'check one, two' medley, Amanda belted out a few tunes using some bass heavy backing tracks. We pushed the volume to the max. Feedback wasn't a problem even when the singer was less than one meter away from the speakers. With just a little tweaking of a couple of hot spots on the EQ and checking out a bit of on-board reverb we ended up with a surprisingly big pumping sound – 'surprising' given the amp's meagre 200w rating.

On the negative side of the balance sheet, is the lack of individually switchable phantom power on the four mic inputs – I know it's common in entry level mixers, but I don't have to like it! Also the steel reinforced plastic carry handles didn't look like they would last very long on the

road – I think they could probably do with a redesign.

In conclusion, this system maybe without 'frills', but all you need to do is: bring it in, plug it in, and your up in amplified heaven in less than 5 minutes... without even so much as raising a sweat – and there's a lot to said for that. It offers Yamaha's dependable build quality and a very respectable sound for your dollar.



Distributed by

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Price

• \$2,150, EMX620 & S15E speakers; \$770, EMX620; \$870 per S15E speaker. The EMX range of amp heads are also packaged with other SE series speakers

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So, what else have we packed into the 386? For starters it includes features you would demand from a high-end mic pre such as:

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