

Snapshot Product Reviews



SPL MODEL 2380 Surround Monitor Controller

Sound Performance Labs has a long history of providing slick new products that do something completely different, such as its acclaimed Transient Designer. Now, SPL offers an elegant solution to the mundane, everyday issue of multichannel monitor management with the Model 2380 Surround Monitor Controller (SMC).

Housed in a single unit, the SMC is a multichannel volume control and source-switching selector for 5.1 and stereo listening environments, especially those where playback is from a DAW or console that lacks playback level control of 5.1 material.

The front panel is dominated by the

TRS), the surround "A" and stereo "C" inputs (+4dB balanced on D25 subs in the 8-channel Tascam DA-88 format) and a "slave" D25 sub mirroring the "A" and "C" inputs to connect to a recording device. Input "B" has six RCA jacks for monitoring unbalanced sources, such as a reference DVD player, and input "D" is stereo unbalanced on RCA jacks. For ease of hookup, SPL screened the IDs for all of the connections both rightside-up and upside-down (for looking over the unit)—nice!

In the studio, the unit's maximum of 16 individual lines, two D25 sub snakes and IEC power cord can make for a messy setup when used as an on-console controller. Mine was much better in the classic "sit on meterbridge" and "set off to the

smooth and the essential switching of the individual speaker buses was glitchless. At \$769 retail, this could be the solution you need right now!

Dist. by SPL USA, 866/4-SPL-USA, www.spl-usa.com.

—George Petersen

M-AUDIO TAMPA Mic Preamp/DI/Compressor

TAMPA is M-Audio's entry into the land of rackmount signal processing, and the result is a great-sounding unit at an affordable \$799.95 price.

Combining a mic preamp, ¼-inch direct box input, compressor and analog/digital outputs, TAMPA is packed with features. The preamp uses Temporal Harmonic Alignment™, which supposedly aligns the phase of the desirable even-order harmonic components in a signal with the main signal itself, resulting in a tube-like sound from a solid-state circuit.

The front panel is straightforward, with toggle switches for power, phantom power, instrument/mic select, polarity reverse, low-cut in/out, compressor in/out, a 20dB input gain boost and a 20dB output level pad. Retro "chicken head" knobs select input impedance (300/600/1,200/2,400 ohms) and digital output



large volume control and also has surround/stereo input selectors; in/out switches that double as Solo/Mute buttons for any of the individual 5.1 (and stereo) speakers; -20dB attenuator/dim switch, switches for summing either the L/R stereo fronts of Ls/Rs rears to a single mono playback; and a Mute-All switch that doubles as a panic button.

On the rear are the connections for the 5.1 speaker outputs (all balanced ¼-inch

side" modes, allowing for cleaner cable management.

But the best part about the SMC was its sound, or rather lack of sound. Instead of taking the easy, lo-fi route of using VCAs or DCAs to control volume, SPL opted for a discrete, six-level potentiometer with a minimalist approach to components throughout to maximize transparency. Frequency response extends to 100 kHz (-3 dB), the action of the pot was

sampling rate (44.1/48/88.2/96 kHz). There is no switch for output select; the XLR and ¼-inch TRS analog, and both S/PDIF co-ax and XLR AES digital outs are always active. Rotary pots handle input gain and threshold/ratio/attack/release parameters, and illuminated VUs display output level and compressor gain reduction.

I used TAMPA to track background vocals with a Royer SF-1 ribbon mic: a low-