

If your desk is missing something, then the MC3 could neatly fill that hole and put you back in control, says **STEPHEN BENNETT.**

When you're working 'in the box,' it's likely that all that's sitting between you and your Grammy is your computer, your audio interface, and some form of monitoring. If you have an inexpensive interface it might have a single headphone socket and dedicated monitor output, while those devices further up the food chain might dispense with these niceties altogether, as the manufacturers will be expecting you to be using your SSL 4000 for these duties instead. Whatever the situation, a decent monitor controller such as the Radial MC3 under review here can provide much needed useful control if you don't use or don't have access to, a traditional desk.

The MC3 can be used with both balanced and unbalanced cabling. All connections are via quarter-inch sockets mounted on the rear panel of the unit – I would have preferred the outputs at least to be via XLRs, as these are the connectors fitted to most active monitors, but I accept that this might have meant the device would have to be larger. Two sets of monitors and a sub woofer unit can be plugged in and their relative levels determined via recessed preset potentiometers on the top panel. I would like to have seen these protected by some type of cover – the rubber strip on the Sound Devices USB-2 springs to mind – as they were quite easy to knock out of alignment. The phase of the sub woofer can be set here as well and this,

RADIAL MC3

Monitor Controller

Looks Like...

Housed in a sturdy box that feels like it could survive several years in a bag knocking alongside other useful widgets, the MC3 is just 148x48x115mm in size and weighs in at just under a kilo. The controller has a nice firm felt bottom that keeps it on the desk even when festooned with cables, and the metal case is covered with a baked enamel coating with the controls and connectors neatly recessed to protect them from daily abuse. The monitor switching is passive, so the circuitry doesn't add or subtract anything from the audio passing through it – the last thing you need is your monitor controller mucking around with your audio. The front panel sports two quarter-inch headphone outputs with a single dedicated level knob, and which drove my Sennheiser 650s up to distortion-free (and career ending) levels alongside a nod to the iGeneration with a 3.5mm earbud socket. An on/off button switches the headphone feed on and off and this, along with the headphone gain control, also affect the signal sent from the rear panel Aux output – which is useful if you want to send audio to a more sophisticated headphone amp, or my favourite device, a localised FM transmitter. A supplied wall wart PSU powers the headphone amp, sub woofer output, LEDs, and associated non-audio elektrickery.



along with the sub woofer defeat button on front panel, made setting up my Genelec sub woofer a doddle. Also on the front panel there's a Dim control to reduce the monitor level to a preset amount (again set on the top panel) and a mono button to help you sort out phase issues.

The front of the MC3 is completed by probably the most important control: a largish level control that feels smooth and sturdy in operation. Finally the MC3 has select buttons for the two sets of audio monitors for easy mix checking.

Sounds Like...

A device like this stands and falls on its sonic and operational properties and I can report that the MC3 excels in both areas. Unlike the monitor controller I'm used to, (the active Mackie big Knob), it imparts no discernable changes to the audio passing through it. Monitor switching was silent and quick, while the Phase and Dim buttons do what they say on the tin.

It lacks some of the features of other monitor controllers, such as talkback and alternative stereo inputs, but if all you need is a portable system that will allow you to quickly check phase issues, drive your headphones with some high quality amplification, and allow you to switch between a couple of sets of monitors for mix checking without adding any colour of its own, the MC3 could be exactly what you've been looking for. **TAB**



THE REVIEWER

STEPHEN BENNETT has been involved in music production for over 25 years. Now based in Norwich he splits his time between writing books and articles on music technology, running his own Chaos studios and working in the Electroacoustic Studios in the School of Music at the University of East Anglia. He's also a filmmaker with several music videos and short films to his credit. www.stephenjamesbennett.co.uk

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