

Wharfedale Pro BX1780

Trevor Cronin makes a date with this powered mixer and gets the right result.

Wharfedale is a UK-based audio manufacturer which for many years has successfully produced popular speaker systems for hi-fi and professional use. Wharfedale has recently restructured, and now produces a new range of products for professional PA use. Powered mixers are part of the new line up – the Wharfedale Pro BX Series, each with built-in stereo digital effects, graphic equalisers and high efficiency power amplifiers. For the purposes of this review I was looking at the top-of-the-range BX1780 SD.

This unit is a compact 'amp head' type design – popular amongst many manufacturers – and given the space constraints uses rotary pots rather than faders for main volume control functions. Weighing in at just over 19kg it is housed in a robust injection moulded chassis with an integral carry handle on one side. Front and rear controls are deeply recessed out of harm's way making it nice and easy to pack into the back of the wagon 'as is'. It features seven XLR mic input channels and five stereo line input channels each controlled by



a individual rotary pot fader. The first seven channels also have 6.25mm jack line input connectors as well as the XLR mic connector (albeit only one input can be used at any one time). All up, you have a 12-channel mixer, although you can

connect up to 17 input lines.

Above the level control 'fader' we have an input gain pot labelled Trim and an associated red clip LED labelled Peak. These are a couple of nice professional features on a unit of this type and aids in distortion-free running.

Above this section is the pan pot followed by a three-way fixed frequency equaliser – $\pm 15\text{dB}$ at 12kHz (high) shelving, 2.5kHz (mid), 80Hz (low) shelving. Moving upwards we have the effects send control and finally the monitor output send pot.

The five stereo input channels are more basic, omitting the gain pot and peak indicator and mid-band EQ. Two of these channels have additional RCA connectors as well as the standard line input jacks. The first seven channels have a global phantom power activation button and a global mute button, both with an internal LED indicator to aid operation.

An internal effects unit is provided with eight preset digital effects – various flavours of reverb and echo. The selected effect can be routed to the monitor send as well as the main outputs and can be muted with a button on the front panel or a foot switch.

The output section features a power amp routing selection button, which allows operation of the unit in one of two modes: where the stereo master output signal flows into the onboard nine-band graphic equalisers and power amplifiers; or where the monitor out is routed to the top graphic EQ and power amp and summed mono master into the bottom EQ/amp. The internal power amplifier is a high output device providing 2 x 400W into a 4 Ω load and has internal electronic protection.

The back of the mixer packs the unit's cooling fan, AC power IEC connector and associated non-illuminated power switch. For connecting up the speakers there are four professional Speakon-type connectors.

There are many manufacturers selling this type of unit and competition is fierce. Wharfedale has made a concerted effort to ensure its offering has something different 'to say' by supplying certain pro features on this unit not offered by its competition. Although, missing are a couple of features that would have helped set apart the BX1780 even further, such as an XLR input on each channel (making the unit a true 12-channel mixer); and perhaps a sub bass output connector.

That said, in the time I had this mixer it worked extremely well and provided a loud and clear output performance. Its flexible enough to be suitable for many applications, such as mobile disco, small function bands as well as fixed installations in restaurants and bars, and even for conference/multimedia presentations. I used the unit to power four PA speakers at the Fubar café, which was involved in the massive St Kilda festival earlier in the year. It was a real baptism of fire, with a live DJ running the unit at fairly high level for 10 hours straight, and I'm pleased to report it sailed through the experience without a hiccup. In fact, there was no shortage of positive comments about the sound from all involved and the rig compared favourably with other similar installations that we checked out on the day.

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Price

• \$1,199