

sound technology

soundInnovations: the manufacturer's view

Field Recording Gets Up To Speed

M-Audio MicroTrack 24/96

by Adam Castillo

M-Audio has long established itself as a driving force in the mobile recording market. By making computer-centric music production the core focus of its business, the company has been able to provide a new generation of musicians and recordists with a wide range of innovative products. The MicroTrack 24/96 is a recent release that offers some new twists on the portable recorder.

The vast majority of M-Audio products have been focused on helping the "Everyman musician" create a recording system that is tailored to his or her budget, space constraints, and vari-

ous other needs. We have seen yesterday's "project studio" transition into what we today call the "personal studio." The personal studio is an independently owned recording system, usually based at home but often mobile in nature, which is capable of creating commercially viable content. Today, we see personal studios generating film scores, commercial music and even major CD releases.

The MicroTrack 24/96 is an extension of the personal studio movement, offering the convenience of high-quality recording and a small form factor coupled with a familiar consumer paradigm of drag-and-drop file transfer via Flash me-

dia. Remember the first time you took pictures on your digital camera and just dropped them onto your computer? The MicroTrack 24/96 lets you do this with audio. We believe that's the kind of workflow that musicians have been waiting for.

It was clear to us that DAT and MiniDisc recorders simply don't deliver the feature set that today's customer needs. To begin with, tape is expensive, and transfers can only be done in real time, not to mention that DAT recorders themselves weigh in at several pounds. Furthermore, if you've spent an entire afternoon recording and you want to hear that "one sound," you're forced to rewind or fast-forward through an hour of tape or take notes as you record, which is a huge waste of time and kills the creative flow. Af-



ter all that, your best resolution is 16-bit/48 kHz. While MiniDisc allows you to access the songs on the media like a CD, in its original and widespread incarnation it requires you to sacrifice sound quality with ATRAC compression (a 10-to-1 lossy data compression scheme similar in concept to MP3 encoding). It is a shame to see people spend hundreds of dollars on mics that pick

(continued on page 64)

Sensaphonics 'Active Ambient' IEMs Wow NAMM

by Frank Wells

ANAHEIM, CA—There's typically one demo that stands out at a given trade show, a "wow" moment where you've experienced a product that fills a need and market void in a superlative fashion. For this year's NAMM Convention, that moment was the audition of the 3D Active Ambient IEM (personal monitor) system from Sensaphonics Hearing Conservation.

The benefits of personal monitors are well established—for reducing stage volume and, when used wisely, to help avoid hearing damage. Still, the stage experience is diminished



Sensaphonics' new 3D Active Ambient system

for many; the personal monitors also isolate the artist from the ambience of stage and audience. "For years, we've seen performers taking off one, or both, of their monitors because they couldn't hear their full environment," notes Sensaphonics president and CEO Michael Santucci in a company statement. "The 3D Active Ambient solves that problem

by adding natural ambient sound to the monitor mix in a controlled way, so musicians can finally hear everything they want to hear."

The 3D Active Ambient system embeds a tiny microphone into a Sensaphonic custom-

molded, soft-gel silicone earpiece. The mics are fed through additional conductors in the headphone cabling to a compact bodypack that is inserted into the monitor chain between the artist's monitor feed and the IEMs. A patent-pending 3D Active Signal Processing technology is used to add full-range ambient sound received at the mics back into the monitor signal.

In demonstration, a universal fit earpiece was used and the listener stood in the middle of a soundfield created by playback of the front and rear channels of a concert recorded in surround, with the isolated vocal appearing only in the earpieces and mutable. The listener could move within the field, getting closer to the sound sources representing the audience

and band-directional cues were realistically maintained. The listener could also conduct a conversation with those standing nearby—impossible with standard IEM usage.

The production 3D bodypack, acting as preamplifier and mixer, offers the user two operating modes. In Performance mode, the user can adjust the level of ambient sound inserted into the earpiece mix. Flipped to Full Ambient mode, the ambience is blended into the mix at unity gain, as if the earpieces were off, while the monitor mix level is dynamically reduced to facilitate conversation.

The 3D Active Ambient system will be available with two models of Sensaphonics custom earpieces—one with a new hybrid driver and another with a dual driver. Availability is slated for early spring.

Sensaphonics Hearing Conservation
www.sensaphonics.com

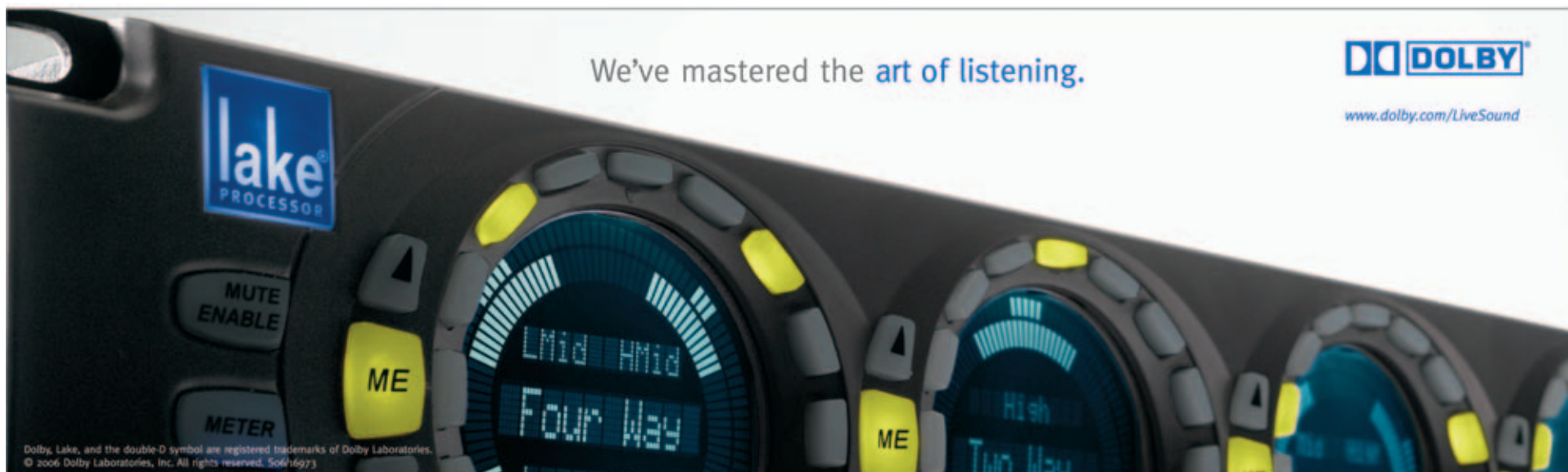
February 2006 prosoundnews.com

ADVERTISEMENT

We've mastered the art of listening.



www.dolby.com/LiveSound



Dolby, Lake, and the double-D symbol are registered trademarks of Dolby Laboratories. © 2006 Dolby Laboratories, Inc. All rights reserved. 50616973