

Peavey XR 8300

Powered mixer amp



Peavey have a knack for giving the musician what they need without adding unnecessary complexity, and the XR 8300 powered mixer is a perfect example of that philosophy.

Paul White

When it comes to smaller gigs, the most practical PA solution usually boils down to a couple of active speakers and a mixer, or a powered mixer teamed with a couple of passive speakers. Peavey's XR 8300 is designed with the latter market in mind, and is housed in the now familiar 'sit up and beg' format plastic cabinet that can be set up on a small table. Plug in your speakers, plug in your mics, power it up, and you're ready for the soundcheck with 300W per channel (into 4 Ω) at your disposal.

The moulded cabinet design has generously deep recesses to protect the front and rear

panels, and a smooth and chunky carry handle is built into one end, with corresponding feet on the other to avoid damage during loading and unloading. If you're worried about space in the car or damage to your back, the vital statistics are 533 x 314 x 305mm, weighing in at 17.2kg. If you need a bit more power, then try the XR 8600, which will give you 500W RMS per channel and weighs 18.9kg.

Channel choice

This model offers eight mic/line preamp channels: the mic inputs are on balanced XLRs, and the line inputs come in on quarter-inch TRS balanced jacks, though they can be used with unbalanced jacks too. Up to 60dB of mic gain is available with a generous 14dB of headroom, and there's 48V phantom power for DI boxes and condenser mics, plus Signal and Clip indicators on each channel.

The last channel can also take a stereo phono feed from an MP3 player or similar (with separate mono buttons for the two inputs), though these stereo inputs are always summed to mono. If only one button is pressed in, that source feeds both channels while the other is muted, the rationale being that some backing tracks come with vocals on

one channel and the music mix on the other, so this allows the user to select either input to feed both channels. Channel seven offers two summed mono line inputs on quarter-inch jacks, so you could use this to either feed in two line-level sources (as long as you can control their levels at source) or one stereo source to be summed to mono.

Give it a tweak

A fixed three-band cut/boost EQ (70Hz, 450Hz and 12kHz) provides the essentials of tonal tweaking, and there are separate sends for effects and monitor, the latter being pre-EQ. A warning LED in the Effects section shows if the send level is too hot. Additional overall tonal adjustments can be made using the graphic equalisers in the master section.

Channels one to six also incorporate

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Peavey XR 8300 **£473**

This is a good-sounding, rugged little powered mixer, which is limited only by its lack of stereo capability.

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25dB Pad switches, which affect both the mic and line inputs, and the channel level is controlled via a rotary pot rather than a fader to save space. Closer inspection of the front panel reveals that there are no channel pan

ner noise is audible under quiet test conditions, it shouldn't be a problem in normal use.

Each of the two onboard power amps delivers 300W into 4Ω, either to supply a two-channel FOH feed or single FOH plus

intensity. While a seven-band graphic isn't ideal for feedback management, this one seems to work better than most, inasmuch as you can dip out problem frequencies by a few decibels without changing the overall tonality too drastically. Perhaps that's one benefit of the constant-Q filter design?

Useful effects

Everyone needs 'a bit of wet' on the vocals, so Peavey have also included a DSP effects section, where a 16-way rotary switch selects from a range of sensibly chosen vocal-enhancement treatments, delays and reverbs without wasting space on less useful effects. It's OK offering pitch-shifting, distortion, ring modulation and vinyl crackle on a second effects engine if fitted, but for most people a good vocal treatment is the main priority and that invariably means delay or reverb. Once a preset is selected, its decay or repeat time can be adjusted using a single control. Some of the longer halls and cathedral reverbs are a bit excessive for normal use, but of the preset-based effects systems I've tried, this is definitely one of the most usable. The enhancement settings combine a brightening EQ with reverb, and a push-button switch allows the effects to be bypassed.

The Effects section has separate level controls for its contribution to the main and monitor mixes, while the monitor and main outputs have rotary level controls. A row of connectors at the bottom of the panel allows the use of an optional effects bypass footswitch, as well as providing Main and Monitor line outs (post-graphic EQs), line inputs to both power amplifiers, and a Record output on a pair of phonsos.

Solid workhorse

I tried out the mixer with a pair of very neutral-sounding Fohhn speakers and had no trouble getting a good vocal sound using little or no EQ. When you do need EQ, the three-band channel equaliser produces workmanlike results, as long as you don't overdo the high or low boost, while the choice of 450Hz as a mid frequency is very practical for backing off vocal muddiness. I was slightly disappointed that everything was strictly mono, but I can see how this saves a little on cost, as adding stereo capability — even just for the MP3 input — would have meant building a stereo graphic equaliser rather than the mono one fitted.

As it is, the XR 8300 is a solid workhorse of a mixer that sounds good, has very usable effects and incorporates some practical extras that don't get in the way of straightforward operation, such as the DDT clip protection and the feedback identification LEDs. As such, it comes close to being the ideal small-format pub-gig powered mixer, and is ideally suited for driving a pair of good-quality, 10-inch or 12-inch, two-way passive speakers. ■ **PM**



▲ Two combi connector outputs for the speakers are located on the rear panel, compatible with both Speakon and quarter-inch jacks.

ner pots. While the option of stereo operation is attractive, the reality is that in a small gig situation it is usually safer to keep things in mono. Panning just changes the apparent mix depending on where people are standing in the audience, and the ethos behind this mixer seems to be to keep things simple.

As is now becoming a common feature on mixers of this type, a master Mute button kills all but the last channel, so you can feed music through the system during breaks without having to turn down your mics and lose your settings. The channel circuitry also includes subsonic filtering to keep unwanted low frequencies out of your speakers, plus the circuitry incorporates something Peavey call multi-point clip sampling: the level-sensing technology behind their DDT speaker protection system. This is a type of limiter that prevents clipped signals being fed to the speakers, and a warning LED comes on when the DDT system is provoked into action, giving you a chance to drop the levels accordingly.

Everything you need to access during a performance is on the front panel, including all signal connectors other than the two Speakon feeds to the speakers. These are actually combi connectors that can also accept quarter-inch jacks and are located on the rear panel, along with the IEC mains inlet and Power switch. Vents for the power amps are also on the rear panel and must be kept free of obstruction in use, as the amp section includes over-temperature protection that will switch off the amplifiers should overheating occur. The amplifier is fan-cooled, but although the

mono monitors, as selected by a recessed panel switch in the master section. If used with 8Ω speakers, the available power is halved. Two seven-band, constant-Q equalisers (80Hz to 10kHz with a ±12dB range) allow for tonal shaping in both the main and monitor signal paths, and lights above the faders form part of the FLS feedback location system, which is a particularly useful feature when ringing out the system during the soundcheck. As soon as the system is driven into feedback, the red LED above the fader denoting the feedback frequency comes on brightly and remains lit for several seconds. Under normal conditions, all the LEDs remain lit, but only at a very low

Tech Spec

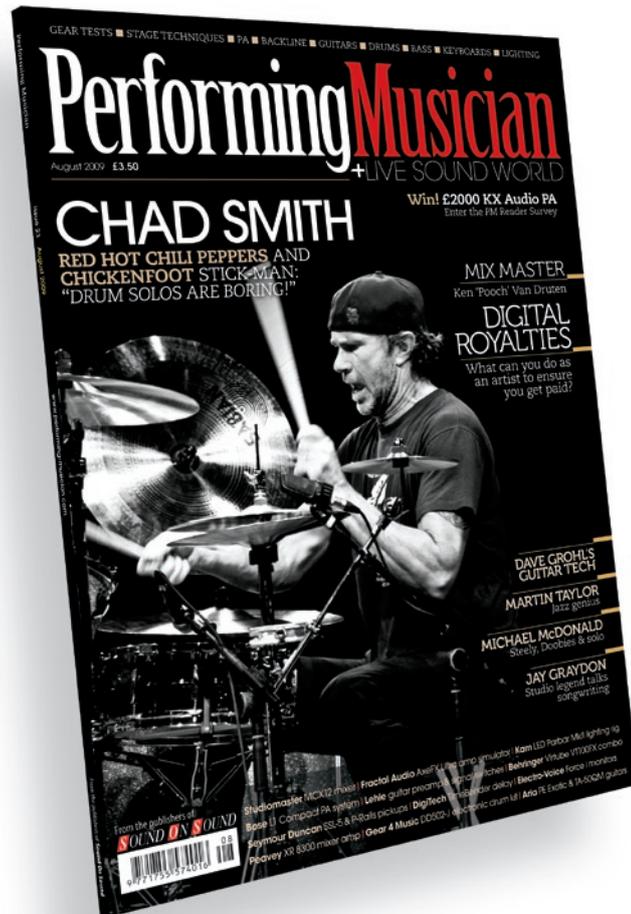
XR 8300

- 2 x 300W per channel (at 4Ω).
- Eight low-noise mic preamps.
- 10 line inputs.
- Three-band EQ, monitor send and effects send on each channel.
- 25dB pad on channels 1 to 6.
- Signal and Clip indicator on each channel.
- Dual Main or Main/Mon power amp mode switch.
- Channel Mute switch.
- Dedicated seven-band graphic for mains and monitors with FLS.
- DDT speaker protection.
- DSP-based effects with parameter control.
- 48V phantom power.
- Dimensions (WDH): 533 x 314 x 305mm
- Weight: 17.2kg.

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