

Sky's the Limit

Blue Sky's EXO 2.1 Monitoring System

by Christopher Walsh

In a few short years, Blue Sky International has built a reputation for quality monitoring systems at attractive prices. The desktop audio revolution has provided the manufacturer an army of potential customers, while editing and broadcast workstations are also a popular destination for reliable, easy-to-use and unobtrusive monitoring. ESPN and Skywalker Sound, for example, are among the large-scale broadcast and film facilities relying on Blue Sky monitoring systems.

Blue Sky systems are unique in that each model in the line has a ".1", with both stereo and surround systems equipped with a subwoofer. The latest addition to the product line, Blue Sky's EXO 2.1 Stereo Monitoring System addresses the needs of music, broadcast, gaming and computer professionals.

The EXO 2.1 System adds a very cool and useful component to this user's recording and mixing arsenal. Just over a year removed from a home-studio setup that had long outgrown its cramped surroundings, my Pro Tools-based studio finally exists in a dedicated rehearsal/recording space, about

a mile from home.

All well and good, but now tasks such as editing and comping tracks require a trip to the studio, which is shared among a few engineers and musicians and not always available. A Pro Tools-equipped desktop computer, Digi M Box and my previous monitoring system—headphones—allowed me to work at home, but between the unreliability of headphone mixing and the fast onset of ear fatigue, such sessions were quickly curtailed.

At \$399 MSRP and just 8x5x4.75 inches for each of the left/right cabinets, the EXO speakers fit beautifully into a home-based DAW setup. The system is rounded out by a 12x12x12-inch subwoofer enclosure, and a small remote control/preamp with gain and subwoofer pots. The remote features a power indicator; balanced left and right XLR/TRS combo inputs; unbalanced RCA and 3.5mm inputs; and a 3.5mm headphone output. The system allows simultaneous monitoring of various sources via these inputs.

Outputs to the satellite ins and input from the remote/preamp are situated on the back of the subwoofer. Both the subwoofer

inthe**field**



and satellites feature sturdy binding posts. The system boasts 160 Watts of total system power (35W per satellite, 90W subwoofer) with the amps housed in the sub cabinet.

The upward angled satellite speakers aim directly at the user's ears while avoiding reflections on the desk; by relieving the satellites of the need to reproduce low frequencies, says Blue Sky, the 2.1 system delivers full-range sound in a package that fits a tight or confining space.

Like the satisfying experience of listening to CDs or iTunes through the EXO system, Pro Tools editing and mixing is easy and comfortably accomplished at home once again—more so, in fact, given the vastly reduced space occupied by the Blue Sky satellites and my iMac, Mbox and FireWire hard drive. True to the manufacturer's claim, the full range of frequencies transition seamlessly between satellites and sub, which combine for a very accurate reproduction of source material, be it Pro Tools sessions, CDs

or iPod. As a computer peripheral, the EXO 2.1 system is wonderful; it would also work nicely as a second monitor system.

In working with an artist who requires considerable comping of vocal tracks, for example, I greatly prefer completing such a task in the comforts of home after hours of takes in the studio. While I'll continue to use the monitors in my studio for critical listening, the Blue Sky EXO system is an excellent low-cost alternative to that system, eminently useful in a tight desktop environment. Suddenly, a tiny home setup is a functioning satellite to my dedicated studio space.

Product information

EXO 2.1 Stereo Monitoring System:
\$399
Blue Sky
www.abluesky.com