

SOUND  DEVICES

MixPre



Microphone Preamplifier User Guide and Technical Information

Sound Devices, LLC
300 Wengel Drive
Reedsburg, WI 53959 USA
Ph: +1 (608) 524-0625
Fax: +1 (608) 524-0655

www.sounddevices.com

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WELCOME

The MixPre is a studio-quality two-channel, portable, stereo microphone preamplifier/mixer. With its pan switches, built-in slate microphone, 1 kHz tone oscillator, and headphone monitoring, the MixPre is a flexible, portable mixer. The MixPre has impressive audio performance and comprehensive features, making it ideal for the front end of any studio or field production system. Radio, television, and film production engineers value its compact size and ability to withstand environmental extremes. The MixPre combines rugged mechanical and electrical construction, compact size, and high-quality components for no-compromise performance for any application.

KEY FEATURES

High Performance Microphone Inputs

- Maximum of 66 dB of gain per input
- Premium Lundahl input transformers
- Sealed, conductive plastic potentiometers
- Phantom power, selectable between 48-volts and 15-volts
- High-pass filters with 80 or 160 Hz corner, 6 dB per octave
- Input panning to Left, Center, or Right outputs

Audio Performance

- Dynamic range exceeding 110 dB
- 10 Hz to 50 kHz audio bandwidth
- Exceptionally low distortion characteristics
- Discrete 6-transistor balanced output drivers

Headphone Monitoring

- High current headphone monitor circuit
- Headphone level control and peak-indicator

Level Metering

- Sunlight-readable, seven segment GaN LED output meters
- 3 position LED brightness switch
- Two-color clip/limiter activity LEDs per input channel

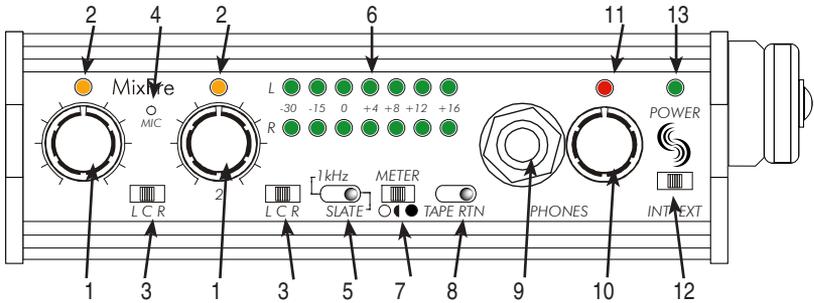
Audio Limiters

- “Unclippable” input peak limiters via two-stage opto-isolator circuit with adjustable limiter threshold (per input)
- Dual mono or linked stereo limiter operation

Flexible Powering

- Internal battery-power from two AA batteries
- Chassis-isolated 5 to 18 VDC external power input
- Power LED indicates low battery power

FRONT PANEL



1. Gain Controls

Adjusts the input gain via sealed, conductive plastic rotary potentiometers.

2. Input Peak/Limiter LED

Two-color LED illuminates red at 3 dB below clipping; illuminates amber to indicate limiter activity.

3. Pan Switches (Input Assignment)

Three-position switch pans inputs to Left, Center (both left and right) or Right outputs.

4. Slate Microphone

Condenser microphone with AGC controlled by momentary Slate Microphone Switch. Slate Microphone output appears at all outputs.

5. Tone Oscillator/Slate Microphone Switch

Toggle switch activates a 1 kHz tone oscillator when switched to the left position and activates the slate microphone when in the right (momentary) position. Microphone inputs are muted when tone or slate are activated.

6. Output Level Meter

Indicates peak output level in dBu appearing at the left and right outputs.

7. Meter Brightness Control

Three-position switch adjusts the intensity of illumination of the output meter; low illumination, normal illumination, or super-bright illumination.

8. Tape Return Switch

Toggle switch allows external audio to be monitored in the headphones. The center position is MixPre program audio. The left and right positions monitor tape return audio; the left position is locking, and the right position is momentary.

9. Headphone Connector

Accepts stereo and mono headphones with 1/4-inch connectors.

10. Headphone Volume Control

Adjusts the level in the headphones.

11. Headphone Peak LED

Illuminates 3 dB before clipping of either channel of the headphone circuit. Also illuminates 3 dB before clipping of either channel of Tape Return audio.

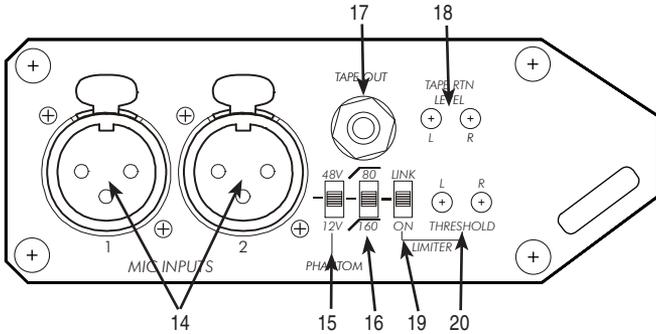
12. POWER Switch

Three-position switch selects the power source. The unit is powered from internal batteries when in the left position; powered from external DC source when in the right position. Center position is off.

13. POWER LED

Two-color LED illuminates green when the unit is powered and changes to red when batteries require changing. For external DC, the power LED is always green.

INPUT PANEL CONNECTORS AND CONTROLS



14. MIC INPUTS

Transformer-balanced XLR inputs accept microphone level signals. Pin 2 = hot, pin 3 = cold, pin 1 = ground.

15. PHANTOM Power

Three-position switch selects either 48-volt or 15-volt phantom power for both inputs. Center position turns phantom power off. Phantom positions reduce input sensitivity by 10 dB.

16. High-Pass Filter Switch

Three-position switch selects 80 Hz or 160 Hz corner frequency filters, 6 dB per octave. Filters affect both inputs. Center position of switch removes filters from the signal path.

17. Tape Output

3.5 mm TRS stereo output (unbalanced) can be used to feed consumer level DAT, MiniDisc, and CD recorders. Tip = left, ring = right, sleeve = ground.

18. Tape Return Level Control

Recessed potentiometers adjust Tape Return level feeding the Headphone Monitor.

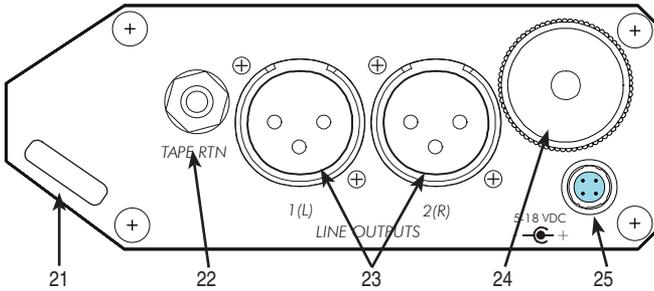
19. Limiter Switch

Activates input peak limiter. ON position functions as a dual mono limiter, with each input signal controlling its own limiter. LINK functions as a stereo limiter, with both left and right inputs controlled simultaneously. Center position of switch turns limiter off.

20. Limiter Threshold Level Control

Recessed potentiometers adjust peak level of limiter activation. Can be independently controlled for each input.

OUTPUT PANEL CONNECTORS



21. Strap Slot

Attachment point for camera straps.

22. Tape Return Input Connector

3.5 mm TRS stereo (unbalanced) connector allows external audio sources to be monitored in the MixPre Headphone circuit. Tip = left, ring = right, sleeve = ground.

23. Left and Right Line-Level Outputs

Active-balanced XLR line-level outputs. +22 dBu peak output level. Pin-2 = hot, pin-3 = cold, pin-1 = ground. To unbalance, use pin-2 as signal and pin-1 as ground, pin-3 should not be grounded.

24. BATTERY Compartment

MixPre operates on two AA batteries. Insert positive (+) end of batteries first.

25. External DC Power Input

Accepts external DC power source (battery supply or AC to DC transformer) from 5–18 VDC. Locking, 4-pin Hirose pin-4 (+), pin-1 (-).

OPERATIONAL NOTES

Input Circuitry

The isolation characteristics of transformers are superior to other balancing techniques for the adverse and uncontrolled environments of field production. Input transformers provide complete galvanic isolation from the source, meaning there is no direct electrical connection. Signals are “transformed” magnetically. The MixPre features expensive Lundahl input transformers, which are unparalleled in sound quality. Lundahl input transformers use premium magnetic core material and advanced winding techniques to achieve high signal handling capability and flat frequency response while keeping distortion to a minimum. Because of their inherently high common mode impedance, transformers are unrivaled by any other type of input for common-mode noise rejection.

Output Circuitry and Tape Output

Each line level XLR output of the MixPre uses an active-balanced output stage. The circuit provides robust line driving capability. To drive unbalanced inputs, pin-3 should not be connected. When unbalancing the connection the output level will be reduced by 6 dB.

The Tape Output is designed to feed consumer level devices, such as computer sound cards, DAT or MiniDisc recorders, and cassette recorders. A cable wired with 3.5 mm TRS to 3.5 mm TRS or, 3.5 mm TRS to Left/Right phono (RCA) connectors, is useful when directly connecting the MixPre to portable consumer audio electronics.

The “Mix” in MixPre

The MixPre pan switches assign each input channel to an output bus. With this feature, the MixPre can be used as a two-channel microphone preamplifier and as a simple mixer. As a mixer, many applications are possible, such as:

- Quickly reversing the stereo image of a recording without reconnecting inputs or outputs.
- During set up, checking for mono compatibility by assigning both inputs to the same output.
- Recording dialog in mono.

By routing input 1 to Center and input 2 to Right, a summed mono signal of both inputs appears at the Right output while only input 1 appears at the Left output. This is useful for postproduction processing of input 1 audio.

Phantom Power

Microphones requiring phantom power should use the lowest voltage acceptable to maximize MixPre battery life. Condenser microphones that can operate on phantom voltages from 11–52 volts will not have a performance benefit with 48-volt phantom; therefore 15-volt phantom is appropriate. The 15-volt setting will increase battery life versus the 48-volt setting.

Microphones requiring 48-volt phantom will not operate, or may operate with lower headroom and increased distortion at the 15-volt setting; therefore use 48-volt phantom for these mics. Consult your microphone documentation.

Dynamic microphones do not require phantom power. A properly connected balanced, dynamic microphone will not be affected by the presence of phantom power nor will it draw any current. However, it is good practice to turn phantom power off when not needed. Poor or incorrectly wired microphone cable can cause audible artifacts in microphone signals. Some wireless receiver outputs are adversely affected by the presence of phantom power, therefore, consult the wireless receiver documentation.

High-Pass Filter

The two-position high pass (low-cut) filter in the MixPre is useful for removing excess low frequency energy in audio signals. This excess energy can be caused by multiple sources, including wind noise, vibration, unidirectional proximity effect, or high ambient noise levels. The 80 Hz position is appropriate when recording general speech, music, and ambient sound. The 160 Hz position is useful to enhance speech clarity. The MixPre high pass circuit topology is unique in that the filters are placed immediately after the input transformer, before any active gain circuitry. This gives the MixPre higher headroom with low frequency signals, as the low frequency signals are not amplified before they are removed, as in most other designs. The high pass filter is a single pole design (slope of 6 dB per octave) and uses high quality film capacitors for very low distortion. The high pass filter switch controls both inputs. The center position of the switch removes the filter from both audio paths.

When possible, attempt to equalize at the sound source with microphone selection, use of windscreens, shock mounts, microphone placement, and onboard microphone filtering. Multiple high pass filters (filters on microphones and on the MixPre) will give an additive effect, increasing the slope of the filter.

Headphone Monitoring and Tape Return

Headphone monitoring is an essential need in production audio. The MixPre enables monitoring of program (mixer) audio or a second audio source. In normal operation the headphones monitor the output bus directly. Using

MixPre Compact Mixer

the Tape Return input, a second audio source can be monitored in the headphones. This is useful to verify that signal is reaching cameras and tape machines. The three-position Tape Return switch on the front panel selects the audio source being monitored. The left and right positions monitor the tape return audio. Left is locking, and right is momentary. The center position monitors the Left and Right outputs of the MixPre. As the MixPre can drive headphones to very high levels, care should be exercised when monitoring.

Limiters

The MixPre has two built-in peak responding limiters, one for each input channel. The three-position LIMITER switch on the input panel activates both channels limiters. Each limiter in the MixPre is a two-stage circuit; the first stage keeps the input gain stage from clipping; the second stage limits the variable gain stage to the level set by the Limiter Threshold control. This unique two stage topology limits the gain stage directly after the mic input transformer, to make the front end virtually “unclippable”, but does not change the input impedance as other “at the mic” limiters do. The circuit enables the MixPre to limit, when necessary, in excess of 50 dB, making it very difficult to clip the unit no matter the gain setting.

The three-position Limiter switch can be set to operate in either dual mono or stereo linked operation. Dual mono operation (ON switch position) allows each input to limit independently, responding only to its input signal. Stereo linked operation (LINK switch position) connects both limiters, ensuring that the limiters control both channels identically. This linking is important for stereo operation to maintain a proper stereo image. When the limiters activate, the Peak/Limiter LED on the front panel illuminates amber in proportion to the amount of limiting for each channel.

Tone Oscillator and Slate Microphone

The switch labeled 1 kHz/SLATE controls two functions. The 1 kHz position (left - locking) activates a 0 dBu level 1 kHz sine wave calibration tone - sent to both outputs. Inputs are muted when the tone oscillator is activated. The tone oscillator is useful during setup to verify connections and to set nominal levels to recording and transmission equipment. The SLATE position (right - momentary) of the switch activates the built-in slate microphone (located behind the front panel). The Slate Mic circuit contains an AGC (automatic gain control) to keep the slate level relatively constant regardless of the acoustic level. Slate microphones are convenient to document “takes” right at the mixer location when microphones are “on talent” or away from the production mixer. Slate microphone audio is present at all outputs, and inputs are muted while the slate mic is active.

Metering

Input Clip LEDs

Above each input gain control is a two-color LED that illuminates red when the input approaches clipping (3 dB before clipping). This clip circuit monitors both the front end gain stage and the variable gain stage. If the audio signal clips anywhere, this LED will show it. When the limiter is activated, the input LED's illuminate amber in proportion to limiting action.

Headphone Clip LED

Above the headphone level control, the headphone clip LED shows when either channel of the headphone circuit is nearing clipping level. The headphone clip LED also shows when either channel of the tape return audio is nearing clipping level. Between these three clip indicators, any clipping, anywhere in the mixer will be seen before it is heard.

Output Meter

The MixPre has a highly visible, seven-segment LED output meter. The meter is peak responding—showing the instantaneous output level in dBu. Peak readings are essential when the outputs feed digital devices. The meter uses red and green Gallium Nitride (GaN) LED's. These premium LED's allow for excellent viewing (with minimal current draw) under all lighting conditions, including direct sunlight. The front panel Meter Brightness switch controls the meter brightness (low, normal, or super-bright). The meter indicates a signal range of 46 dB. From left to right the first three LED's are separated by 15 dB and the next four LED's are separated by 4 dB. This calibration provides a large dynamic range with good resolution in the critical signal level range.

Power Sources

The MixPre is designed to operate from two internal AA alkaline cells for approximately 6 hours with typical signal levels (without phantom power). External DC sources such as AC to DC transformers and external battery supplies can also power the MixPre. Because of its regulated power supply circuitry, audio performance does not change depending on battery or external DC voltage.

The external DC input supply is galvanically isolated (floating) from the chassis and the rest of the circuitry. The isolation provides trouble free interconnection to other pieces of equipment sharing the same DC power source. The pin-2 of the locking Hirose DC connector is positive, and pin-1 is negative. As the external DC supply is floating, the positive or the negative can be connected to the chassis with no adverse effects.

Battery Life

Two factors determine battery life - battery power and current draw.

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Battery Power

For internal power the MixPre uses two AA (LR6) 1.5-volt batteries. Different batteries have different power capacities depending on their chemistry, age, operational temperature, and amount of current being drawn. Alkaline cells are a popular and cost-effective battery type. Lithium cells have higher power per cell with higher current draws and yield significantly longer battery life, at a cost premium. AA carbon cells and AA nickel-cadmium cells are not recommended battery types in the MixPre since these batteries have lower power capacity than other types and will result in very short service life. Temperature has a significant effect on the life of batteries. Lithium batteries are significantly better than alkaline batteries at lower temperatures.

Current Draw

The MixPre can vary significantly in the amount of current it draws. Several functions of the MixPre directly affect current draw in different ways. The following list highlights the larger current drawing functions (listed from highest to lowest current draw).

1. **Phantom power:** the main source of extra MixPre current draw. (See Phantom Power) 48V Phantom can draw copious amounts of current out of the batteries depending on what model microphone is used. Two phantom powered microphones draw twice as much current as one. Microphones vary widely in their current draw depending on type and phantom voltage applied.
2. **Headphone output circuit** - high headphone output levels increase current draw.
3. **Meter illumination intensity** - higher meter brightness increases current draw. The meter can be switched to low for battery conservation.
4. **Output drive level** - higher output drive levels into low impedance inputs increases current draw.

Experimentation is recommended to determine battery life for each individual setup and application. The chart below can be used as a starting point to estimate battery life.

Battery Type	Microphone Type	Battery Life
Eveready AA No. L91 (lithium)	2 dynamic handheld microphones, low meter, no headphones	11 hrs.
Duracell AA MN 1500 (alkaline)	2 dynamic handheld microphones, low meter, low headphones	6 hrs.
Duracell AA MN 1500	2 condenser, 12-volt phantom powered microphones, normal meter intensity, normal headphone drive level	4 hrs.
Duracell AA MN 1500	2 studio condenser, 48-volt phantom powered microphones, super bright meter intensity, cranking headphones	2 hrs.

(Test conditions: 70° F, 42 dB of gain with an acoustic music source, 600 ohm load, +4 dBu output)

SPECIFICATIONS

Gain:

Min Input to Output, per channel, continuously variable

Output	Gain Range
Line	Off-66 dB
Tape	Off-52 dB

Frequency Response (see graph below)

20 Hz-30 kHz, +0.2, -0.5 dB

-1 dB at 5 Hz, 50 kHz (relative to 1 kHz level with 150 ohm source, gain controls set at 50%)

Equivalent Input Noise:

-126 dBu (-128 dBV) maximum (150 ohm source, flat weighting, 22-22 kHz bandwidth, gain control set at 50% or higher, phantom power off)

Input Clipping Level:

-10 dBu minimum, phantom off
0 dBu minimum, phantom on

Output Clipping Level:

Line: +22 dBu minimum with 100k ohm load,
+20 dBu minimum with 600 ohm load
Tape: +8 dBu (2.0 V RMS) minimum with 100k ohm load

Dynamic Range:

110 dB minimum

THD + Noise

0.05% maximum (from 50 Hz to 22 kHz @ +4 dBu output level, 22 Hz - 22 kHz filter bandwidth, gain control at 50%, phantom off)

Common Mode Rejection Ratio

100 dB minimum at 80 Hz, 60 dB minimum at 10 kHz

Channel Separation

Greater than 80 dB at 1 kHz (gain controls set to 50%)

Input (XLR)

Transformer-balanced, 2k ohm input impedance

Input (Tape In to Headphone Output)

Unbalanced, 1 meg ohm input impedance

Outputs:

XLR: Active-balanced, 120 ohm output impedance

Tape: (3.5 mm): Unbalanced, tip-left, ring-right, sleeve-ground, 2.1k ohm output impedance

High-Pass Filters

80 Hz or 160 Hz (switch selectable), 6 dB per octave

Phantom Power

15 V through 680 ohm resistors or 48 V through 6.8k resistors (switch selectable)

Limiter

Thresholds independently adjustable from +6 dBu to +18 dBu, 10:1 limiting ratio, 5 mS attack time, 100 mS release time, Amber/Red LED indicates limiting/clipping, dual-mono or stereo-linked

Internal Voltage Rails

±15 V, regulated

Metering

High-efficiency, peak-responding 7-segment GaN (Gallium Nitride) meter with 3 brightness levels

Powering:

Internal: 2 AA alkaline batteries, 6 hours life typical with +4 dBu signal into 600 ohms, no phantom

External: Isolated external DC input jack, 5-18 V on locking 4-pin Hirose connector, pin-4 = (+), pin-1 = (-), Use gold Hirose #HR10A-7P-4P or silver Hirose #HR10-7P-4P for locking mating DC connector, voltages above 18 VDC cause no damage to unit, but will open an internal poly fuse. Poly fuse will reset when voltage is removed.

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Power LED:

Green indicates power and good battery. Red indicates power and low battery. LED turns red when approximately 1 hour of battery life remain (phantom off). Green with external DC power.

Polarity

All inputs to all outputs, non-inverting; pin-2 of XLRs “hot” to unbalanced inputs and outputs.

Operating Temperature Range

0° to 70° degrees C (32° to 160° degrees F)

Dimensions

43 mm x 94 mm x 140 mm (h x w x d)
(1.7” x 3.7” x 5.5”)

Weight (unit only)

0.8 kg, 1.6 lbs

Weight (packaged):

1.2 kg, 3.0 lbs.

Certifications:

Meets FCC Part 15 Class B

Eligible to bear CE mark (see conformance statement)

CE Declaration of Conformity

According to ISO/IEC Guide 22

Manufacturer’s Name:

Sound Devices, LLC

Manufacturer’s Address:

Sound Devices, LLC
300 Wengel Drive
Reedsburg, WI 53959 USA

declares that the product:
is in conformity with:

MixPre Professional Microphone Preamplifier

Document No.
EN55103-1 (1997)

Description
Emissions standard for product family audio devices for professional use

EN55103-2 (1997)

Immunity standard for product family audio devices for professional use

EN55022 (1995)/
CISPR 22 (1997)

Radiated and Conducted emissions, Class B

EN61000-4-2 (1995)/
IEC1000-4-2 (1995)

ESD - 6kV contact, 8kV air-discharge

EN61000-4-3 (1995)/
IEC1000-4-3 (1995)

Radiated RF Immunity, 10 V/m, 80% 1 kHz amplitude modulation

EN61000-4-4 (1995)/
IEC1000-4-4 (1995)

EFT/Burst, I/O lines, +/- .25 kV to +/- 1.0 kV

EN61000-4-6 (1996)/
IEC1000-4-6 (1996)

Conducted RF Immunity, 10 V, 80% 1 kHz amplitude modulation

Tested by:

L. S. Compliance, Inc. Cedarburg, Wisconsin

December 16, 1999
Matthew Anderson
Director of Engineering

FCC Statement

This device has been tested and found to comply with the limits for a class B digital device, pursuant to part 15 of the FCC rules. These limits are designed to provide reasonable protection against harmful interference in a residential installation. This equipment generates, uses, and can radiate radio frequency energy and, if not installed and used in accordance with the instructions, may cause harmful interference to radio communications. However, there is no guarantee that interference will not occur in a particular installation.

Warranty

Sound Devices, LLC warrants the MixPre Compact Mixer against defects in materials and workmanship for a period of ONE (1) year from date of original retail purchase. This is a non-transferable warranty that extends only to the original purchaser. Sound Devices, LLC will repair or replace the product at its discretion at no charge. Warranty claims due to severe service conditions will be addressed on an individual basis. THE WARRANTY AND REMEDIES SET FORTH ABOVE ARE EXCLUSIVE. SOUND DEVICES, LLC DISCLAIMS ALL OTHER WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. SOUND DEVICES, LLC IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES ARISING FROM ANY BREACH OF WARRANTY OR UNDER ANY OTHER LEGAL THEORY. Because some jurisdictions do not permit the exclusion or limitations set forth above, they may not apply in all cases.

For all service, contact Sound Devices prior to service for Return Authorization. For warranty repairs please include proof of purchase date. Send unit in original shipping carton to:

Sound Devices, LLC
Service Repair RMA # XXXX
300 Wengel Drive
Reedsburg, WI 53959 USA

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