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# E-MU PM5 PRECISION MONITORS

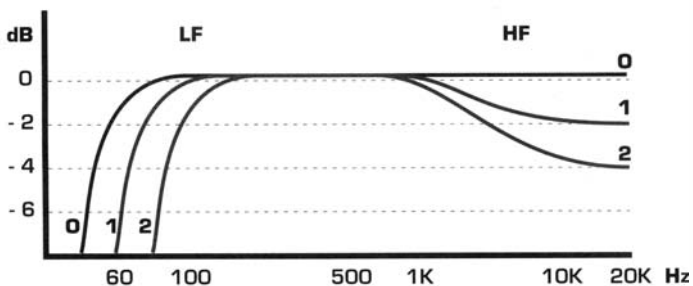
BY LORENZ RYCHNER

For as long as E-MU Systems has been on the recording musician's radar—and that's a long, long time, going back to the Drumulator and Emulators in the early '80s, and to large modular synthesizers before that—I don't think we've ever seen a speaker with the E-MU logo. The PM5 is in keeping with the company's tradition of bringing us systems and devices that enhance the studio experience without breaking the bank.

## Front (and inside)

The PM5 is a discreetly dark-grey box with slightly rounded edges and corners, standing 11.5" tall, 6.9" wide, and 9.8" deep. That's a modest footprint and should allow positioning in just about anybody's setup no matter how space-restricted. Aside from the greyish logo and the tiny lettering Precision Monitor along the bottom, the only color accent is the power-on light in blue that turns red to indicate overload.

Along most of the width at the bottom is the bass port; above in the center of the fascia sits the 5" low-frequency driver (a glass fiber cone for you tech heads), and near the top is the 1" Neodymium soft-dome high-frequency driver. The box weighs 14.3 lbs.



Each driver has its own power amp, each listed as 40W RMS into 4 ohms, with a Signal-to-Noise Ratio referred to full output of >98 dB and THD of <0.2%. The crossover frequency is at 2.5 kHz, the type is an active second-order Butterworth. That's all pretty standard stuff so far.

## Back

There's a heatsink protruding from the upper part of the rear. Below it, all at the same height, are the inputs and controls. On the left is the Neutrik Combo XLR/TRS balanced analog input socket, further in is a female unbalanced RCA connector, and between the two there is a toggle switch that turns out to be a mystery. The manual says "Select either balanced (XLR or TRS) or unbalanced (RCA) analog inputs with this switch". It doesn't switch between the input connectors: they're both live at all times, any signals received at both connectors at once will be mixed, and the manual cautions against this. What it *does* do is to alter the level of the signal going into the power amp to an appropriate setting for an unbalanced or balanced line.

Next on that line of items is the Input Sensitivity Control Knob. It has a center detent

at 12 o'clock position marked -7; the un-notched calibration markings at left are, clockwise from bottom left, -21, -14, -11, -9, and going clockwise from the top to the right they are -5, -3, -2, and zero. Considering the tiny size of this knob and the difficulty in reaching the exact same setting for two speakers, the user would be best off choosing the notched -7 position for both speakers to insure balanced volumes.

The manual helpfully translates all these settings into equivalent values for balanced professional use where the

The trouble in a small home setup is this, though: As you crank the volume for more bass, the room starts to act as a bass enhancer, and if you hear a lot of bass, you might not be sure that it is what the speaker itself produces primarily, so you might be better off keeping it down unless you've done serious work on your room. It's more important to remain close to the speakers, to set them up with the tweeters at ear height, forming an equilateral triangle with the listener's head, and (wishful thinking, I know)



recommended input sensitivity level is +4 dBu. The center-notched position then corresponds to 5.4 dBu, the extreme left is 19.4 dBu, the extreme right is -1.4 dBu.

The manual also states values for all these knob positions in V—at the extreme left it's 7.2 V, at the notched center position it's 1.4 V, fully to the right it's 0.66 V.

These values, plus the overload light in front, should make it easy to set up healthy relationships between audio sources and PM5 inputs.

This line of items concludes with, on the right, two 3-position attenuation switches, for bass and treble. A graph beneath these switches shows their effect—see the facing page.

## Sound

You wouldn't expect much bass from boxes of this modest size, and you could be somewhat wrong. The PM5 delivers nothing earth-shattering by today's hyped low-end standards, but you can hear what is going on in the bass, and when monitoring at modest levels, well below 85 dB for loud passages, I would call the amount of bass just about adequate. As you crank the volume, the remainder of the spectrum runs away from the bass and you begin to lust after a sub. [E-MU announced as we went to press that it will ship the PS12 200W subwoofer in April, price and technical details to be announced.—MM] What there is sounds well-rounded with quite good definition.

hopefully without any intervening surfaces, like the top of a mixing console, splashing sound around.

The mids are quite bold on this speaker. Female voices in particular seemed to stand out front a bit more than I've heard from other systems lately. The tonality is fine, the voices are not made to sound harsh or otherwise unduly colored. But it is a monitor, not a smiley-face hi-fi speaker—raising the fader of a midrange source by a single dB is immediately heard, so mixing vocals should be an enjoyable task on the PM5. As always, check the work in progress on vastly different speakers, in this instance to make sure you didn't back off on the voices to a degree that would leave them shy on other speakers.

The highs are very present, strings sizzled, triangles and piccolo flutes had all the cutting quality they should have, and drummers' brushes swished convincingly.

Overall I found a bigger sound from the PM5 than might be expected from a box of its size. The PM5 is meant for close-field monitoring, and that it does well. It provides a generous stereo field for the home recordist, and while it doesn't have exceptional sonic depth, the PM5 should be considered where well-informed monitoring in restricted spaces is required. 🎧

**Price:** \$349.99 each (street price around \$500/pair)

**More from:** E-MU Systems, Inc., 1500 Green Hills Rd., Scotts Valley, CA 95067. 831/438-1921, [www.emu.com](http://www.emu.com).