



MPX-30: MP3s a-go-go

GEMINI MPX-30

SINGLE TABLETOP MP3 CD PLAYER

GEMINI HAVE STORMED INTO THE MP3 CD PLAYER MARKET WITH GUNS BLAZING AS THEY REVEAL THEIR FEATURE-RICH MPX-30.

PRICE: £379 INFORMATION: WWW.GEMINIDJ.COM CONTACT: 0870 870 0880

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FIRST impressions of Gemini's initial foray into the growing MP3 CD player market are very good. The on-board features really stand out, with a great effects section, sampling and looping, while the MP3 file support is spot on.

Locating tunes is nice and easy. Search through MP3 CD folders by pressing down and turning the track skip dial, and there's also a numeric keypad for tapping track numbers straight in. This pad then allows DJs to program a play-list from the CD.

The screen displays both the track times and folder/file information separately, which is particularly handy. It also has a track progress bar that can be set to elapsed or remaining time. Searching via the jog wheel is frame accurate, a mode activated by pressing 'Jog Mode' above and right of the jog wheel.

Cue functions are well looked after; by pausing the audio and moving the jog wheel to find the start beat. When in pause mode, these points can also be saved to one of five cue point buttons. These buttons can store cue points for any track on the CD. The cue buttons respond at lightning speed so can be used to beat juggle.

FORMAT FRIENDLY

The MPX-30 is able to play practically all types of MP3 encoded files. This is a real plus point in our opinion as we use the highest resolution variable bit rate files. It reads all the MP3 tag information and also CD-Text to help you navigate.

SAMPLE & LOOP

Audio can be recorded to four sample banks. Simply press the memo button and hit the

appropriate sample button in time at the start and finish of the desired sample (up to ten seconds each), and there it is - ready to drop over the top of the CD audio.

The player is also endowed with Seamless Looping, which still requires your accurate timing skills, but won't produce any clicks or pops. The loop can be stuttered with the press of a button and the loop-out point can easily be edited.

EFFECTS

The MPX-30 has eight different effects that are all accessed from just above the jog wheel; each with its own button.

Most of the effects are controlled using the jog wheel, which changes the main parameter. There are also more controls just under the players display, which include a dedicated wet/dry effects mix, controls for start and brake time (as found on some decks) and a dedicated dimmer control for the display light.

The filter works both as a low pass type (when turning the jog wheel anti-clockwise) and as a high pass type (when turning the jog wheel clockwise). Activating the filter always starts it with the parameter set in the middle, which ensures the filter only kicks in when you turn the wheel in the desired direction.

The wet/dry control in this mode controls the resonance, but this can easily distort bass and can sound pretty bad, so is best used in moderation.

The Zoom effect is pretty standard and the jog wheel controls speed. The sound quality is pretty average, but again works well when used subtly in the mix.

Echo, Pan and Trans would all benefit from BPM

synchronisation. Even so, the counter is a little dyslexic, so would definitely benefit from a bit of tutoring, or at least a manual tap to guide it into the right timing on occasion. When it does get it right, however (with most 4/4 material), it can be handy to speed up mixing.

To make these effects sound good, the timing is crucial. This is controlled manually by the jog dial. So without the BPM aid, it's necessary to monitor these effects in your cans before dropping them in.

Not more than one processing effect can be used at once, but you can activate the brake or reverse while using an effect.

SCRATCH

The MPX-30 has a scratch effect, which is actually very tight to respond to movement from the jog wheel. The wheel is not touch-sensitive so only starts to take control of playback when the wheel starts to move. And as soon as the wheel stops moving, playback is then started again instantly. For a player of this nature this is one of the best scratch effects we've heard, even if the scratch sound itself is a bit screechy.

TIME & PITCH

The MPX-30 has key correction, which allows DJs to change the speed of a track without affecting the tempo. This also preserves the key when you use the jog wheel to correct a mix, which is 'on air' and avoids the tell-tail signs of a howling mix, such as pitching strings. It isn't the best quality we've heard, but for the money it's certainly usable; deterioration is

INFO

T-SPECS

» One-year laser warranty » MP3: 32 - 320kbps (VBR + CBR) » Discs: Audio CD, CDR, MP3 CD » Eight DSP effects with wet/dry » Five cue points » Four sampler banks of ten seconds each » Slot-loading CD mechanism with light » Frame accurate cue and search » Instant start » Hot start master cue » Seamless loop plus stutter and editing » Pitch: ±4, 8, 16, 100% » Pitch bend buttons » Key lock and BPM recognition » Digital output (S/PDIF)

PROS

» Loaded with top of the range features » Plays all types of MP3 files » Sampler, looping and hot cues

CONS

» Would benefit from BPM-synched effects » Build quality is not the best

VERDICT

VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

only noticeable past about -4%. There are four pitch settings with direct access buttons to either 4%, 8% or 16%. By pressing all three buttons you get 100% pitch for interesting effects with stuttering beats and mega time-stretching.

IN THE MIX

Basic operation of the player is nice and simple. There are loads of nifty features to remix your tracks, and with a button for practically every feature improvising is nice and easy. More to the point, it's quick and intuitive. The fact that the MPX-30 supports all types of MP3 files makes it straightforward to use and benefits from reasonable sound quality. The player is literally stacked with great top of the range features, but the icing on the cake would be better integration of the BPM with the effects and perhaps manual tap-tempo. We also rigorously tested the memory and there was no skipping. Overall, it's well worth a look-in.

