

Coleman Audio

TB4 DAW Talkback Monitor

It's refreshing to review a piece of gear that screams pro audio and yet is handmade by the company owner. Coleman Audio is this company, and they make VU meters, source/speaker switchers and other pro audio devices. Respectfully known for the M3P switcher, Coleman has introduced the TB4.

Both the TB4 and M3P were designed for DAW users who have noneed for a proper mixing console. Nicely housed in a black, single rackspace metal chassis, it is intended to emulate the master section of a mixing console. The TB4 has four balanced passive stereo inputs and two balanced passive outputs. The inputs can simply be whatever you want, (AVID, Pro Tools, CD, DVD, DAT, VCR, etc), and the twin outputs can switch deftly between two monitoring systems (i.e. near fields and an alternate pair of speakers). All of this is controlled by a single, passive main level control that is one of the best features of the unit. The attenuator has a smooth pro feel and according to creator Glen Coleman, cost upwards of \$300. The quality of this component is most apparent when you hear how the stereo image maintains its quality at any level. When tested on my system, there was no noticeable image shift, stereo smear or other artifacts that come with a cheaper unit. The quality of the attenuator is most apparent when you hear how the stereo image maintains its quality at any level.

Also onboard is an active cue amp that is accessed via balanced stereo quarter-inch TRS jacks. There is a talkback push button and dedicated level control on the front panel to control the signal to the cue amp. The TB4 comes with a remote talkback mic that plugs directly into the front panel by way of a stereo mini connection. Nicely, there is an engineer's headphone jack on the front panel with a separate level control that can select either the main signal or the cue signal as a source.

The best feature of the TB4 is not what is in it, but what is not: Namely, there's no gain stage on the main output to add noise. The passive inputs and outputs along with the master volume make the unit very true and transparent. The master attenuator is smooth and allows you to lower the volume without smearing the stereo image. I didn't realise how good the unit was until it replaced a speaker switcher in my home studio. The result was absolutely stunning.

During the review, the TB4 did exactly what it was supposed to do while providing a clean signal path from my DAW to my speakers and cue system. It upgrades even the simplest DAW setup to something definitely pro in quality and features. Mark Cross



FEATURES

- High-quality passive attenuator (main output).
- Active cue output.
- Remote talkback mic included.

INFORMATION

\$ TB4 \$1150.
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