

## SOUNDCRAFT GigRac



According to Soundcraft you don't have to be a professional sound engineer to set up and use GigRac. **Keith Gemmell** plugs in to find out...

### GIGRAC

Manufacturer **Soundcraft**

Price **£700**

Contact **Soundcraft**  
**01707 665000**

[www.gigrac.com](http://www.gigrac.com)

From the time when Led Zeppelin was the biggest band in the world to the present day, Soundcraft has been designing and manufacturing mixers for live performance and recording. The company's first product, the Series 1, was the first mixer to be housed in a flightcase and it has been producing innovative products ever since – including the Spirit Folio range.

GigRac is the latest innovation from the company, combining as it does a fully-featured eight-channel mixer with digital effects and power amplification in a portable package which can be slung over your shoulder and set up in few minutes. Clearly aimed at the solo performer, duos or small ensembles, it accommodates a wide range of input sources, making it also suitable for PA use in small halls, clubs, pubs and even outdoor events. But one has to ask: can setting up and using a pro-quality sound system for live performance really be this easy?

### Hard case

Obviously, equipment used for live performance must be robust, and GigRac fits the bill perfectly in that respect. It's housed in a very smart, but tough, case made from polypropylene resin, and although we didn't actually knock our review model about, it most certainly looked capable of withstanding the day-to-day rigours of life on the road. The case has a handy carry strap enabling you to lug GigRac around over your shoulder, but as you would expect, it's not exactly a lightweight package and a couple of handles would have been useful for lifting and positioning the unit on

stage – particularly after the lid has been removed.

By way of compensation, it's a great-looking unit with all the controls and inputs/outputs neatly laid out on a very smart front panel while the powered speaker outputs and on/off switch are located at the rear. You can rack it with the rest of your gear by removing the four screws from each corner of the front panel and removing it from the casing. Two versions are available: the £350 GigRac 300 (300W), and the £700 GigRac 600 (2x300W) as tested.

Setting up GigRac really is effortless and in many respects can

phantom power complete with 20dB pad switches for condenser mics.

Channels 5–8 are less sensitive and suitable for line-level gear such as keyboards, guitars with active pickups, and CD players. Unlike inputs 1–4, channels 5–8 will also accommodate stereo signals but, of course, GigRac has been designed for live and not studio use, so the output will be summed to mono.

### Extra, extra!

Many solo and duo performers use pre-recorded music in one form or another – MIDI, tape, MD and so on – and Soundcraft has wisely thought

## A superb one-box solution for anyone requiring a high-quality and flexible sound system.

be compared to the simple PA systems manufactured by Vox back in the mists of time before the advent of front-of-house mixers and all of the paraphernalia that accompanies them. In fact, the phrase 'plug and play' can be used here in the true sense of the words: plug it into the mains, plug in your speakers, mics and instruments, switch on, set your levels and you're off.

No matter what type of microphones you tend to use, GigRac can accommodate them. All eight inputs are balanced and feature combi connections that enable you to plug both XLRs and jacks into the same sockets. Channels 1–4 are the most sensitive, being suitable for microphones fitted with jack plugs and guitars with passive pickups. These channels also provide 48V

about this when designing this mixer. In addition to the main inputs there are a couple of extra jack inputs assigned to channels 7 and 8. These are very useful not just for connecting a stereo keyboard but also for samplers, sound modules, MIDI file players and effects units.

Channels 5–6 can be used in a similar way but these are fitted with RCA/phono inputs, making it easy to connect MiniDisc, MP3 and CD players. Large volume control knobs are placed directly above the input connectors.

Just above the inputs, each channel strip features a comprehensive set of controls including (from top to bottom) Treble and Bass for tone shaping, an FX Send, and separate Monitor and Main volume knobs, enabling you to create independent mixes for the audience and the band.

### METHOD SPOT Wet or dry?

It's quite likely that you'll want to hear your music 'dry' on headphones or via the monitors while the audience hears it treated with reverb, and to that end Soundcraft has equipped the GigFX section with controls that enable you to add the digital effects separately to the main and monitor mixes.

Tone shaping is limited to a two-band EQ, but it's perfectly adequate for live use. The Treble control is set at 12kHz, the Bass to 80Hz and you can cut or boost both frequencies by 15dB – enough to help you add a sizzle to guitars and cymbals, cut out vocal sibilance, boost bass guitars and kick drums and reduce microphone rumble.

### Magnificent seven

Live venues are rarely perfect acoustically, but to compensate for poor rooms and halls GigRac is equipped with a seven-band graphic equaliser in the Master section. Each frequency band can be used to either cut or boost the main output signal by up to 10dB. This worked particularly well in the room used for testing and the actual controls proved to be easy to use, with clear white markings to help you create and adjust the frequency curve, even on a dimly lit stage. Although the equaliser is really intended for the front-of-house mix, it's just possible that you may want to use it on the monitor mix, and this can be done using a push-button switch (GigRac 600 only).

If you need effects – for fattening vocals and acoustic instruments and so on – there are eight to choose from: five reverbs, a chorus/reverb, and two echo delays. You can't edit them, but it's unlikely that you'll need to anyway. They'll more than compensate for any particularly 'dead' rooms you happen to perform in.

Selecting the effects couldn't be easier. They're arranged in a circle

### RELATED TECHNOLOGY

## Mix and match

**The GigRac 300 features a built-in 300W amplifier with each speaker output used to power a single 8Ω speaker.**

**Alternatively, you can use just one of the two outputs to connect two 8Ω speakers in series ('daisy-chained' together). The GigRac 600 is more powerful and houses two 300W amplifiers. Using the front-panel Amplifier Assignment switch you can send the main mix to both amplifiers.**

**Each speaker output can be used to power a single 8Ω speaker, or two 8Ω speakers in parallel – a total of four speakers.**

**Alternatively, you can send the main mix to amplifier 1 and the monitor mix to amplifier 2. The main mix output can be used to power a single 8Ω speaker or two 8Ω speakers in parallel, while at the same time the monitor mix connector can power up to two wedges in parallel.**

around a chunky chrome dial. As you move the dial a blue LED glows brightly, indicating the chosen effect. Once you know exactly where the effects are positioned, a quick glance is all that's needed to establish which one you're using. You can turn the effects on or off using a push-button switch or connect a foot switch and use that.

### On the 'Rac

The GigFX are fairly basic and you may prefer to use your own external processor. If so, you can connect it to the front-panel FX output and use the Send Level controls on the channel strips in the usual way. The output of the external processor can then be plugged into either a channel input or the sub-mix input.

Other useful features include a precision, ten-segment LED meter display (just like those on Soundcraft's pro sound-mixing consoles), overload warning LED(s) and a pair of RCA/phono outputs for recording the main mix on an external recorder. Monitoring options abound: you can plug in a pair of headphones for critical listening during soundchecks, and there are also independent outputs for both the main and monitor mixes through which additional powered speaker cabinets can be connected.

As for mic'ing a band, a lot can be done with eight channels. A typical band set-up in small hall might use a couple of channels for drums, one each for keyboards, bass and guitar, leaving three spare for vocals. If more drum mics are needed you can always dispense

with a couple of vocal mics – or vice versa.

So, can a pro sound system really be this easy to use? The answer is a definite 'Yes'. GigRac must surely be destined for high sales. Soundcraft seems to have thought of just about everything. It's a compact amp, mixer and effects unit combined, suitable for pro use in all kinds of small venues yet is also the ideal 'starter kit' (minus speakers) for younger, inexperienced performers who may be looking for a 'one-box' PA solution. Buy with confidence. **mtm**

## SUMMARY

### KEY FEATURES

- Eight mic/line inputs
- 48V phantom power (inputs 1-4)
- Pad buttons (inputs 1-4)
- Four stereo-compatible inputs
- Two-band EQ
- Individual main/monitor channel controls
- Seven-band graphic equaliser
- Eight digital effects (24-bit/48kHz)

### WHY BUY

- Excellent value for money
- Quality product with excellent sound
- Sturdy construction and good looks

### WALK ON BY

- No handles (just shoulder strap)
- Effects a little basic

## VERDICT

A superb one-box solution for anyone requiring a high-quality and flexible sound system that's easy to operate and great value for money.

