

Sabine SWM-3000

Sabine has packed a Feedback Exterminator® and a compressor into a UHF wireless system. Guy Harrison learns the meaning of Christmas.

In a time when digital TV looks set to crowd the lower frequency bands, UHF is being sold to us as the way forward. The SWM-3000 UHF wireless system from Sabine sets its self apart from the crowd by including on-board compression and ducking along with

their famous FBX Feedback Exterminator®. Add to these features an on-board dual recharger for the supplied 9V NiMH battery and you have a package unlike anything else on the market. A similarly featured VHF System is also available (SWM-1600).

The Sabine SWM-3000 UHF Wireless system includes the SW-30H condenser wireless microphone/transmitter and clip supplied in the traditional 'pencil case'. The receiver (SW-30R) is a true diversity unit supporting 30 preprogrammed frequencies and is supplied with dual molded antennae. A 7.2V NiMH rechargeable battery is also provided. Located on the far left of the SW-30R receiver is a small drawer with two slots for battery recharging, a green LED indicates when the charger has switched into trickle mode, (though Sabine warns that this doesn't mean the battery is fully charged and recommends overnight charging to ensure a full charge). The FBX section contains three buttons Set-up, Ready and Bypass. In FBX Systems there are two types of filter used to control feedback, these are static, i.e. fixed-frequency filters usually set up at the start of a performance, and dynamic filters, i.e. roving filters that track down feedback when it occurs then free themselves up once the danger of feedback has passed—particularly handy in a case such as when a singer drops their mic into the monitor speaker. The SW-30R's FBX System contains 10 filters in total. By default these are arranged as seven fixed and three dynamic with a filter width of 1/10th of an octave. This can be changed via an internal DIP switch to eight static/two dynamic and the filter width can be separately adjusted to 1/5th of an octave if need be. The de-esser section is controlled by a single rotary pot providing 0 dB to 30 dB of cut between 2.5kHz and 10kHz. The compression section is a more user-definable, with control over Ratio (1:1 to infinity), Thresh-



old (-30 dBV to 0 dBV) and Attack (1ms to 99ms). Meanwhile Release is factory set at 400ms. A gain reduction meter is provided with LEDs for 2 dB, 4 dB, 6 dB, 10 dB and 15 dB of reduction. The Group and Channel selectors are on rotary indented pots. A green

vacuum display is included for each so there is no confusion in the dark. There are 30 preprogrammed frequencies available on the SW-30R arranged as six channels in six groups, with groups five and six only having three channels each. RF signal level meters and input meters are supplied and a rotary control for output level rounds off this section. There is a power switch and status LED on the SW-30R, although, this does not interrupt supply to the battery recharger—as long as the unit is plugged in, the batteries are charging. On the rear

of the SW-30R are antennae connections A and B. Output is supplied on both balanced XLR (mic level) and unbalanced 6.5mm phono jack connectors with a High/Low switch for the unbalanced output only. A Squelch setting is also found back here and power to the unit can be supplied on (240V) IEC or alternatively DC 12V to 15V. The SW-30H handheld condenser mic/transmitter is a standard affair. The capsule unscrews in the traditional way to give access to the battery compartment. A separate sliding door compartment on the base of the mic keeps Channel and Group controls out of harms way. A single switch takes care of on/off duties with a dual function LED to inform you when battery power is low.

Setting up the SWM-3000 is quite straightforward. First thing to do is find a free channel on the receiver—this is easily achieved by scanning the channels with the mic turned off. If RF is present at the meter, then that frequency is occupied and another must be selected. Once a free Group/Channel on the receiver has been identified it's time to set up the mic/transmitter, matching the Group/Channel settings on the receiver. Once this has been done check for RF levels, speaking into the mic

should spark the input meters into life. Setting up the FBX is achieved by positioning the mic on a stand where the singer will be. Pressing and holding the Set-up button cancels previous settings and puts the unit into standby mode. Now raise the system gain slowly, as you do this you'll hear feedback begin to mount which will then be shut down by one of the static filters. Once all the static filters have been employed the Ready switch will light and you should reduce the gain slightly. If you don't need to use all the static filters then press the Ready button, which will leave the remaining static filters in place and take you out of set-up mode.

I tested the SW-3000 in various scenarios, one of which was an inner Sydney harbourside venue quite renowned for RF problems. Here the system performed admirably with no interference problems whatsoever. (It's also worth mentioning that everywhere I took the SW-3000 System there were at least 18 or more channels available for use, so availability doesn't seem to be a problem.) The mic/transmitter is quite a nice sounding unit with good off-axis rejection. A pleasing result was easily achieved with both male and female vocalists. I must admit to finding no need to use the de-esser at any point. This feature may come into its own when used on lavalier mics which tend to emphasize sibilance if incorrectly placed. The compressor is adequate for tidying up the dynamically wayward vocalist, though some

control over the release time would have been a nice touch. The FBX system is easy to use and works well, I was particularly thankful for it at one of my Christmas Carol gigs when the speaker announced he was coming out into the crowd to discuss "what Christmas meant to the people". At that point I was ordering a hot dog from the van, which inevitably was two days hike from my mix position! As I started my sprint back to the desk I heard the feedback mounting but was delighted to hear it nipped in the bud. "Picked the right mic to walk out there with," was my thought as I bit into my Yuletide dog.

As I mentioned from the onset: the combination of the SWM-3000's features makes it unique and difficult to compare to other UHF systems. Initially the system seems a little expensive, but if you were to individually buy the components to do the job you would easily spend much more. Add to this the savings in batteries over a 12-month period and the price is looking all the more reasonable. I believe the SWM-3000's set-and-forget nature will find favour with the installation market or anywhere you have inexperienced presenters using wireless mics. If you need the features the SWM-3000 has to offer, and I know many do, then currently there isn't a more elegant or effective system in the market to do the job.

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