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THE RISE OF THE RETRO ROADSHOW

LEUCHTKRAFT TWIST-40LED
EV EVOLVE 50
ADJ ELEMENT SERIES

6 THINGS I WISH I KNEW WHEN I STARTED MY MULTI-OP
The EVOLVE 50 from Electro-Voice has been out for over a year, but with a white version now available (which I was lucky enough to see in Las Vegas back in March at Mobile Beat) an in-depth review in Pro Mobile was certainly in order. I was quick to jump at the chance of completing the review, as I had recently borrowed and then gone on to purchase a pair.

I have used EV speakers in the past, so already knew that it is a quality brand, plus some of the DJs I most respect around the world, both in the UK and Stateside, were shouting about how awesome the new EVOLVE 50 is. So, as I was contemplating a new system and the EVs seemed to fit the bill, I sought out a demo, compared the system to other options on the market and was suitably impressed. That said, I had been using my current system for over nine years and was perfectly happy with the performance, so I was initially hesitant about changing my brand allegiance. How good would the EVOLVE 50s perform out on the road? Did I really need a change?

Well, I’ve already given the game away! As I said at the start, I have purchased a pair – so clearly I came to the conclusion that they were worth the investment. But, before I explain how and why I came to that decision, first let me give you a brief introduction to the Electro-Voice (EV) brand. For those that don’t know, it has been around for over ninety years! It was founded in 1927 by two radio engineers, Al Kahn and Lou Burroughs, to service radio receivers and was located in the basement of the Century Tire & Rubber Company in South Bend, Indiana. In 1930, they designed and built their first PA system to assist Notre Dame American football coach Knute Rockne at team practice.

From those humble beginnings Electro-Voice has grown to become a worldwide leader in the design and manufacture of speakers and portable PA systems. Over the years building both customers’ trust and a deep understanding of what makes good sound, EV stands apart as one of the few companies to design all components in house.

The EVOLVE 50 is a portable powered column-style PA system that boasts a variety of advanced features. It has been designed to offer a combination of light weight, low-profile looks and impressive audio clarity, making it ideally suited for the world of mobile DJing.

One of the things that initially attracted me to the EVOLVE 50 is that I had heard it was specifically designed to be easily transported and assembled. As I am primarily a wedding DJ, this was very important as I am increasingly being required to setup quickly in the turnaround from wedding breakfast to evening function. I was pleased to find that each unit comes in just...
two pieces, which means only four bags in total to carry in to a venue (compared with the eight that comprised my previous system).

So, initially, I borrowed a pair of EVOLVE 50s to see how good they were and set out for a wedding at one of my regular venues which would allow for a good comparison. This time I was working on my own, whereas I normally have an assistant, so setup time was even more crucial. I couldn’t believe how easy they were to assemble. I had them out of the bags and ready to play in just under two minutes, having never set them up before. I was blown away!

The sound on the evening was crisp and the clarity when I was speaking was first class. The bass response was also more than I had expected from such a compact column array system.

On that particular evening I was restricted for space, as I was also working with a band. This meant that the compact footprint of the EVOLVE 50s proved particularly useful, taking up very little space on either side of my booth. Despite this far from ideal positioning, I was still very impressed with the sound quality. I have since found that when I set up the speakers further apart, they sound even better.

Now that I’ve shared my first experience of using the system out on the road, let’s take a look at the technical specification and capability of the EVOLVE 50. The system is a full-range column array with eight 3.5-inch neodymium drivers which are directed using custom-designed waveguides for a consistent 120-degree horizontal coverage and array-formed 40-degree asymmetrical vertical coverage. This means that all the acoustic energy is directed towards both sitting and standing audiences, making for even audience coverage and clarity from the front to the back.

The ported sub enclosure houses a 12-inch woofer and also contains the Class-D amplifier, which provides up to 1000 watts of output power (500 watts to the subwoofer and 500 watts to the column array). As you would expect, all of the weight is in the sub. But, coming in at 20.3kg, it is still very manageable – especially considering the punch it delivers.

The input panel at the back of the subwoofer features EV’s industry-leading QuickSmart DSP interface allowing intuitive navigation of system parameters via an LCD menu screen with single-knob control, something that even on a first attempt without reading the manual I found easy to understand. Even for a minor technophobe like myself, the system is incredibly easy to setup and use. It really is ‘plug-n-play’, ready to go right out of the box. However, if you take the time to read the manual you’ll also discover that the DSP is incredibly powerful and can allow you to get even more out of the system. It offers four pre-programmed presets, five user-programmable presets, 3-band EQ, input level control and master volume control, among other options and features.

While benefitting from a very simple and easy to use design, the EVOLVE 50 offers lots of flexibility when it comes to inputs and signal routing. INPUTS 1
and 2 are compatible with both mic- and line-level sources from combination XLR and ¼” TRS jack sockets. Meanwhile, the additional auxiliary INPUT 3 offers a choice between RCA phono or 3.5mm mini jack input.

As an added bonus, the system even supports high-quality Bluetooth audio streaming, something I know I will find really useful for background music and as a back-up if I ever experience technical issues with my main play out system. This will give me enough time to investigate and solve the issue without a significant drop out in performance.

The rear panel has independent gain controls for each of the three input channels, while the DSP rotary push-button doubles up as the Master Volume knob. In addition to an XLR ‘THRU’ output from INPUT 1, which can be used to daisy-chain multiple systems from an external mixer, there is also a MIX OUT XLR that provides the combined post-fade audio signals of INPUT 1, INPUT 2 and INPUT 3. This allows one EVOLVE 50 to be used as a basic three-channel mixer (with one music and two mic inputs) with the output linked to a second system. This will prove very useful when music and microphones are required in a restrictive space, for example wedding speeches or after dinner speakers, when the main sound system for the party is located elsewhere in the venue.

As I mentioned earlier, setting up is really easy thanks to the symmetrical aluminium subwoofer pole with its integrated wire assembly. The connection is secured by a magnet-assisted latching system, which magnetically locks the sub pole in place. Another nice touch is that it is impossible to assemble the pole the wrong way up, as it will connect from either end via the magnetic latch.

For those DJs who are particularly tech savvy, and really want to be on top of their sound, the new Electro-Voice QuickSmart mobile application can be connected to up to six EVOLVE 50 systems simultaneously. This utilises Bluetooth Low Energy (BTLE) technology and allows for wireless configuration, control and monitoring.

The sleek aesthetics of the EVOLVE 50 also lends it to blending into the background in a lounge for pre-party music as well as wedding receptions where clients have potentially spent thousand on making sure the room looks just right! There’s also the white version available for those DJs who prefer the white look or maybe even want to upsell a ‘Complete White Setup’.

The EVOLVE 50 really is a great PA system for mobile DJs. It offers a winning combination of size, portability and ease of setup. On top of that there is the quality of sound that we have come to expect from Electro-Voice, you just need to hear it in action to be blown away! I for one am delighted with my purchase and, contrary to my initial concerns, I am now 100% sure that I made the right decision in upgrading from my previous system. It is ideal for my work as a wedding DJ and I am confident it will serve me well for years to come.