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PRODUCT OF THE MONTH: HME DX200 WITH SPECTRUM-FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGY

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The **DX200 system** itself isn't exactly a new product, but what is new in the last year for HME is its **Spectrum-Friendly** technology, and all DX Series products now have it. Meant for interference-free operation in the increasingly crowded 2.4 GHz frequency band, as the manufacturer touts, the addition of this feature allows the products not only to avoid interference but also to prevent *causing* interference—hence, friendly. We caught up with several users of the DX200 system to see what they think.

Tim Walter, technical operations supervisor for the **Sight and Sound Theatres** in Strasburg, PA and Branson, MO, usually has just over 50 staff members using wired and wireless devices during a production. A longtime user of HME's older UHF wireless system, Walter notes that, when the facility upgraded, it needed something to integrate with its existing setup of wired and wireless intercoms and mics. In Strasburg, the system is in use by the deck electricians, and in Branson, four DX200 base stations are split across the 2.4 spectrum with 40 wireless packs.

Walter calls the units solid, and says the ability to split where they are used in the 2.4 spectrum has been a huge benefit to us to avoid Wi-Fi hot spots and wireless DMX. They have good sound quality. The system is easy to set up, and pack registration is simple, he says, adding that it's essential for the system to enable his team to connect two separate, wired channels to each base station. Other benefits for Walter include the battery life, which he says lasts 10 to 12 hours at a clip, and the fact that there are no external antennas, or other physical things for technicians to break, he adds. We have always said that companies should hire techs to break-test new gear, because it seems like they can break almost anything.



Brenda Cortina, technical director of the **Mount Holyoke College Kendall Performance Center**, uses the wireless system mostly for dance productions, noting that it allows the technical director and stage managers to be mobile during performance. Generally, the system is easy to use with minimal instruction, she says. It is being used easily by students who are not technically theatre trained. Cortina notes that the light weight of both the handsets and belt packs is a plus, but she brings up the range as a bit of a concern. It does not allow us to go past our lobby, which is limiting in that the bathrooms are out of range, she says. A greater range would benefit us.

Jonathan Burke is the sound supervisor for the **UCLA School of Theatre**. He has used DX200 systems at Cabrillo Music Theatre, as well as for the Los Angeles Opera outreach production of *Play of Daniel* at the Our Lady of Angels Cathedral. At UCLA, he and his staff have used the system for productions including *Medea* for UCLA Live and for the university's musicals. It is very quick to set up and sync packs, and it interfaces well with our wired com, he says. The range is quite good.

Burke notes that a big plus is that the system is not in the frequency bands of wireless mics. I often do shows with multiple wireless microphones—I am opening *Cinderella* tonight with 34 wireless mics and four channels of RF com in Thousand Oaks—so not having to coordinate them with the RFs is wonderful, he says. I love the fact that all the packs are the same, so when I use multiple systems in a shared venue—we have four theaters at UCLA—we are able to just sync up the ones that we need for a show, and if we need more, we can just tune them and go. He adds that he would like to see less latency in the system, as well as better side-tone control. The latency drives crew nuts—not a problem for me, as I never have a headset on—but they don't really understand side-tone and levels very well. A standard headset connector would also be nice, too, as many crew have their own.

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