

# WHOA-OH BLACK BETTY!

The Scan 3XS RP55 rack mountable PC, or Black Betty as we've nicknamed it, rocks the house as well as the club...

The Mac vs PC debate is one that has rumbled on since the dawn of creation — well, since the dawn of personal computers, anyway — and the key points have pretty much remained the same on both sides. The Apple fan-boys love to point out that they have fewer issues with hardware and software compatibility and therefore an easier life, while the PC enthusiasts point out the outrageous cost difference between a PC and Mac of the same spec. So what if someone came along who was an expert in the art of music PCs, who could not only put together rock-solid PC DAW systems, but would also configure them in a way imaginable? We'd have to get our hands on one, that's what!

It turns out that the answer to many a PC user's problems could just lie in the form of a company called Scan Computers who build DAWs (digital audio workstations) to cater for every budget and are perfectionists when it comes to building bespoke PC audio systems. We decided to set Scan and their 3XS RP55 a real challenge, and we've set the bar high. Too many reviews are carried out under lab conditions and garble on about specs with no real consequences of failure other than a tut and an unkind word or two appearing in print.

Here's what we put the Scan 3XS RP55 rackDAW — or Black Betty, as we've fondly nicknamed her — through. Bam-ba-lam! Earlier in the year, we were performing at Together, at London's Coronet venue, under our Sioux City Boys Club guise alongside Digitalism and Felix Da Housecat in front of 4,000 people. This we saw as the perfect opportunity to test Black Betty's ability, as we'd previously used a number of systems that just couldn't handle the demands that we threw at them. The performance was a full live set up, including synths, vocals and videos.

We took delivery of Betty after giving a very bespoke set of requirements to the folks over at Scan. We needed to install, configure and programme a live show into Black Betty for the performance. Black Betty was to be used as the main computer system running both audio and video. If the machine crashed, the results would have been devastating — silence and darkness, as both the audio and video would stop. No pressure there, then.

## IMPRESSIVE

The set up we ended up with was the Scan 3XS rackDAW running Cubase 5, Ableton Live 8 and

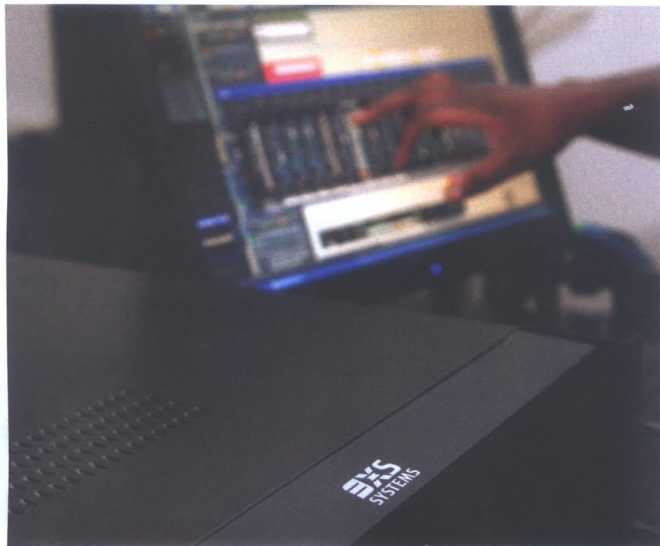
Resolute Avenue 3 simultaneously. In addition, we had various VST plug-ins running in Cubase and Ableton, as well as the live soft synths and vocal processing within Cubase itself. Obviously this is really pushing the envelope as to what is possible in a live situation for any computer, and Scan's 3XS rackDAW performed way beyond our expectations. It's one thing to like a computer system, it's a whole other thing to put your trust in one to this extent in front of a live audience. Black Betty handled the way we threw everything at it on the night with no problems at all. She performed without any hiccups, and back in the studio the speed and power of this machine is impressive. It handles the high track count and plug-in heavy sessions with aplomb.

The care and attention to detail that goes into a Scan Computer is truly impressive. Rather than just building a machine that does the job, Scan have gone the extra mile and the result is an outstanding machine that could only come about from years of experience and a real passion for audio and building PCs. Having seen the inside of more PCs than I care to remember, as well as building more than my fair share of systems, I can say with hand on heart I've never seen a better built system. The components are matched to perfection, and the cabling and installation of the parts is a work of art. The Scan 3XS machines are full of clever features, like the hard disks being mounted using vibration proof mounts — essential for club or live environments where heavy bass can render a harddrive useless — and surrounded by huge heat sinks, something also necessary when the heat starts to pick up, especially with stage lighting etc. All of the components have been selected wisely based on value for money and performance, rather than sticking the most expensive components in, just to be flash.

## SEXY

All this care and attention to detail really pay off and are obvious when using the computer, especially in studio or live applications. The system is ultra stable, incredibly fast and as close to silent as it needs to be for studio work. All in all, the 3XS is the fastest, most reliable and downright sexy PC-based computer system we have ever had the pleasure of using to date. The only thing we could find wrong with this computer system is the fact that once you've added a flight case, it pushes the weight up to just over the limit that can be checked into an airplane's hold, but this is going to be the case with any rack-mountable machine wielding this amount of power.

Supplied with the 3XS Computer is Scan's 21-inch touch-screen display that turned out to be a massive





## VERDICT

BUILD QUALITY	9.0
EASE OF USE	9.0
FEATURES	9.0
VALUE FOR MONEY	9.0
SOUND QUALITY	9.0

## HYPE

The best built, most stable and fastest PC we have ever laid hands on so far.

## GRIPE

The only gripe we could find is that it gets a bit heavy, especially when a flight case is added to the equation.

The ultimate PC dream machine in the studio and/or on the road, the Scan 3XS rackDAW is how all PC computer systems should be.

# 9/10

**PRICE**  
£894+  
**CONTACT**  
scan.co.uk

hit in the studio and a massive help on stage. Initial scepticism as to how useful a touch-screen would be in the studio was soon swept aside after a few minutes of use. Applications such as Ableton Live and Resolume Avenue really lend themselves to being used via touch-screen, especially if the display is mounted flat and used as a control surface.

Touch screens have drastically dropped in price, and the one supplied to us was a 22-inch widescreen made by Llyama, costing under £200 (ex VAT). This is an absolute bargain when you compare this price with a hardware controller. With more and more touch-based interfaces being created for programmes like Ableton, such as the Emulator project, it makes a lot of sense to invest in a touch-screen.

One of the best things about the Scan 3XS systems isn't to be found inside the machine, but rather when purchasing a machine. Gone is the tedium of reading endless reviews to make sure the system ordered is going to work for audio or visual. Also gone are the hours of configuring hardware and software to get a DAW system stable. Simply order the system that suits, add in whatever hardware choices you have as well as audio interfaces, and when the machine arrives it will be configured and ready to go. This is a Brave New World for PC users — all the convenience of the Apple way of doing things, without the extortionate price tag.

If you are looking for an ultra-fast, ultra-reliable studio computer that will also handle the rigours of life on the road, then look no further. The Scan 3XS rackDAW is an absolute dream to use. The build quality is superb, as is the customer support. The knowledge of the staff at Scan is nothing short of

marvellous, and will save many hours and headaches when it comes to configuring the perfect DAW.

