

MidAir Review

Contributed by Administrator
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A mini-review of the MidAir Wireless MIDI device, which I use to connect the WX5 to the VL-70m and my laptop wirelessly

DISCLAIMER: I am not a "pro" musician. I am strictly an amateur/hobbyist. So, please take my comments in this light. This unit, the MidAir from M-Audio was brought to my attention by Onyx Ashanti on the windcontroller group, for which I am grateful to him! Thanks, Onyx! The unit was MSRP at \$150, which is well below the competition and well within my budget as a hobbyist. So, when it finally went on sale (I kept randomly checking until someone said they are actually in stock and shipping), I was delighted to find out that Musician's Friend had it for \$119 with FREE shipping! So, the total cost to me, delivered, was under \$120. This was tremendous. I was also impressed by the fact that they advertised the 30 foot range "under typical conditions". Usually, we are used to manufacturers' claims of range under "ideal" conditions. I ordered and received the unit from Musician's Friend in under 1 week. The unit came in perfect working order, and worked right out of the box.

Description
 There are 2 units that come with the device - a transmitter and a receiver. The transmitter is smaller and slimmer, and has a cable to connect to MIDI out of the instrument (in my case, the WX5). It also has a battery compartment for 2 AA batteries, or, optionally a 9Volt input. You can look up the pictures in the M-Audio web site. The receiver has a MIDI in and MIDI out, as well as a USB connector. It also comes with a wall wart for power. However this is optional, see below. The receiver unit is a bit larger and fatter than the transmitter unit. There are no protruding antennae in either unit.

The unit looks nice Velcroed to the side of the WX5. Here is a picture [Usage](#)

The transmitter has to be powered either with a 9 volt input, or a 2 AA batteries (included). I used the latter method, with the included batteries, until I figured out the power pack situation (more on that in a separate post). It has a short cord to connect into the WX5's MIDI-output. It also has a built in velcro-pad, so you can velcro it easily to the side of the WX5, which I did. The receiver has 2 "modes": Standalone, and Computer. In the Standalone mode, you power it using the wall wart provided, and connect the MIDI IN and OUT to the synth unit (in my case VL-70m). This is how I set it up first to test out the connectivity. To "associate" the transmitter with the receiver, you have to press a button on each, at which point they agree on a common channel, and then they are done. This is supposed to come that way from the factory, but in my units, this step had to be performed manually. No big deal, takes 1 second (one time only). The more interesting mode of the receiver is when it is used with the USB connector on the PC. In this mode, it draws the power from the USB connector (so you don't have to find a place to plug the wall wart), and acts as USB-to-MIDI converter for the PC as well. When you connect USB and install the drivers, you see 2 USB devices on the PC, one corresponding to the "wired" USB and the other to the "wireless" USB. Really nifty. This of course means that the USB in-and out connectors can still be connected to the VL-70m.

My setup
 Here is how I decided to set up my rig: I connect the MidAir receiver to the PC via USB, and connect the VL-70M to the MIDI connectors on the MidAir. Then, I run MIDI-Ox to "reflect" the incoming "wireless" MIDI signal, BOTH to the "wired" MIDI-OUT port on the MidAir, as well as an internal "bus" port. This means that I can simultaneously drive both a soft-synth (my current experimentation is with Reason 3), as well as the VL-70m. And, I don't need to connect a wall wart either! This is a great setup, since I can also use a VL Editor program to send custom patches to the VL-70m using the same MIDI interface.

Range testing
 Again, please read my initial disclaimer. NO testing was done in a stage environment! ALL testing was done in my home. Based on my testing, the manufacturer's claim of 30 foot range was adequately borne out. In fact, I could get about 35 feet range in my home, maybe even a tad more. When there were 3 intervening walls, the range dropped to about 32 feet or so, still exceeding the 30 foot spec. When you move out of range (say 40 feet), there still is adequate signal, but infrequently, notes get dropped. However, there was NO case of "stuck notes", which is of course the major concern. I have my windsynth rig downstairs, and I could even go upstairs and play it (as long I was within the 30 foot spherical radius specified). As I am mostly going to be playing within 20 feet of the receiver unit, this is more than adequate for my needs.

Conclusion
 This is a SWEET unit at the price (did I mention it was under \$120 delivered?). It is definitely adequate for home/ practice use. If your stage ambulatory range is within 30 feet of the receiver, I bet it will work fine for you as well. If you are playing at the Carnegie Hall, maybe not ;-) The combination of the small form factor, low price, and USB interface, with a solid 30 foot range (not just a BS number), make this a winner for me. YMMV. Hope this helps someone, -Kal.