

Pro X Fader feature part 1

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About a year ago Eclectic Breaks, a London based company specialising in promotion, events, tutorials and other DJ related activities, announced that they were working on a brand new type of analogue crossfader that would change the crossfader market. The Pro X Fade as it's called would do this by being cross compatible across a wide range of popular mixers, by being developed and tested by DJs for DJs and by offering a wide range of customisable options (such as cut in rotaries and torque adjust) which were before only available to DJs either through mods to their current faders or by buying specially made faders such as the Focus and Penny and Gilles (which only had certain options available each).

It was regarded by many as a bold announcement, and even after prototypes were shown off at PLASA 04 people were still wondering whether or not this 'revolutionary' fader would really deliver what it said it would. After all it wasn't the first time such claims were being made and many companies failed before EB took their chance.

Fast forward a year and after more testing and changing of the original prototype, the Pro X Fade is finally about to drop. Developed in conjunction with Seltron Electronics and TKD, the Pro X Fade will be released this September, with its launch at PLASA 05. While the wait of a year might have convinced some that the product would not deliver what it said it would or might even have disappeared all together, this isn't the case. EB, Seltron and TKD simply spent the last year ensuring that they would deliver the ultimate in analogue crossfader technology, a claim that they're intent on fulfilling and proving to the public.

And so in June this year, we took a trip down to the EB studio to hook up with 2tall, who worked as tester for the Pro X Fade project, and ended up coming out with an idea to give you the public an exclusive feature on the history and development of this new piece of kit. The idea was simple: team up with our good friends at Skratchworx to bring you the exclusive review of the Pro X (coming up next month) and a feature that backs up the claims that this is indeed a revolutionary piece of kit for scratch DJs (and DJs across the board) while also showing that EB, Seltron and TKD are happy to open themselves up to inquiry about such claims and that they're happy to share with you the various developments and stages that have made the Pro X Fade what it is today.

EB are a company that pride themselves in offering services and products that are by DJs for DJs, a claim too often usurped by companies. So what better way to prove that they mean it then by giving us an incredible amount of information about the history and development of the fader, including sketches, diagrams, pictures, research material, comparison charts and more. They also agreed to sit down with us and take part in a lengthy q&a session to answer the questions that you'll most likely be asking yourself and show that they mean what they say when they claim to deliver the ultimate in analogue cross fader technology. The q&a is now online and you can check it here.

So what happens now?

With all this data and info on our hands it was hard to make a decision as to what to do with it and how to bring it to you. Originally we thought of bringing you the review and this feature in full at the same time, however with the fader not being officially out until mid September we thought it best to delay things slightly and bring you the feature in two parts to avoid letting too much out too early.

So this month what you get is answers to some of the most frequent questions regarding the Pro X Fade as well as a fair amount of information and pictures of the fader at various stages of its development.

This will be followed in late August by the first review of the fader courtesy of the Skratchworx guys and the rest of the feature which will essentially be the q&a between ourselves (Spin Science and Skratchworx) and EB, Seltron and TKD. The q&a was answered by Siya (head of EB), 2tall (tester on the project), Paul (EB's electronics engineer), John and Mike at Seltron and TKD, their Japanese partner. For the first time all 3 companies will answer questions from the public and ourselves about the Pro X, its history, development and uniqueness.

So without further ado let's get this baby rolling... Ladies and gents here's the Pro X Fade.

Frequently asked questions

Ahead of the full q&a session here are some short answers to the most frequently asked questions about the Pro X Fade. More detail about each faq and other queries will be answered next month.

What type of contact does the fader use?

The Pro X Fade uses conductive plastic tracks, the technology for which was and is developed by TKD, renowned worldwide for their superior conductive plastic technology. By using this technology the Pro X Fade is guaranteed to never wear down as long as it's properly maintained.

How wide is the compatibility of the Pro X Fade? Will it fit in X, Y, Z mixer?

The Pro X Fade's cross compatibility is more than just a boast. On release it'll be cross compatible (or retro fitable) with practically any 45mm fader with a 50k resistance value. This includes the whole Vestax Pro Series (05, 06 and 07), Numark, Stanton, Allen & Heath, Rane Empath, Gemini, Tascam and so on. So as you can see, this baby truly is a scratch DJ's dream.

What will the price be?

The price will be £90 for UK retail. This includes the Pro X Fade, a tube of Caig DeOxit lube/cleaner, a cleaning/adjustment tool, instructions and warranty all boxed in a professional package, not just a plastic bag. Prices for other markets will be announced in time and more info will be given on these next month in our full q&a.

Will there be upfader compatibility?

Upfaders are EB's next project, so you can expect to see them in the future.

How resistant is it?

As you'll see from the pictures below, the fader is built like a tank. As for resistance the fader did in excess of 2 million cycles under factory conditions and has been tested extensively by scratch DJs around the world as well as other professional DJs. More info on this will be available next month.

I'm quite dubious of a product that can be fitted across a lot of mixers, is resistant and will last and won't cost a fortune.

To be honest so were we, but after getting our hands on one, speaking to the guys and seeing all their work we can assure you that this indeed what the Pro X Fade will do. If you're still unsure, wait until next month for our full q&a and review and then go and test it for yourself.

Pro X Fade evolution and history in pictures

Below you'll find a selection of images, sketches, diagrams and pdf documents which detail various stages of the Pro X's development and show the cleaning and adjustment tool in more detail as well as various other bits. These are meant to help show how much work and dedication went into making the Pro X Fade... when these guys say they worked hard on it, they mean it! We were originally going to show you some sketches of the fader's development unfortunately due to understandable security issues we've had to withdraw these.

Sketches and Diagrams

Fader Knob sketch

Here's a sketch of the final knob you'll find on the Pro X

Hi res version: right click and save as

Fader Knob early design

And here's a picture of an earlier design, which was dismissed due to being too chunky.

PCBs

Here are some diagrams of the PCBs, which were originally intended for use in the Pro X but later dismissed. They were dismissed as they found that hard wiring was the best way to achieve cross platform retro fitting, the main aim of the product.

Cleaning Tool

In life it's the little touches that make a difference and the guys behind the Pro X Fade know that well. So your Pro X Fade will come complete with a very handy cleaning and adjustment tool, which was also thoroughly researched and developed as you'll see with the pictures below. The tool allows you to clean, lube and operate the various functions of the fader. It's also well handy for removing the screws in your mixer! The final picture shows the tool as it will be shipped. It'll come with a tube of Caig DeOxit cleaner and lubricant.

The different stages in the life of a cross fader prototype

Here we have a selection of pictures to show you exactly how the Pro X Fade evolved in its short life. As you'll see many different sizes and configurations were tried, tested and thrown away before settling on a final prototype which eventually became the Pro X Fader. You'll also see in these pictures just how much damage the Pro X Fade can take... this isn't just a cheap fader, it's a friggin tank!

Early Prototypes

Below are 6 pictures of various early Pro X prototypes. As you'll see they differ from the final product (final picture) in

various ways: the rotaries were changed from big to small, the fader went from one screw to two, the fader was longer and less solid, the design had to be changed to allow for different casings which made the cleaning and adjustment easier, the stem went from 4mm to 8mm and it even started life without any cut in rotaries or torque adjustment.

Hi res version: right click and save as.

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Hi res version: right click and save as.

Hi res version: right click and save as.

Prototype with fat rotaries

Hi res version: right click and save as.

Prototype with one screw

Hi res version: right click and save as.

Final version

Hi res version: right click and save as.

Battered version, built like a tank! This fader still works but can't be fitted into a mixer anymore!

Hi res version: right click and save as.

Overall design process

To round off the first part of this feature, you can download a pdf document that shows the overall progression of the fader, detailing all the stages of its life and what was changed.

Right click and save as (3mb).

Some final words...

Before we round off this first part, here's some more info regarding the launch at PLASA as well as some quotes from DJs who have had a Pro X to play with in the last year. Lastly we'll also be giving you the details of two competitions to get your hands on a free Pro X.

If you're heading to PLASA this September you can find EB and the Pro X at Booth D59, next to the Music Industry Manual booth. Once more the Pro X will be demo-ed by a wide range of top tablists and the public will also be able to test this baby for themselves. You will also be able to buy the Pro X at PLASA.

What the DJs say

"When I first started DJing, we had to do all kinds of crazy things to get our faders to feel right. It's amazing that a fader is coming out that's so customizable, giving DJs more options and letting them make it feel the way they're most comfortable with." Rob Swift (formerly of the X-Ecutioners)

"This fader is incredible! Totally smooth, adjustable tension. It's all you could want from a fader." Infamous (Allies): 2000 ITF Beat Juggling World Champion, DMC and ITF Team Champion

"It's great that DJs, like any other musicians, now have alternatives. A feature like adjustable tension is a great step towards providing the type of alternatives we need." A-Trak (Allies): 5x World Champion & DJ for Kanye West

"Irristably smooth, once you've cut with a Pro-X-Fade it'll make all other faders inferior in comparison" DJ Blakey (2004 UK DMC Champ)

One last thing, for those of you in the UK, or able to purchase UK magazine, you'll be able to enter an exclusive competition in Undercover Magazine's September edition to win one of two copies of the Pro X Fade. And for those of you in the rest of the world, Turntable Radio will also have 2 copies to give away in September, so make sure you check the site.

That's it for this month folks. Be sure to check back here next month for part 2 of our Pro X feature with the full q&a with EB, Seltron and TKD, which will answer all the questions you might still have and shed more light on exactly how much work went into this project and how it is indeed the next level in analogue crossfader. And then check Skcratchworx for the official first ever review. You know that these guys know their stuff, so expect an in depth look at the Pro X.

Many thanks to Siya for his help and openness to put this together, and thanks also to Mike and John at Seltron, TKD, 2tall and Paul for their time.