

Axio BeatBox DJ Bag

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By DJ Ron Slomowicz, About.com

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Finding the perfect bag for a DJ is kind of like finding the perfect vehicle. There are so many options - each with different strengths and weaknesses that are suitable for different people. I have been using the UDG Producer Bag for several months and absolutely love it for out of town gigs involving plane flights, but for local gigs, I have found myself carrying a second bag for a second laptop and additional cables. This inspired me to search for another bag.

Selecting the bag

As a Mac newbie, my first place of research was MacWorld magazine, where I saw an ad for the Axio Beatbox DJ Bag. The bag looked sizable with room to carry a keyboard controller, laptop, and additional gear. Knowing that it was co-designed by the BPM Magazine crew gave me the impression that it would be great for a digital DJ. I logged onto the Axio website and looked around for a bit. I figured this was a good time to test customer service, so I called the general information phone and asked for help with selecting a bag. My questions were quickly and knowledgeably answered, so I ordered the bag directly. Shipping was reasonable and the bag arrived ahead of schedule.

What is the Axio Beatbox DJ Bag?

The Axio Beatbox DJ Bag is bigger than imagined. Measuring (in inches) 14 X 21 X 13, its overall size makes it a bit too big for plane travel - as that is in the grey area for size restrictions for airline carry-ons (which range from 22 x 14 x 9 to 24 X 16 X 10, depending on the airline). That said, the bag is very well-suited for local use. The bag is designed so that it will not tip over, no matter how it is loaded. The wheels and base pegs keep it balanced whether it's full and zippered or unzipped, which is a great feature for such precious cargo.

The bag is designed for the laptop DJ/musician and has seven main compartments and several pockets. The two largest compartments in the center are a padded and fabric lined for a laptop (fits a 17" Mac Powerbook perfectly) and a deeper padded pocket for a controller (it holds the Vestax VCI-100 and a Dexia Rack with room for a power supply, other controllers like the M-Audio Ozone and the Total Control would fit easily as well). Two padded compartments fit a large size external hard drive (the 1TB LaCie Extreme drive fits in either - so two could be carried). A fabric-lined compartment fits a standard size pair of headphones with two smaller compartments for power supplies. The additional pockets can be used for magazines, cables, DVDs, or even vinyl (20 records can be carried comfortably in the bag).

The internal padding is rigid and sturdy-feeling, but the exterior shell doesn't seem as rigid. At



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first, the vivid red color of the interior seems kind of gothic with the black exterior, but after using the bag, the padding actually helps you locate and see your gear better in a dimly-lit club.

Testing

The design on the bag is really strong and it took a few days of usage to best fill the bag. I found that the pockets for vinyl can also safely carry a secondary Powerbook. The pocket for the second hard drive can also hold the sound card. The smaller pockets are great for power supplies and cables, so that everything has its place. After a few days, I am safely carrying the following in the bag - 17" Mac Book pro, 15" Powerbook, Vestax VCI-100, Dexia Rack, M-Audio Fast Track Pro-USB, Technics headphones, Power/Surge Strip, LaCie 1 TB external Drive, TView Scan Converter, and all the power supplies/cables to connect everything. That is a lot to carry in one bag, and the Axio Beatbox carries it all.

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Testing (cont.)

With all the gear in the bag, weight distribution when carrying is an issue. The bag itself weighs about 11 pounds, so it's quite substantial on its own. Standing on its own, it's difficult to make the bag tip over. It's weighted and designed to stand at an angle. The bag can be carried with an underpadded handle or trolleyed with a built-in expanded handle. On low end luggage, the expandable trolley handle is always the first thing to go, so I did some torture testing - opening and closing the handle over 5000 times over the course of a day (my personal trainer said this would count as an arms workout) - and the handle was no worse for wear. The same cannot be said for the wheels as after a few weeks' usage they shifted a bit out of alignment and had to be nudged (banged) back into place. They also experienced a bit of wear. This would be interpreted as normal wear and tear especially since I dragged the bag over sidewalks and paved highways.



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To test the ruggedness of the bag, we devised a few tests. It's been a wet couple of weeks here in Nashville, so using the bag to get from the car to the club through a long parking lot was a good test in itself. The outside of the bag would get wet but the inside contents were safe through the rain (and puddles). I repeated the same test used on the UDG Producer bag, using a water hose with the bag stuffed with towels to record moisture. The shell of the bag repelled most moisture but retained some in the exterior shell, but after dousing the bag for several minutes, the contents were still dry.

Next, to test the padding, I loaded the bag with "simulated gear" and a few eggs, strategically placed. I dropped the bag from different heights, raising a foot each time until an egg broke. Although not the most scientific method, the eggs were safe until 7 feet. The eggs in the internal compartments lasted longer. I interpolate from the test that gear in the bag will be safe from drops and kicks that bags might take during normal transit. I would not recommend dropping a bag full of gear from a height of ten feet, but then again, that is common sense. I would also recommend packing the most fragile gear on the interior of the bag rather than the exterior of the bag.



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Critique

After using the Axio Beatbox bag for a couple of months, there are a few things that I find to critique. The exterior areas of the bag could use an extra layer of padding to prevent shock from kicks and bumps. The size of the bag prevents it from being a universally allowed carry-

on. This is good for those who want the extra space to carry a second laptop and bad for those who fly a lot. An exterior pocket for quick access would be a great feature to add - for say a passport or piece of paper. The handle at the top could use some extra padding for added comfort in carrying and upgrading the wheels would be a good move as well.

Conclusion

The Axio Beatbox DJ Bag is a top quality bag that is highly recommended for any electronic musician or DJ that travels locally and doesn't fly often. It holds everything you need for a performance and is very functional for and use in dark nightclubs. At a price of \$200, it's quite reasonable compared to similar laptop and luggage bags. As a first generation DJ product, Axio has created a bag that many will love. With a few minor changes, the next iteration of the AXio Beatbox DJ bag could easily challenge UDG for supremacy in the DJ world.

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