

Wavelengths Pro Audio's Allen & Heath iLive-144

According to Alan Redstone, vice president of Wavelengths Pro Audio — a production sound rental, sales and installation company based in Leominster, MA — when considering a mixing console to add to inventory or for an installation, he asks three questions: “Will it do everything I want it to do, is it expandable, and what does it really sound like?”

The console that satisfactorily answers those questions, he believes, is Allen & Heath's iLive digital console. Wavelengths purchased one of the very first iLive desks to be brought into the U.S. by the British manufacturer, an iLive-144 with iDR-10 MixRack. Most recently, a smaller iLive-112 was added to the company's rental list. “Before we put our name behind anything, we like to either own it or use it in as many settings as we can and see if it's going to be worth it,” he says.

A longtime aficionado of A&H analog consoles, Redstone was ready to make the transition to the digital desk as soon as he saw it at a trade show. “I love the English EQs, and their preamps are wonderful, so I just knew that this had to be good. It sounds more analog than digital; it doesn't have that harshness to it that a lot of digital consoles do.”

Making the jump to digital was made even easier by the inclusion of the onboard iLive FX, plug-ins that take as their inspiration some of the classic outboard devices of the 1980s. “They're trying to reproduce those analog effects that everybody used back then. And they sound as good, if not better. The reverb, delay, flanger and chorus are just so transparent.”

Redstone had no concerns about the iLive's longevity: “I knew that A&H would

be behind it, as far as firmware updates, that they would constantly make this thing evolve. So it's really a timeless piece, because once you buy it they just keep making it do more things. And they're very good with listening to suggestions, too.”



Alan Redstone with his iLive-144.

But most importantly, he says, “It's just very easy to use. The learning curve is very, very small. You really only have to worry about two buttons — a green one and a blue one.”

The channel SEL button, illuminated with a green LED, provides access to the associated channel's processing. “If you hit that green button on the channel strip, everything you need to know just appears in front of you, from your input gains all the way through your dynamics,” he explains.

The blue-illuminated MIX button pro-

vides access from the channel to assignments, levels, and pan for each group or mix. “So it's very user-friendly,” he continues, “unlike some other consoles out there, where you have to go through so many different layers just to achieve something.”

The compact footprint — an iLive-144 is just over four feet wide — offers space savings at FOH, notes Redstone. “I've set up in locations where I take up only a few seats in an auditorium. There's no rack of dynamics any more. I have a little rack with an external power supply for the desk and a CD player, and that can usually go under the desk.”

Wavelengths will often spec an iLive into an install job. The expandability of the system — one of Redstone's three critical criteria — came into play at a recent installation

at a college performance center. The iLive-112's associated iDR MixRack is networked via an M-MMO-A card, providing interface with an Aviom system, with a MADI card feeding a recorder and a proprietary ACE (Audio and Control over Ethernet) card, which can provide a point-to-point connection with or expansion to an iLive Control Surface or MixRack over Cat-5e cable.

“They can put a smaller rack in different rooms where they need more microphone inputs,” Redstone elaborates.

“Instead of running a bunch of multichannel cable with another patchbay, we ran one Cat-5, and they just plug in an iDR-16 [16-in/8-out] MixRack and have 16 more inputs in that room. They can carry that to another room, where we put another wall panel with an ACE Cat-5 connection.”

The iLive's networking capabilities have also come in handy at Redstone's gigs, he reports: “I've done smaller night clubs and bars where I've mixed on my Wi-Fi tablet sitting at the end of the bar!”

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