

Midas PRO6 Live Audio System

By James Elizondo

Midas PRO6, what can I say about you? You are one classy dame. You have all the right pieces in all the right places. The first time I laid eyes on you I had that feeling you get as a freshman when you see the hot senior walk past you in the hall. I was scared.

At first glance, this console didn't seem too friendly or too easy to manage. With only 16 faders on the surface, two different screens and lots of buttons, I had this feeling that it was layered in excess and a relative nightmare to program. And to top it all off, the only "training" that I was going to get was a one-hour video that was made by Jay Easley from Midas. On the other hand, I knew that at the end, no matter how hard or easy to use, it would sound like a Midas.

The Gear

RT

The console arrived in the HAS Productions shop in Las Vegas at the first of the year, but because these were the perceptions that I had, the desk got forsaken for a week or two. As usual, the deadline for the review was fast approaching, and I could forsake the console no longer.

I stuck the aforementioned DVD into my trusty laptop and begin to watch the training video from Jay. Within the first

channel strips with 12 on the left side and four on the right side, or B area, of the surface. In the middle resides the Midas standard 10VCAs and six pop groups. Each strip has just what you would expect to find, knobs and buttons. In the gain portion you find a gain knob, which is switchable between the analog and digital gains, Osc assign, phase and 48v. Next you find a direct out section, comp, gate, insert, EQ, mix and master sections. All looks very much Midas and is in just the place you would expect it to be.

The onboard dynamics are very appropriate and the gate is very functional and not "clicky." It is a very smooth-sounding gate. They give you a choice of five different styles of compressor. These don't emulate any specific brand or model, but rather represent different styles of compressor. I used all of the compressors on various inputs and found them all very warm and smooth. Also, I could use different styles in different places to color the tones the way I wanted them. The eight onboard FX engines offer a KT DN780 Reverb, Pitch Shifter, Delay, Flanger, Phaser, Multiband Comp, and a Square One 8 channel dynamics processor. I found that although the list of FX is short, that all proved to

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half minute, I found that my original impressions were way off. I haven't even used the desk yet, and it's fast becoming the coolest thing I've ever seen. There is a section of buttons near the trackballs that are a fast way to access any screen that you need to get to. So, for me, this already uncomplicated the layering. Through the remainder of the video, I found that the PRO6 might be one of the easier consoles I'd ever used. Let me lay out its high and low points, and then we'll get into "The Gig."

The first thing we need to realize about the PRO6 is that it's not just a console; it's a networked audio system. You ask, "What does this mean?" It means that there is nearly no end to how vast the system can be.

You can network multiple racks with multiple inputs and outputs from multiple places, and control them all from one place. The PRO6 system can be expanded up to 264 x 264, all controllable from the snapshot automation feature. Also included are dual redundant main computers and a dual redundant hypermac snake system. I'm not even sure I can grasp the magnitude of its capabilities, but I can tell you that the potential and power of the networked audio system makes the PRO6 a force to be reckoned with. We can go on and on about the power of the network, which is vast and amazing, but I know everyone wants to know, what it was like to mix on? In short, simply amazing.

This system has so much going on I find it hard to figure out where to begin. We'll start with the channel strips. Yes, I said "channel strips." The surface has 16

be very well thought out and useful. I was told that there are third-party FX in the works.

As far as the channel strips go, they are very straightforward, with arrow keys to cycle the channel through the 12 faders in groups of four. One cool feature is the 13-16 faders, or the B area. You can have those faders simply be faders 13-16, and the channels will cycle through them seeing 16 channels at a time on the surface. If you switch them to the B area, it locks those four faders out and they work independently from the rest of the desk. With this feature, you can leave those channels selected to important channels for ease of access, or you can have another person drive those channels to take care of, say, FX returns, or MC mics, and so on.

You also have the six pop groups. These are groups that you can assign a number of channels to, so that when you select that group, it populates the channels in that group right into the fader bank. This makes it very easy to reach any channel at any time. To further the versatility, you can deploy the pop group to either the main faders or to the B area if you have it engaged. Even a step further than that, if you select a VCA, it will deploy all the channels in that VCA into the main fader bank. Although you have only been given 16 faders to work with, you can easily bring any channel to your fingertips with the B area, pop groups and VCA select features. Let us not forget that not only do we have 16 faders, but 16 full channel strips. All channel functions, including comps and gates, can be



controlled on the screen with the mouse, if that's the flavor you prefer.

The Gig

RT

After my one-hour video lesson, I felt right at home behind the PRO6. I didn't feel uncomfortable at all on the first show. The test show was actually supposed to be a monitor gig, but changed to a FOH gig at the last minute. I had already written the show to the console, but found it very easy to go in and make the changes to go from monitors to FOH. I think this speaks volumes about the ease of use that Midas has given us with the PRO6 platform.

As far as outputs, you have a total of 32 outputs if you're in monitor mode. You also have a total of 36 KT graphic EQs to insert. The insert patching — all the console patching, for that matter — is extremely easy. In the case of the EQs, it's done via a drop down menu. With all the other patching, you simply click on a "to" and "from" destination in the appropriate patching page. The one drawback that I found, and this may be the only drawback, is that you can only use the graphic OR the parametric EQ — not both. Not to be alarmed, the parametric has six bands, and I found this to be more than suitable to tune my PA or my wedges without having to use the graphs. Also noteworthy is the fact that all of the EQ, parametric or graphic, can be controlled either in the screen with the mouse or with assignable controls on the surface.

I believe that my favorite part of the whole system is the delay compensation function. This function compensates for any latency if you're using outboard processing. Due to the existence of this function, Midas is actually encouraging people to use quality outboard processing. With the compensation, the audio is 100 percent phase coherent. All inputs output at the same time, regardless of the use of outboard gear.

One last piece of awesomeness, and

we'll wrap this up. That would be the KVM function. This stands for Keyboard, Video and Mouse. There are three KVM inputs on the console. With these, you can use your own keyboard or mouse on the screen, but even cooler, you can hook up an external video source. I actually used the KVM function to watch my computer, which was running SMAART, and see and use my computer via the screen on the console.

In conclusion, the only thing I disliked about the console was the graphic/parametric issue. Other than that, I can't say anything but good things about this console. Midas may have been a little late to the digital party, but that's given them the opportunity to correct the shortcomings that all the other manufacturers seem to have encountered. End of story, this console rocks. I've only used one other console that I feel is in the same league as the PRO6. Please give Jay a call and try this bad boy out. I promise you won't be disappointed. **FOH**

Midas PRO6 Live Audio System

What It Is: Following the XL8, it's the second networked digital audio system from Midas, this time in a more compact package.

Who It's For: Sound engineers requiring a networked audio system, not just a mixing console.

Pros: Surprisingly easy to use, nearly no end to how vast the system can be, straightforward channel strip design, smooth-sounding gates and compressors, easy console patching, awesome delay compensation and KVM functionality.

Cons: May seem intimidating at first; you can only use the graphic OR the parametric eq — not both.

How Much: The MSRP is \$99,500 for the complete package.