

prosound

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Graham Helms Crown Int'l



Mark Graham talks about the future of Crown as he takes charge.
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One-Stop Rep/Retail Pro Shop



Brad Lunde's TransAudio Group and LVPA provide a two-stage launch vehicle for pro audio products.
—page 98



MOON GIRL: Beyoncé stole the show at the 2006 MTV Video Music Awards with a performance of her new hit single, "Ring the Alarm." She mesmerized the audience as she sang into a Sennheiser SKM-5200 wireless transmitter with a Neumann KK 105-S capsule. She also took home a Moonman for Best R&B Video for "Check On It."

AES Program Presents Restoration Advances

by Janice Brown

While the AES exhibit floor is a display for cutting-edge technology, the AES California Convention's technical program features topical and historical sessions, and paper presentations which tie the past to the present, and forward the field of audio restoration and archiving. This year will see at least two important technical papers presented in the area of tape restoration, and a special event

on new innovations in the restoration of mechanical recordings.

To be presented during the convention's "Audio Content: Interpretation and Management" technical papers session on Sunday, October 8, from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. are both Charles Richardson's paper on "Solving the Sticky Shed Problem in Magnetic Recording Tapes" and Richard Hess' paper on "Tape Degradation Factors and Predicting Tape Life."

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SR Trends to Digital Desks

Engineers' Mindset a Digital/Analog Hybrid

by Clive Young

NEW YORK, NY—With the arrival earlier this summer of Midas' XL8 console and Cadac's plans to debut a new digital board at PLASA this month (page 69), it would appear that the last days of the live

sound analog-to-digital desk conversion are upon us. As a microcosm of the situation, this month's Centerstage chart (page 88) finds all but two tours sporting digital mixing consoles. However, if the digital

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tech@psn fieldreport:

HHB Flash Mic

HHB mates a Sennheiser mic element, a GB of RAM and USB I/O for wireless, handheld voice recording on the go. **Page 60.**



Webcasts Gain Momentum

by Steve Harvey

Webcasting ventures that showcase musical artists from the most popular to complete unknowns have picked up momentum over the last year or so. Such a trend suggests that, while high-quality methods are being used to capture and record concert events, engineers would be wise to familiarize themselves with data compression methods and check their mixes on computer speakers and even ear buds, with some of these shows also migrating to handheld devices.

Consumers know what they want and they know when they want it—when it's convenient to them. Driven, no doubt, by the same forces that have also led to an increase in the use of TiVo and similar devices and to a general decline in broadcast television viewing numbers, music programming over the internet and to handheld devices is taking off.

Last year's Live 8, webcast globally in real time to an estimated 90 million viewers and archived for later streaming on demand, proved that audio and video

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Voice Recording in a Flash

HHB FlashMic DRM85

by Steve Harvey

It's a Sennheiser microphone that's also a flash recorder, and it offers no-compromise, linear PCM audio up to 48 kHz, 16-bit. What's more, it can be set up for anyone to use, from an audio novice to a seasoned professional. It really doesn't get much better than that.

News of the HHB FlashMic DRM85 first circulated late last year, and by April of this year, models were available for review. Aimed mainly at reportage markets such as radio broadcast, journalism and podcasting,

in the field

the handheld hardware can even be set up using the supplied easy-to-use FlashMic Manager (FMM) PC/Mac software to optimally handle all three applications on consecutive interviews. That's achieved through the FlashMic's nine presets.

Each preset can be a custom-tailored configuration of eight parameters, and might be as simple as a filename change, allowing individual reporters in a busy organization to share the FlashMic yet generate files under their individual names, or an "expert mode" that allows full access to all parameters. But I'm getting ahead of myself.



A little bigger than, say, a Sennheiser evolution 800 series mic, and, at 13 oz., only about 10 percent heavier (2x alkaline or rechargeable AA batteries not included), the FlashMic has a single moving part: a jogswitch located at the opposite end to the Sennheiser omni-directional condenser capsule. Cunningly utilizing the jogswitch's six modes of operation—short and long presses away from or toward you, when looking at the 6-character LCD screen, or inward—it is possible to configure every parameter in the field.

Also on the non-business end are a 5-pin USB Mini-B connector and a 3.5mm jack. Using the supplied USB cable, you can download files via the FMM software or directly, since the computer will recognize FlashMic as a removable storage device. The jack allows headphones (mono audio is fed to left and right) to be attached, or acts as a line out, should you prefer to negate the freedom of movement FlashMic affords and tether yourself to a recording device.

Above the LCD are three buttons: record, play and M, for stop/menu. Press record and, well, you're recording, as indicated by the LCD, which also includes a 15-

segment level meter. Press M to stop, and there's a brief pause as the file is saved. There is no pause button for record or play, however. Press and hold the record button for two seconds, and it will lock to prevent accidental cancellation. Using headphones, you can monitor during recording or later playback directly from the mic.

Also cunning is the pre-record function, set in the FMM software for up to 10 seconds in one-second increments. When on, FlashMic is constantly recording into a buffer, so if you're slow to hit record when the interviewee starts to speak, you won't miss it—a very handy feature.

In "expert mode," that is, when the selected FMM-configured preset has been enabled for field access to all onboard parameters, record level—which doubles as a monitor level during playback—can be jogged up or down in 1 dB steps, from 01 to 40 on the display. At zero, a fast-acting automatic gain control takes over, optimizing for the available sound level. In practice, this works well. Even with the background noise of generators and band soundchecks at the Coachella Festival, I was able to get very nice recordings of all my subjects with

minimal, if any, "pumping" discernible. Plus, it has the quality you would expect from a Sennheiser mic. Enough said.

Handling noise is minimal if you're careful. There is a high-pass filter with a slope of 12 dB/octave at 100 Hz that may be engaged to minimize unwanted background noise.

The onboard 1GB flash memory will record for about three hours in Broadcast WAV format at 48 kHz; 44.1 kHz allows three hours, 15 minutes; and 32 kHz permits four-and-a-half hours. Selecting MPEG 1 Layer 2 compression for each of those resolutions increases recording time to between approximately 12 hours (192 kbps) and 18.5 hours (128 kbps).

Pressing M gains access to the menu and the sub-menus for presets, recording mode and level, filter, battery type, file delete and date/time setup, all of which may also be set in the FMM software. Functions accessible only via the FMM are the naming of presets (six characters) and files (31 characters), setting the pre-record buffer and choosing one of three display backlight levels: on, off or energy-save mode. By the way, the LCD also indicates battery level and warns when memory is low.

For high-end users who will be dumping the audio into editing systems, the non-compressed BWF files offer the BEXT extension data chunk for additional information that will travel with the files as a reference and housekeeping aid. These are in addition to the file name and date/time stamp, of course. Using the FMM, 31-character text strings can be entered for the company name and the reporter/user name, and there is a 255-character field for notes.

At a street price of \$1,300, FlashMic will be appreciated most by professionals, of course, but one should buy the world's first digital recording voice mic now before it becomes too commonplace. It's almost worth it just to see your interview subject looking bemusedly for the expected cable or wireless receiver.

Product information

HHB FlashMic DRM85: \$1,399
HHB (distributed by Sennheiser USA)
www.flashmic.info

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