

One More for the Road

Midas Verona Sound Reinforcement Console

by Gareth John Owen

When a company like Midas releases a new mixing console, the industry tends to sit up and take notice. With a history of exciting and innovative new products, one can always rely on something a bit different. With this in mind, I took a look at the new Midas Verona for a recent project.

The project was a bit different than normal. Merce Cunningham, one of New York's most famous choreographers, decided to put on a large-scale dance show in London's Tate Modern Art Gallery. The music was completely spontaneous, and played on a selection of percussion, pianos and a weird selection of electrical bits and pieces

tremely busy) band. A d&b F1222 PA system was used, along with a selection of dbx outboard and Yamaha effects.

The Midas Verona is the newest of a wide range of Midas products to fit every budget. At the top end, there is the flagship XL-4, used the world over as FOH console for the largest bands in existence. The sturdy XL-3, although now discontinued, continues to put in excellent service as one of the world's best-loved monitor consoles. A newer Heritage range is comprised of the now industry-standard H3000 dual-purpose, large-format console; the H2000, a console designed primarily for FOH on large shows; and the

The next test was to A/B the Verona against its Heritage 3000 partner. Using a pair of Gen-elec 1029A self-powered monitors, we Y-split a condenser mic into both consoles, with 48v supplied from an EMO phantom box. We stuck the mix on the high end of the piano—a suitably daunting task for any channel strip. The Verona didn't sound quite as nice as the Heritage, but it still produced a very warm, clean sound. We tried the same mic at the low end of the piano, and the EQ in the Verona seemed to produce a much tighter low end, despite the much greater control available on the Heritage EQ.

For the final test, we used a pile of BSS AR-116 DI boxes that Orbital had supplied for a



attached together with about half a mile of bell wire. Everything was played in precisely the way you would least expect—the grand piano was plucked like a harp, the percussion was scraped, tapped and stroked in exactly the wrong way, and the electric stuff just defied explanation. It was absolutely mesmerizing to watch, although I never came close to figuring out what it was all about.

Charged with making all this sound good was Cunningham's music supervisor, Andy Russ, who employed the services of Orbital Sound (London) to provide support on the other side of the Atlantic. Orbital, in turn, employed myself and PA techs, Christian Mace and Ruari Cormack. Russ selected a Midas Heritage 3000 as his main console, with the new Midas Verona as a sidecar. The Verona handled the monitor mixes for the 3-piece (but ex-

H1000, ideally suited to theater applications. There is also the innovative Legend console, uniquely placed as being a monitor console and a FOH console at the same time. At the lower end of the spectrum comes the Venice, which is a small-format desk aimed at smaller theaters and hire companies. The Verona fits neatly in the gap between the Legend and the Venice.

The Verona is available in six different models ranging from the 24-input Verona 240 up to the 64-input Verona 640. We used the Verona 400—32 mono inputs as well as eight multifunction inputs. As each multifunction input can either be a mono mic, stereo line—or both—we had the flexibility of 48 channels, most of which were used for Russ' monitor and recording mixes. The output section is uncluttered, and its eight mono groups, eight auxiliaries, four matrix outputs, plus the usual left, center (or mono), right are very easy to navigate.

Since the Verona is a new piece of kit, we decided to give it a bit of abuse before agreeing to use it on the show. First off, we got a pink-noise generator, patched it into the nearest channel and whacked the gains up full. Early results were impressive—despite solid red lights, the preamp refused to distort.

multitrack system that never materialized. We loaded every one of the 40 input channels with a DI box, each drawing 48v phantom power. This is usually a very good test of the power supply's ability to perform, and a quick multimeter test showed a solid 46.8 volts on the 40th mic channel. The Verona is powered by two PSUs that are built into the back of the console and supplied by two IEC connectors. Although they are not slot-mounted (and therefore not hot-swappable), they are mounted on card connectors internally, and so should prove reasonably easy to swap.

While mixing the show, the Verona felt the way you expect a Midas console to feel—solid and dependable with a crystal-clean audio path. The console also demonstrated the musicality of its older brothers and sisters, despite costing considerably less.

The Verona enters into an already crowded console market, neatly plugging the gap in the Midas range. With excellent build quality and the Midas pedigree behind it, it should be a common sight around the world for years to come.

Gareth Owen is a freelance sound designer and sound number one, working in both theater and rock 'n' roll. He can be contacted at Gareth_is@hotmail.com.

tech@psn
inthefield

The Drawing Board

KIDDERMINSTER, U.K.—The highly successful Venice, the smallest footprint and lowest cost desk from Midas, set new quality standards for compact consoles. Now, with Verona, another market segment is addressed, still incorporating the production economies and volumes pioneered by the Venice design.

"The other criteria is to have the sonic quality that people would expect of a Midas, that's obviously crucial and has been maintained," says Alex Cooper, a 20-year veteran of the company and, as director of console development, the leader of the 4-man design team. "The design brief was to build an 8-bus Venice. From the day that we launched Venice, there were customers coming back saying, 'Great, but we want a bigger one as well.' The trick with both of these products was to design them for the manufacturing side. Venice is the first console where we're talking about, from our perspective, mass production, and the whole design had to be done differently."

In terms of capabilities, the absence of VCA fader automation and the lower bus count are the main differences between the Verona and its Midas cousins of similar size. Where other Midas desks use a single, removable module-per-channel approach, the Venice used a single-piece top panel, effectively limiting the fader count to 32 channels. Verona is done in segments of eight, allowing modular expandability to 64 channels. Verona adds swept EQ and automated mutes to the Venice formula as well as stereo modules with the flexibility to still act as mono mic ins as needed.

The automated German factory building Venice is at capacity, so Verona was developed to match specific factory capabilities when bringing the Venice approach home to the Midas U.K. plant. "It was largely a repackaging exercise," says Cooper, attesting that the efforts paid off with more efficient designs and no compromises. In fact, he says, "Any of the changes we made to reduce the number of components, I would still use those now," were he asked to redesign many of Midas' current products. The mic preamp offers one example, where the separate stages for amplifier, polarity reversal and filter are now combined into a single stage. Cooper says the new design achieves an "exceptionally good" 50 percent reduction in parts and "measurably better" performance, including excellent CMRR performance, both on the bench and in practice.

"The American church market should be a big area for this console," says Cooper. He also suggests "smaller touring PA companies, the U.K. church market is starting to develop, small theaters—it's pretty much general purpose. It could go into all sorts of places; it has direct outs, so you could even do some recording."

The keys to Verona's acceptance will be "the professionalism of the design, the sound, the robustness," says Cooper. While you may find a console with a similar feature set for less money, he says, "If you want the best, you'd want a Verona. There's been no sacrifice in performance, so it's the ultimate 8-bus, if you like."

—Frank Wells

Product information

Verona sound reinforcement console
Models 240 to 640 (24- to 64-input)

Contact dealer for pricing
Midas U.S.A. (Telex Communications)
www.midasconsoles.com