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PRESS RELEASE

Darius Rucker engineers embrace the MIDAS PRO6

Photo: DRucker engineers PRO6 0712.jpg
Caption: FOH engineer Billy Huelin (left) and monitor engineer Joel Stickrod both use the MIDAS PRO6 on tour with Darius Rucker.

When FOH engineer Billy Huelin first began working with Darius Rucker, it was 1992 and Hootie & the Blowfish was a popular bar band on the Carolina college circuit. "It was a band in a van with a trailer, playing a lot of fraternity parties and building a following," he recalls. "I hadn't even mixed on my first MIDAS console yet."

Fast-forward 20 years and Huelin is still at the helm for Hootie frontman Darius Rucker, working with monitor engineer Joel Stickrod. Both are mixing on the MIDAS PRO6 digital console. "I was one of the last to go digital," says Huelin. "I was always happy with my MIDAS XL4, and never heard a compelling argument to change, because none of the digital consoles sounded as good. But all that changed when I heard the MIDAS digital."

With sound quality as his primary focus, the PRO6 passed Huelin's ear test. "The MIDAS digital platform is the only one I've heard that places the proper importance on signal flow and gain structure," he asserts. "MIDAS did a great job of emulating their analog preamps, using two gain stages. The preamps and EQ are the heart and soul of the console, and they are accurate and true. It's like I never left the XL4. I just moved to something newer."

Monitor engineer Joel Stickrod is the new kid on the block, having been with Rucker for four years. "When I started with Darius, I inherited a different digital console with about 350 scenes saved, which is what it took to run a Hootie show. That certainly made it easier for me to hit the ground running," he says. "But after my first year, with Darius making the transition to country, I did the research and proposed switching to a PRO6 for monitors, which has worked out great."

The key piece of the design puzzle for Stickrod was the MIDAS DL431, a 24-channel input splitter with multiple preamps. "We have two 431s and used them as stage racks, which means Billy and I have get separate head amps we can each control from our own desk," he explains. "Both DL431s live with our backline; all we do is pull Cat5 cables. There's never a patching issue, and it really minimizes troubleshooting, because once the signal is inside the unit, it stays in the digital domain. It also makes us



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fast and efficient. We can be up and running in half an hour if we have to, and we can get offstage even faster.”

The two engineers use the flexibility of the MIDAS digital platform to suit their own mixing styles. Billy Huelin uses the system’s latency management to enable the use of his favorite outboard gear, mixing the house PA primarily from the console’s 10 VCAs. In monitor world, Joel Stickrod prefers to manage his eight IEMs and two wedge mixes via POP Groups, using the MIDAS onboard DSP engines for all his effects.

“Darius shows are pretty straightforward. I use POP Groups to navigate the console,” says Stickrod. “I really only use three – one for drums with their reverbs, one for vocals, and another for vocal effects – mainly reverbs. Those show up on the first 12 faders. My other instruments – bass, guitar, keys, dobro, etc. – are all on top, starting with channel 13. I mix everything off of one scene. Of course all that changes when it’s a Hootie show, with the band members changing instruments all the time. For that, I just rebuilt all my scenes from the old desk on the MIDAS.”

Stickrod has also found the Area B function on the PRO6 to be very useful. Area B allows the engineer to designate the four faders on the far right of the work surface to operate independently from the rest, creating an “always on top” area for either a VCA or POP Group that can be useful in a number of ways. “I use it for a couple things, like adjusting the click track for the band during the show, or for muting Darius’ acoustic guitar,” he notes. “That lets me keep Darius’ mix on the main faders.”

For Billy Huelin, the value of Area B lies in a slightly different direction. “I use the last POP Group dedicated to Darius and the three main background vocalists and route that to Area B,” he relates. “That way, no matter what I do, my money channels are always available. Nine times out of 10, Darius’ channel is the first thing I’m going to go for at the start of a show, so I really like having it there. It’s a great feature.”

Huelin is also a fan of the PRO6’s two daylight-viewable screens, the channel-strip layout, and the fact that there are ten VCAs instead of the eight found on some competing consoles. “What I found in moving to the MIDAS PRO6 is that they kept it simple, yet gave me the ability to see the entire signal flow. I’m constantly aware of what’s going on, and virtually every function is either already on top or just one click away,” he notes. “I also like the fact that the channel strip parametric EQ looks and acts like the analog version it’s emulating. It’s accurate and responsive, and behaves exactly the way my ears tell me it should. You find yourself where you want to be sonically a lot quicker, and with a lot less drama. I really enjoy that.”

But while both engineers love the layout and functionality of their PRO6 consoles, it all comes down to sound quality. “On stage, both Darius’ band and the Hootie guys loved it from day one,” says Joel Stickrod, “They noticed a huge difference in sound quality right away, and basically said, ‘why didn’t we do this last year?’”



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For Billy Huelin, the PRO6 is just a continuation of his 20-year gig mixing for Darius Rucker. “It’s been an amazing ride, and it’s great to see Darius having such success singing country,” he concludes. “He just continues to evolve as an artist and performer, just like MIDAS has evolved from analog to digital. To have this kind of success twice is an amazing thing, and it’s something I appreciate and enjoy every day.”

Darius Rucker is currently opening on Lady Antebellum’s “Own The Night” tour, and will continue with solo dates into late September.

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Editor’s information:

MIDAS live performance mixing consoles have been used by the world’s most demanding sound engineers, performers and rental companies for four decades. The company strives to raise the standards of sonic quality through its programme of continual research and development, implementing new control functionality and user-friendly desk operation to anticipate and accommodate the ever-evolving needs of audio professionals who specify MIDAS consoles for their major tours, festivals, international events, broadcast projects and prestigious fixed installations.

KLARK TEKNIK was founded in 1971 and in the years immediately following, their innovative approach to design and development allowed them to introduce some truly groundbreaking designs. KLARK TEKNIK was responsible for one of the world’s first digital delay and digital reverb units; however it was their concepts for equalisation devices that really changed the world of professional audio, resulting in the DN370 and the famous DN360. Today KLARK TEKNIK continues to bring innovation in design and dedication to engineering and sonic quality in both the analogue and digital realm of signal processing.

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