

Midas Verona

Midas serves up a larger slice of Italy with the Verona. Trevor Cronin tucks in.

Midas mixing consoles have been at the top of the heap as far as live concert sound is concerned since they were first introduced, way back in 1969. Back then, when live sound could at best be described as 'primitive', a good-sounding live mixer just was not readily available off the shelf. In the studio domain things were different with plenty of top-notch gear available. So, seeing a ready niche in the market, a bunch of the UK's top young electronics techies were assembled. The brief was: it's got to sound good, have the features required for the job at hand, and it must be ultra reliable on the road.

Fast forward some 35 years later and we still see Midas consoles used by most of the world's top engineers. It seems that Midas' original vision was spot on: quality always need to top the list of priorities in the long haul. Until the release of the Midas Venice in 2001, the high price of the Midas sound meant it was out of reach for many operators. The compact Venice

questions asked by the industry's operators. This was a very informative session to attend prior to a product review.

Snapshots of Verona

The Verona arrived from the production plant in Scotland in its factory-commissioned purple flightcase – quite a striking-looking item. The review console is the 48-channel version and two of us managed without too much difficulty to lay the case flat, remove the lid and lift it onto a platform. Midas can supply a clever tilt stand, the 'Easy Tilt', which would no doubt come highly recommended by your chiropractor.

Upon unpacking the Verona, it became immediately obvious that it is not just an upgraded Venice, but an all-new design from top to bottom. It's much larger than the Venice and has a load more features. It has the same subtly striking look of all current Midas mixes – purple and other pastel colours abound – while the colour-coding of the controls is an aspect the designers have paid quite a bit of attention to.

The console's foundation is a very strong steel chassis to which the various modular input and output sections are bolted to. In an effort to save weight, end and rear parts are made of high impact injection moulded plastic.

Module blocks feature a structural sub chassis, housing two PCBs (printed circuit boards) and are covered by a faceplate with all the channel markings. The front panel can be easily

removed with a special headed screwdriver, allowing for easy cleaning. The same fastener is used to bolt the PCBs to the chassis, so you could totally disassemble the whole unit with just the one tool.

The construction's design has eliminated the need for long ribbon cables. The aim here is to improve both reliability and crosstalk rejection and allows for very easy serviceability. Meanwhile, a new design of edge connector, a 'Lumberg', with very low electrical resistance, is used throughout the console to patch all the sections together.

The metal sub chassis provides substantial electrical screening under the PCBs, protecting buses from noise pickup. This also allows for the use of internal power supplies without interference. The PCBs are made

quickly became the company's biggest seller. Unfortunately, for some applications, the Venice was a little lacking on features, although it sounds superb. Sales to the company were lost as there was just too much of a gap between the Venice and the next model up (the Legend) in both the features set and price. Enter the Midas Verona.

John Oakley the company's MD and David Wiggins, international sales manager, introduced the Verona to the Australian audio industry at the recent Entech trade show in Sydney. The first thing they talked about was the sound quality (yep, that's pretty important for a sound engineer to hear). They discussed at length the lengths their chief designer Alex Cooper had gone to in creating this new product, and answered the many



with most of the surface mount components on the underside so that they're not as affected by dust and liquid spills. All the pots and electrolytic capacitors are mounted conventionally on the top of the board. Major circuit test points are positioned on the top of the board to simplify fault diagnosis at system level (or down to component level) while *in situ* – no test jig is required for fault finding. Air-cooling of the console's internals is carefully controlled using vents on the top and sides of the unit. Air that cools the internal PSU is isolated from entering the rest of the console.

Analogue mixing console construction sure has come a long way in the past 35 years.

Mono Eight-Input Module

A brand new high performance mic preamp design is the foundation of the input module. It can handle a massive +18dB input level without distortion. According to the company's MD this is an improved version of the classic Midas XL4 design.

The EQ section comprises a frequency-swept four-band (fixed Q) on the two mid bands, with shelving high and low frequency controls ($\pm 15\text{dB}$). There is a switched high-pass filter with sweepable frequency (20Hz to 200Hz) and an EQ Defeat button. Individual channel control features available are: phantom power button with associated red LED, mic input 15dB pad, mic phase change button and switched external insert point.

The Input level metering is looked after by a four-segment LED meter, positioned adjacent to the nicely-weighted Panasonic 100mm self-cleaning fader. These are designed to be quite resilient to liquid and dust exposure. Above the fader is the large red mute button with associated red LED. It operates a soft mute circuit with totally silent operation. This is placed above the solo button (also with an indicator LED) which helps to avoid accidental operation. Four mute groups are available with simple push-button activation. There is no computer chip logic control on this mixer.

Channel Buses

The console has eight subgroups. In addition there are three main output buses left/right and mono – you can find the relevant routing buttons above the large pan pot. Below the pan controls are a couple of buttons to engage a few neat features. First up, there is 'Groups Pan', which routes the channel signal either pre or post pan into the subgroups. This is handy for sending the signal to a multi-track recorder via the group while still having the ability to do some fancy panning work on that guitar solo! Secondly, the Master/SIS (Spatial Imaging System) button configures the pan pot to allow you to easily mix in LCR (left/centre/right) when using centre cluster speakers. With SIS engaged, pan left and signal comes out of the left master bus; pan centre and the signal comes out of only the mono bus; pan right and the signal comes out the right bus. Pan between these settings and the signal comes out of left (or right) and

centre in varying degrees. To get a signal into L/R & C, disengage SIS and route into all three via the group selection buttons.

Auxiliary Sends

Eight aux sends are provided. Six of the eight aux sends are globally switchable pre/post fade on an individual send basis on the output section. Aux 7&8 are individually switchable pre/post fade and, peculiarly, these pots have a lighter feel than the other aux pots (maybe handy for low-light 'no-look' mixing?). An 'Aux EQ' defeat switch is provided, which is great when the board is being used to mix front of house as well as monitors – it allows the operator to EQ the FOH sound as much as they like without affecting the sound on stage. Next up, a bit of Midas quirkiness creeps in: positioned next to the channel EQ defeat (marked EQ On) is a button marked in big letters as EQ Off! And in small letters the legending reads 'aux pre'...

The Mono Input Channel Connectors

Round the back, the main XLR inputs use gold-plated Neutrik components and can be used with balanced mic or line level signals. The line jack is for use with balanced or unbalanced line level signals and is, of course, isolated from the 48V phantom power. The insert jack is unbalanced, wired with tip send/ring return and positioned pre EQ. The direct output jack is impedance balanced with hot on the tip and cold on the ring. The signal is post EQ but pre mute and fader (jumpers on the PCB can be used to alter this). A little point of possible confusion can be seen at the rear of the console: every input channel is marked with (positioned between the direct out and line in connectors) 'line in left (stereo only) line in right'. All good, except for the fact that the stereo channels don't have a line out. And it is totally irrelevant to mono channels, which make up the majority of the inputs. Hey chaps, why don't you just put a correctly marked sticker on the rear of the stereo channels?

Multi-Function 16 Input Module

The multi-function stereo modules are similar to their mono counterparts, but a few features are sacrificed due to space on the PCB. Eight mic inputs are still available, and can actually be used at the same time as the line-in inputs. An additional function is 'Image Control' (nothing to do with the lead singer's haircut), which removes some of the signal common to left and right by phase cancellation to give a 'wider'-sounding stereo image.

There is no direct out, however the insert point can be used as a substitute (if the insert button is out). Speaking of inserts, this only works on the mic input.

EQ control is also reduced with fixed frequency high and low filters, and high-pass is fixed at 80Hz.

You can actually custom order the console with only mono mic/line input modules or with more of the stereo 'multifunction' modules if that is more suitable for your application.





The Verona's faceplates can be removed easily to facilitate cleaning.

Output Module

This section provides an extensive array of features. At the top of the section you'll find 14-LED bargraph meters with 16 segments. The first eight are switchable between metering matrix/group and aux; the next three for Master L/Mono/R (another Midas quirk raises its head here with the master output faders [left to right] being Left/Right/Mono but the meters being Left/Mono/Right); the last three meters are on stereo and mono PFL/AFL sources.

The eight groups have the aforementioned SIS function. Fader change-over for aux and group outputs are provided for when using the console for monitor applications.

A 12-in/four-out matrix section derives its inputs from eight groups or auxes, L/R/Mono and an external source. The four external direct inputs can also be routed straight into the stereo and mono buses with a big knob for level control and an associated solo function. Two more tape inputs (using RCA connectors round the back) are also there, routable to L/R/Mono. Four mute group masters are positioned in an easily accessible spot right in the middle.

Monitoring – the PFL and stereo AFL solo system includes solo-in-place with a single headphone socket at the very front and monitor L/R and PFL outputs on the rear.

Talkback functions – there's a front-mounted XLR input for use with a goose-neck mic and external input, and output XLRs on the back panel for using balanced line level signals. A versatile sweepable tone generator is also on board. Both these functions are routable to all the module's outputs. External inserts are available on L/R/mono and the eight groups (auxs in fader change-over mode). All of the module's outputs are balanced using gold-plated XLR connectors and provide high current capability and low noise, of course!

Power Supply Units

The PSUs are current-sharing, voltage-sensing, auto-switching and, as mentioned earlier, are internally mounted, with LED metering of all voltages on the rear. This particular design saves space, as there's no need for external racks and cabling. Due to space limitations the smaller Verona 240 and 320 only come with one internal PSU. The 400 model upwards come with two internal PSUs. However, all models have a connector for an external unit. Additionally, there is a grounding post on the console's rear.

Why Analogue?

Why launch a totally new analogue console when most manufacturers are largely looking to an all-digital future? Well, the good old-fashioned way (analogue) still has some big advantages over all-digital consoles – no latency, no crashes and no glitches... all very important considerations, especially for performers using in-ear monitors. In the main, a well-designed analogue board will offer a better sound (dollar for dollar); an ergonomic control surface that is extremely fast to use (and reacts instantaneously); and a heap of input and output connection options.

I'd go as far to say that if I was fronting up to a big festival with no time for a soundcheck and I needed a board that would make the punters and the artists' management happy, I'd rather this console over anything else available – it's got just the right combination of sound quality, features and functionality. The EQ and metering is great and very accurate, it has a very intelligent set of very useable features. A padded arm rest would have been nice though.

The Verona actually feels like a full-sized Midas to work on, but it won't give recent audio engineering graduates a panic attack. And the sound of the console? Big, fat, warm and clean. In short, it sounds like a Midas. The Verona fills a niche and fills it very admirably.



Distributed by

• *EVI Audio*
 Phone: (02) 9648 3455
 Email: info@eviaudio.com.au
 Web: www.eviaudio.com.au

Price

• *The Verona comes in a range of six sizes:*
 Verona 240 (24 mic inputs): \$24,999
 Verona 320 (32 mic inputs): \$28,799
 Verona 400 (40 mic inputs): \$33,599
 Verona 480 (48 mic inputs): \$37,499
 Verona 560 (56 mic inputs): \$43,799
 Verona 640 (64 mic inputs): \$53,499
The above pricing is for the installation packages, without accessories. Verona can be shipped as a touring package that includes flight case, Littlites and dustcover. Both packages include a three-year global warranty.