

Artistic licence

Taking its long experience in audio consoles and its considerable investment in digital control has allowed Euphonix to bring powerful control surfaces within the reach of a new generation of studios

THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND

Euphonix's recently released Artist Series of control surfaces have been in development since around 2002 when the company made the strategic decision to extend the ability of its mixing consoles' control facilities into 'the outside world'. A paradigm shift saw the perception of a digital mixing console as a self-contained system (with a control surface and back-end comprised of a DSP core, router, monitoring system and I/O) change to that of a number of separate elements, could each related to equipment outside of its own system.

'The System 5 is a complete mixing system, as was our earlier CS series of consoles and as are all analogue consoles,' says Euphonix VP of marketing Andrew Wild. 'Nowadays, practically every music and audio post project involves a DAW and software such as Pro Tools, Logic Pro or Nuendo, which can replace the traditional digital back-end with a Mac or a PC. We wanted to be able to control these applications but to control them intelligently and responsively, which meant using high-speed Ethernet rather than Midi.'

Going further back, the company foresaw the need to have a hardware control surface to integrate with DAW applications that work on the 'studio in a box' model ('The keyboard and mouse are not the best way to control 48 faders,' laughs Mr Wild) Euphonix felt that it was possible to design a control surface that would directly benefit the interaction between the user and the music being produced.

The company had already invested considerable R&D in its EuCon high-speed Ethernet based control protocol, which – until this point – was used to allow the Euphonix system elements to communicate very quickly and efficiently. In 2002, the company began to work closely with Steinberg and then Apple to extend the reach of EuCon to their DAWs. 'We were looking for

total integration,' Mr Wild says.

'We wanted our console surfaces to feel as if they were part of the application.

'When you design a DAW control surface as opposed to a mixing console, you need to help and speed up the work of the user during editing and track building process and so we needed to work around the Qwerty keyboard, which is an essential part of the set-up. Hence we designed the MC Pro using our System 5 channel strips to provide a standalone controller and a complete DAW recording/editing/mixing solution that we called the System 5-MC. Effectively, the MC Pro becomes the centre section of the console.'

The key to the exercise was expanding the proprietary nature of EuCon. 'We could never have done this over Midi,' Mr Wild counters. 'It's way too slow and does not have the intelligence necessary to make a surface work with an application – features such as high-resolution 5.1 metering on the console, EQ curves, intelligent display of track information and so on. EuCon solves all that, and it can work with any application, not just a DAW. Integration of the MC Pro and the Artist Series with video edit applications such as Final Cut Pro prove that point.'

With products to market in 2005 using EuCon as their control protocol, the Euphonix R&D team was confident that it was capable of providing a professional level of integration, and had wanted to take the principle to the personal studio market for some time. The key was to get EuCon integration working 100 per cent with a couple of major applications. 'We learnt a lot about DAW and video application control from this process and this experience allowed us to design the new Artist Series,' Mr Wild explains. 'In reality, the MC Mix is a compact, affordable version of our System 5 eight-fader module, and MC Control is simply an affordable version of the MC Pro – affordable for the personal studio.



Demonstration of the Euphonix Artist Series control surface at the recent Namm show

So for very little money you can have a very powerful professional controller that allows you to get the most out of your home studio. With a EuCon aware application such as Logic Pro or Cubase the integration is total – the Artist Series and the application work as one.'

The Artist Series is targeted at the personal studio and is capable of speeding and extending the working process with audio and video projects. Because of its professional feature set, it also fits well with any professional facility that uses Macintosh computers for creative output. MC Mix is now a fit with any audio application and MC Control will work really well in music and video applications. Its most important feature is the ability to integrate with any application via high-speed Ethernet – at 250 times the speed and eight times the resolution of Midi. It is also 'intelligent', so it switches its surface to match the application in focus (Euphonix has a patent pending for this). The design brief also recognised the practical differences between top-flight commercial (or private) recording studios and smaller 'feeder' rooms, project facilities and home set-ups – primarily that of space. The slim design of the Artist Series allows it to be positioned between a keyboard and monitor screen, which is also the ergonomically perfect place for it.

Behind the development project were some of Euphonix's top men – Andrew Wild and company CEO Martin Kloiber had hands-on roles. To them it was more than a



Artist Series display



The Artist Series system working set-up



The MC control screen



The Artist Series' slim-line control surface

business initiative as both have a close relationship with music and postproduction, and recognised the opportunity open to the company. 'Like myself, Martin has very strong feelings about improving the user experience with DAWs and video edit applications,' says Mr Wild. 'Bringing the Artist Series to market has opened up a whole new world. The first positive consequence is that we are now working with several high-profile companies that want to include EuCon control into their products – Apple, Steinberg, Cakewalk, Merging Technologies and Apogee, to name just a few. This also has a knock-on effect with our professional line of products, which now all benefit from much higher integration with a larger pool of media applications.'

Along with the vision exercised by Mr Wild, Mr Kloiber and the rest of the Euphonix development team, it is the 20-year history of Euphonix that has provided the experience and technical knowledge to bring the Artist Series to fruition. Reflecting the dynamic nature of the pro audio business, the success that Euphonix has enjoyed in the professional market has been brought down in scale – both physically and financially – and introduced to the project studio market. 'We were able to distil/translate the professional features and technology of our MC Pro – our professional DAW controller – into the Artist Series for the home studio end-user,' Mr Wild agrees. 'Moreover, the profile Euphonix enjoys in the high-end console market allowed us to benefit from our heritage and branding as well as our client base.'

When it made its debut at the US Namm show in January, the Artist Series attracted more than its share of the attention from show attendees and media. Tellingly, internet bloggers have also picked up on the development, suggesting that it has registered on the radar of its intended audience. By the end of the show, five further software developers had approached Euphonix regarding the integration of EuCon into their DAW applications.

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the perfect mix...



...of form and function

The new MC Control brings the unparalleled speed, resolution and DAW integration of Euphonix' high-end professional consoles to your studio in a revolutionary, slim-line design. The high-resolution, customizable touchscreen and ergonomic controls

let you effortlessly navigate and edit your projects without ever touching a mouse, and place everything from simple keystroke commands to complex custom macros at your fingertips to deliver an unmatched editing and mixing experience.

multimedia
international
award
m.i.p.a.
Best Recording Hardware
winner 2008


reddot design award
winner 2008



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