

North South East West

Surround Sound Is Finding More Market Directions

by Wayne Dolnick

When you head out on the road in uncharted territory, the smart accessory is the road map. While this seems like common sense not everyone follows a path, straight or variegated, as planned. Most of us road warriors are too smart, or too stubborn, to use a map. In the business world of today, if you are not following a road map you are either extremely decisive and successful in your "gut" directions or on a path to a serious road block.

In the world of surround sound, engineers have blazed many a path, and driven down many a road only to change direction to what they hope will be our road map to the current and future use of surround sound in all walks of life.

Case in point comes from the early '70s, when JVC, Pioneer, RCA and others were drawing a map that put our lives in Quadrophonic and all the iterations of '70s surround. Where did all these competing formats go? Fast forward to almost 2006 and let's look at where surround is today. I am sure everyone reading this knows of 5.1 Dolby, THX and DTS surround and most likely the advent of 7.1 formats and the recently introduced but lesser known 10.1, but how many of us really install this today, or even enjoy the variations? Well, in search of the

truth we asked many industry executives for their opinions, comments and business plans.

If you are installing or retrofitting a boardroom today that holds between six and 60 executives, the likelihood is very high that a professional surround processor or even a "prosumer" receiver is the control center. Given the current gamut of options, the end-user has the ability to play back a company video and or presentation in 5.1 Dolby, 5.1 THX, 5.1 DTS, DTS ES, 6.1, 5.1a, Dolby II and about a dozen other variants and proprietary room themes. Are the executives utilizing these options and how and what is being recorded in surround? When we are talking of learning centers, the question becomes even more difficult to nail down.

Source products today from professional audio firms like Lexicon allow for the use of multi-setup scenarios, which on the cover might not seem like much, but in actuality can be a very useful, time-saving tool when multiple users and uses are involved. Case in point would be a PowerPoint presentation using a Lexicon algorithm for stereo vocals at 9:00 a.m. and another marketing meeting at 10:30 a.m. in surround. Both can be preset in the Lexicon MC-12 to prevent connection anxieties in front of the new boss. Of course you can do

this with another brand of pre-pro, but manually in most cases each time. What I found interesting about the MC-12, besides the audio qualities, is the ability to name a function button anything, up to eight characters, after the input jack has been picked and assigned. You can put the digital co-ax feed into jack #4, assign it as the DVD input, on auto-signal sense, and then label it "sales" if you wanted, or just source.

The important questions we are faced with are where is surround headed and should we recommend it to our clients? As Apple moves into updated, flash recording, with the recent simultaneous launch of the iPod Nano and the first ever Apple based cell phone, is AAC, MP3 and WAV file use something to contend with, accept and embrace or do we just move on? What does this have to do with surround? In the world of music making, yes the real world of recording and mixing, the consensus seems to be audio, as in high quality audio, is the desired objective. A group of recording engineers called a press conference last January at the Studio@Home Show within CES, to send the loud and clear message that Dolby, DTS, DVD-A, SACD, or Dual Disc, are not the questions, but part of the solution! Collectively, Phil Ramone, Rory Kaplan, George Massenburg and

the rest of the META organization stated that they are fully behind surround sound, no matter what the format! (And collectively they have mixed the majority of the better discs in your collection!)

So we go back to the map where our choices are up or down, left or right and the answer is, we have to follow this path to the end. Surround is prevalent right now and surround is in our future. Guiding our clients to build rooms that utilize surround equipment, and embracing the technology of "envelope" sound, should

(continued on page 71)

Surround Content Creation

To really get into surround creation, look no further than two of the giants in audio whose products stretch from project inception to completion, on out through to the end-consumer. Tascam and Yamaha are making major advances in surround sound. "I think surround sound is just about to become the big deal they said it would be a few years ago," says Marsh Gooch, national marketing manager for TASCAM. "We've been making products for surround sound for a while now, and I think our DS-M71 digital monitoring surround controller will really catch fire now."

Yamaha's recent acquisition of Steinberg from Pinnacle allows the company to offer a complete hardware and software surround solution for music production. At Yamaha, surround is the starting point. "From the 01v96 to the THX approved 02r96, our digital mixing consoles were designed with surround in mind," says Yamaha's Athan Billias director of marketing, technology products.

He adds, "Both Yamaha and Steinberg believe that surround sound is a critical growth area for the music production field." With the advent of Steinberg Cubase SX and Nuendo support, native-based surround sound mixing is possible. "Now with the release of Cubase 3.1, it is even possible to add the DTS and Dolby encoders to Cubase SX for delivery of encoded projects in a cost-effective DAW platform." Yamaha recently released a set of add-on effects for its digital mixers that are specifically targeted to surround sound applications and its new HS line of speakers allow customers the ability to put together cost effective 5.1 and 7.1 speaker systems. "All of these things point to the fact that we believe surround sound music production in home and project studios will continue to grow significantly in the next few years," says Billias.

—W.D.

We Got You Surrounded

Listen For Surround Sound Throughout History

by Steve Olszewski

There are two basic types of audio people: two-channel purists and the rest of the world. To write about the two-channel people of the world would require opening a full-time threaded internet discussion board to handle all the grousing about how others just don't get it; something I just don't have the wherewithal to do. So, if you are an immovable two-channel aficionado sitting in your favorite listening chair, perfectly aligned between your two speakers, I'll leave you alone now with your \$120K per pair Wilson Audio robot-style transducers to enjoy Vivaldi.

Ok, now that those folks have left

the room, let's get down to some real audio fun; surround sound. Surround sound is that explosion enveloping you in the theater. It's also the scary glass breaking from behind you that makes you tingle. Or perhaps it's applause, or the violin section, or a dog barking. The cool thing about surround sound is that if it's properly created and reproduced, our senses are compelled to appreciate the total experience more fully, whether it is a movie, music video or live concert.

Surround sound may seem to be a recent phenomenon, especially since DVDs and home theaters have become popular, but in reality, movie surround sound goes all

the way back to the 1940s when Walt Disney had his visual epiphany and created the stunning cartoon classic *Fantasia*.

Walt's audio vision for *Fantasia* included not just live orchestras, but also dedicated sound systems that toured with the film. These sound systems consisted of three mono optical film sound tracks (and a control track) that played to not only left, center and right channel speakers, but also house left and house right speakers derived from the screen left and right channels. In other words, a surround system.

Surround sound in music playback goes pretty far back as well. In

(continued on page 70)

October 2005

Virginia Sports Museum Plays And Runs In Surround

PORTSMOUTH, VA—The Virginia Sports Hall of Fame and Museum has installed a new SLS loudspeakers system in its new 125-seat multi-media theater. The 5.1 surround speakers are designed for clear and superior sound quality throughout the museum's intro theater, which plays a pre-recorded show every half hour.

Randy Vaughn, president of AE Systems (formerly Ambassador Enterprises) and president of NSCA, worked with the design team, spearheading the audio design and installation. "We recommended the SLS HT1800 series because we knew it would give the complete theater experience. The sound detail is amazing, especially with the incredible bass and high end."



The HT1800 series consists of five HT28R speakers and two PSS12 subwoofers. The HT28R is a dual-woofer version of the HT8R

and is recommended for use when high output is a requirement. The additional 8-inch woofer makes the HT28R well-suited for commercial

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sound or larger home theater installations. The PSS12 provides a ground-shaking bass, powered by a built-in 300-watt amplifier. The 12-inch subwoofer has a very smooth and flat response to well below 30 Hz. Complete with a selectable and defeatable crossover, low and high level inputs, and feed-through connections, the PSS12 produces warm and musical low frequencies.

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SURROUND DIRECTION

(continued from page 68)

be a high priority. After all, with history as a teacher, look no further than the audio change from 78s to LPs and from mono to stereo "long-play."

With the increase in software and hardware solutions, from the desktop to the studio, to produce anything in surround, further proof is given to the direction of surround today. Especially when the prices put these options within reach of the masses. We have our PowerPoint, Adobe Premiere Pro and Photoshop CS2 programs that allow anyone with some basic computer skills to edit not just video, but create an audio and video experience.

Since a MB of HD storage costs less than \$1 from firms like Western Digital, Maxtor and Seagate, storage of all these large, multi-track files is affordable not just to the large corporation looking to store multiple presentations that may include 20 minutes of digitally recorded surround, but also to the upstart trying to make a mark. Now keeping your complete audio and video on a drive is easier than ever. Building a room today for presentations, conferences or education must include provision for surround sound.

Adam Castillo, director of marketing at M-Audio states, "Surround

sound technology is certainly within the reach of serious audio professionals, but surround encoding can be cost prohibitive for entry-level end users and most musicians. The future growth of surround depends on our ability to make the technology more accessible." To enable anyone with a computer to produce, edit and distribute media in surround, M-Audio's release of the LX4

expandable surround sound monitoring system was a first step. They continue to push the technology downstream, allowing for the ability to produce, edit and distribute media in surround affordably.

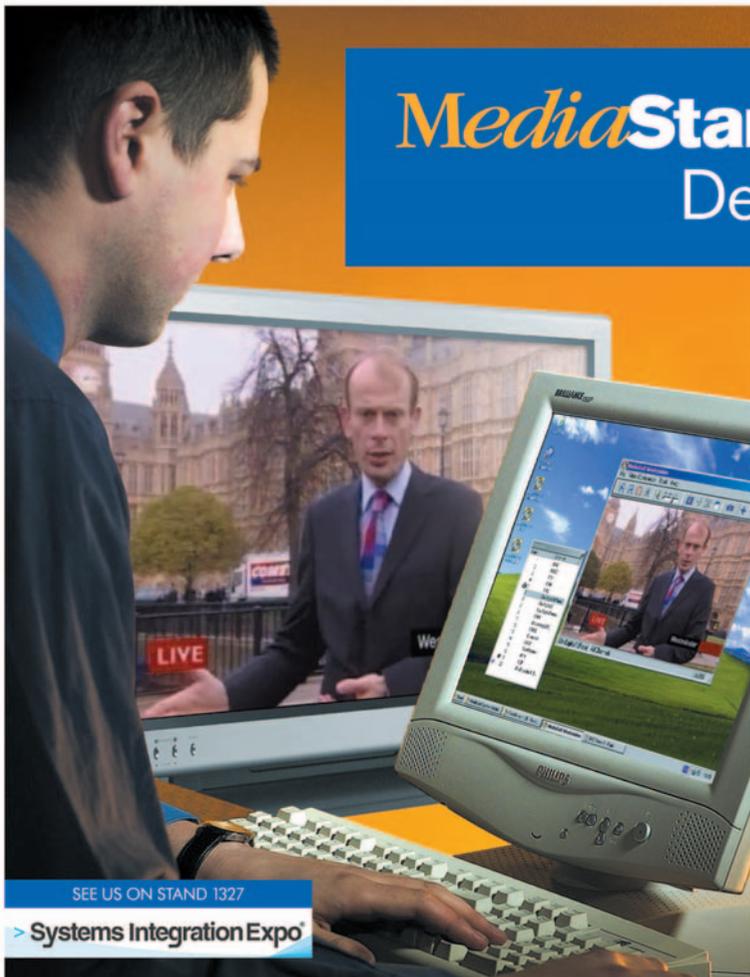
From the delivery side of things, Hagai Gefen, of Gefen states, "Cat-5 cable enables a true surround sound experience without the hassles of expensive re-wiring. If I were

to speculate, I would say that future developments will likely explore methods of extension that rely on point-to-point transmissions independent of cabling."

Wayne Dolnick (proaudionow@verizon.net) is president of Pro Audio Now, a sales and marketing firm. He is a consultant to the AES show and a co-organizer of the pro-show at CES.

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