

RSS REAC SYSTEM

The RSS digital snake system has always been flexible, and the introduction of some new hardware options has opened up even more options for users.

By JIMMY DEN-LOUDEN

The RSS Digital Snake system is based around their REAC driven digital audio transfer protocol, introduced to the market a couple of years back. The M-400 mixer and M-48 personal mixers followed soon after. The most recent additions to the line are the M-380 rack mount mixer, S-4000M REAC Merge unit, and S-0808 I/O unit.

THE MIXER

The M-380 will seem very familiar to M-400 users – the layout is virtually the same. The M-380 is a 48 channel mixer with 18 busses and 8 matrixes. It supports Stereo and LCR modes. The mixer has 8 on-board mic/line level inputs, plus a talkback mic input – all have phantom power capability. There's also an unbalanced stereo input on RCA connectors. 8 line level balanced outputs are on XLR connectors., and a headphone output, Coax and Optical digital outputs, and of course the usual array of RJ45 REAC ports finish the package. The M-380 uses the same mix engine as the M-400, and runs at either 44.1 or 48 kHz. Typical latency is quoted as 2.8 mS from I/O box input to output.

Access to most features is achieved by pressing the "DISPLAY" button located adjacent to the feature, then using the context sensitive softkeys beneath the display. There's a set of navigation arrows and a big rotary encoder. Patching setup is pretty easy too – there's a dedicated key and the matrix style layout is self explanatory. There's even a "sends on fader" function, or you can use the rotary encoder adjacent to the aux bus selector buttons.

Really, the obvious differences here are



size and the number of faders. Unlike the M-400, the M-380 is rack mountable, and there are 12 faders (plus master fader) on the surface (rather than 24). 6 page/bank keys swap between inputs 1-48 and output faders for the mix and matrix busses. There are also 6 "user definable" pages, onto which you can place input, output, effect return or DCA faders in whatever order pleases you best. Really, the M-380 makes about as much sense as the M-400, which is a lot. All the stuff you need is easy to find and get to, and it works well.

THE NEW I/O KIT

The S-0808 is the baby of the family in terms of REAC I/O units. It's an 8 input, 8 output box. Inputs 5-8 have TRS connectors in addition to the XLRs, and inputs 7-8 can be switched to high impedance mode to allow direct connection of instruments. 8 inputs doesn't seem like a whole lot, but keep in mind that you can use more

than one unit. The S-0808 runs on 12-18v DC, delivered via a 4 pin XLR. Co-incidentally that's the same power supply a broadcast camera uses...

Alternatively, you can power it over the same Cat5 cable that carries the REAC connection. This is where the S-4000M comes into play – 4x powered REAC ports connect to the S-0808 units to allow up to 32 inputs and 4x 8 outputs to be combined into a single REAC port. That single port then connects to the mixer, and is treated as a 32 input, 8 output device. Channel numbers on the S-0808 units are defined by which port you connect them to. There's a helpful diagram on the top of the S-4000M box to tell you how it all works. You can even connect an S-1608 I/O unit instead. The 8 outputs are common on all the boxes – ie: whatever you route to output 1 appears on output 1 on all boxes.

The brilliant thing about the S-0808 is that it's small. Spreading several of these around a stage (or even a venue) would

save you running subtrunks. You run Cat5 cable instead, which is considerably cheaper than multicore copper. Take it a step further, and consider that the cable cost is so negligible that you could leave the cable permanently installed if you planned to go back to do another gig in the venue.

FINAL WORDS

Where will it stop? Perhaps when the folks at RSS run out of good ideas, though it may be a while yet. The new additions to the REAC based range of products are solid, and make the technology accessible and useful to more users. The system is compatible with the rest of the gear in the range, and they've even held onto the EtherCon connectors which is nice. The gear is well built, and it works how it's supposed to. The biggest challenge the system faces is not an operational or functional one – it's simply one of perception.

BRAND: RSS

Model: M-380 Mixer, S-4000M REAC

Merge unit, S-0808 8x8 I/O unit

RRP: M380: \$11995, S4000M: \$2995,

S-0808: \$2495

Product Info: <http://rolandcorp.com.au>

Distributor: <http://rolandcorp.com.au>



The M380 jams the M400's controllability into a smaller footprint.