

Soundcraft Si Performer

Now you can make the band sound more purple...



BY JIMMY DEN-ODEN

Some years ago while working as the solo in-house venue tech, I decided I wanted to control lighting and audio from one console. I got a MIDI cable and some manuals and bought myself a world of frustration. It never worked real well. Now Soundcraft comes to the rescue, with the mixing console which does lights as well.

The Si Performer is based on the Si Compact series, and carries the same familiar feeling. Make no mistake the Si Performer is first and foremost a mixing console, the lighting functionality is secondary, playing second fiddle. The cool thing is that second fiddle is well integrated with the first.

You can assign any of the onboard 24 mic preamps, 8 line inputs and 4 stereo effects to the 80 mix channels which are spread across 4 fader layers. 14 auxiliaries plus 4 matrix mixes are available. The first eight aux busses are fixed as mono, while the remaining six can be switched to stereo (as can the matrix busses). Channels can be switched individually to pre/post fader mode as well as globally per send. The first press on the mix buttons for the matrix busses shows you the 14 aux/groups. The next press takes you to a page where you can add L&R, Right only, and Mono to the matrix. I'm not sure why it's on a separate page – it would have all fit on a single layer.

There are some limitations on the way you can structure the console. If you want to use a stereo input channel you can't select a pair of mic inputs – but an AES or line input



Almost anything you like can be assigned to any fader on the audio layers

pair is fine. The console automatically chooses adjacent pairs, but this isn't a major problem. You can't mix to a matrix from a channel – only from other mix busses. The stereo output can only be assigned to 2 sets of outputs simultaneously – the same goes for other outputs. Again, this is annoying but you could get around it by using a stereo matrix. Really all this stuff comes down to the question of “does it need to be able to do everything at once, all the time?”. The limitations imposed certainly aren't going to be obstacles for practical operation of this desk within its intended market sector.

Four Lexicon effects are included, each with its own mix bus and return. Back panel connectivity includes the 24 mic inputs, 8 TRS line inputs, AES in and out, wordclock input and 16 analogue XLR outputs. An Ethernet port allows connection to the console remotely via either computer or iPad app. Finally there's a 5 pin XLR DMX port.

Additional audio I/O connectivity comes via the expansion slots which can accept a variety of cards including Cat5 and Optical MADI. This allows for connectivity to the remote stage rack, providing additional inputs. The “auto-complete” function allows you to patch one channel then the next 7 successive ones with a single button. This is a good timesaver, and really illustrates that the console has been designed with live users in mind. All told you can assign 64 mic channels to the surface, with the remainder being stereo inputs and effect returns.

Some nice touches are included on this console – for instance when you assign a channel to LR and C it automatically goes into LCR mode. Using the touchscreen to get to channel input settings, you can then adjust the stereo width to add centre panned channels to LR. Nothing is ever more than one or two screens away at most, so again it's quick to operate. The on-screen keyboard is small but workable enough – plugging in the USB keyboard from desktop didn't work. Not surprising really – if you need a full-size keyboard use the remote software.





See the light

Pressing the ALT button while pressing a layer select button takes you to one of four DMX layers. Think of it like a four preset lighting board. Each layer controls the same 22 DMX addresses, starting at address 1. For each fader there is a master fader, which can then be replicated onto any of the audio layers. So basically you can set-up four lighting scenes and cross fade between them.

The Si Performer quickly sorts the lighties from the soundies, who by default push the lighting faders to unity (which is actually about



90% lighting intensity). 100% is at the top of the fader. It sounds funny, but the difference in mentality is really obvious! I'd like to see a menu choice to have 100% intensity at the unity fader position. Julius reckons beyond this it should drive the lights to 110% (Gronk!). The channel ON buttons become flash buttons in lighting mode. Console states (audio and lighting) are recorded into "cues", which can be triggered using buttons above the master faders. The console allows you to edit cues to define LX fade times. Just about every function on the console can be "isolated" from scene recall – this only seems to affect recall of such functions – I isolated lighting functions and they still stored okay in a cue. Once de-isolated, the LX state recalled fine.

New security features have been included in the current Si Compact & Performer software release. These allow definition of multiple users and very specific control over exactly what each user can do. This was one of our earlier gripes about the early Si Compact – it's really nice to see it's been so well addressed.

USB support is included for storing and recalling shows, so it's easy to get the console back to where it's supposed to be. So far as how it sounds, our expectation is that if it follows in the footsteps of the Si Compact then it will be great. I'm taking it to a gig this weekend to validate the theory, and I plan on not only mixing but also lighting the band. Pretty cool stuff.

The Si Performer is going to do really well in small environments where novice users are in control, or there's not much real-estate for a control position. The console itself is still as easy as ever to use, and the lighting functionality just adds another dimension to an already very worthwhile product.

Both thumbs up.



BRAND: SOUNDCRAFT
 MODEL: SI PERFORMER 2
 RRP: \$10,995 INC GST FOR THE
 CONSOLE. \$5,995 FOR 32X16 SI
 COMPACT STAGEBOX.
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.SOUNDCRAFT.COM
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.JANDS.COM.AU

The Followup...

- I took the Si Performer to the gig.
- I mixed 3 bands (FOH and a couple of monitor sends).
- I lit them at the same time.
- I used cue lists.
- I used reverbs.
- I smacked the pre-amps on the head just to find out what would happen. They survived, so did the mix.
- I didn't need a lesson to use it.

The gig was a roaring success, and I really enjoyed not having to manually recall stuff off crib sheets between bands. It all worked how I expected it to, and more importantly how I wanted it to.

This is a console I'd happily use any day, for almost any application.

We just raised the bar on quality hand made custom cable assemblies



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