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Single Aura 8-IP Handles Northeast Cluster

Multichannel processor takes the load for Neversink's group

USERREPORT

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PORT JERVIS, N.Y. — Radio in 2012: Gone are the days of one simple audio path from console to processor to STL and transmitter.

Back then, your talent listened off-air and your concern was just keeping the one analog AM or FM signal on the air. With consolidation and the advent of digital transmission, your one analog AM or FM signal is now a group of five stations broadcasting an analog signal with up to three HD channels along with streams for the analog and HD channels. That can add up to 20 different pipes for content delivery.

And then, of course, each of those needs processing, and the jocks need their own processing now since they can't monitor off the air because of the delay. Add in PPM encoders and decoders and your racks are suddenly overflowing with gear.

MULTICHANNEL

Neversink Media Group operates three FM and two AM signals out of our facilities in Port Jervis, N.Y. We are right at the confluence of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania (where the Catskills end and the Poconos begin ... or vice versa!). Two of the FMs are translators for the AMs, and we have a full service FM that serves the Poconos down in Stroudsburg, Pa.



Each station needed STL protection as well as processing for streams. Rack space was tight so the thought of adding additional processing boxes to do the job was not something I was looking forward to. "Inexpensive" 1RU processing that could manage all of this started at \$1,600 per box and I was looking at the need for at least six to eight processors. On the other side of the equation, using tired old analog processing

from the '80s was not an alternative.

Neversink uses Audioarts consoles in the facility and I happened across another product made by Wheatstone that grabbed my attention: the Aura8-IP. It was a 1RU unit that could process eight individual audio sources. At first, I thought it was too good to be true, and had to be severely stripped down. I was wrong.

It can be a standalone box or can be



deployed as part of a full-blown AoIP WheatNet-IP system. The processing inside the Aura8-IP consists of a three-band AGC and compressor and a three-band limiter. I was using a Wheatstone processor on one of my FMs already and had been very pleased with the audio, so I decided to take a look at the Aura8-IP for my streaming and pre-processing needs.

The Aura8-IP was pretty simple to set up. I connected with the Aura GUI that came with it and was quickly familiar with the interface without having to look at the manual. There are six controls for each of the eight processors — AGC drive, compressor, density and loudness, as well as separate bass and treble controls. Factory presets include everything from gentle gain

riding for STL protection to a very processed sound for talent headphones.

Presets are well organized by category and it's easy to pick what you want just based on the preset names. The six sound controls can quickly add or subtract from the factory preset and dialing in the sound is very easy from there. The GUI shows metering for each of the paths going through the device, and the different processors can be selected from the tabs along the top of the GUI. Inputs and outputs are a mix of analog and digital, and an analog input can feed a digital output ... another pleasant surprise.

The audio has an analog texture without the harshness you get from some digital processors. I like the fact that the Aura8-IP uses lookahead limiting over clipping for

streaming. The streaming audio has good artifact management even at lower bitrates and we've received many compliments about our streams.

The best part is that it is a part of the WheatNet-IP Blade system, so as we upgrade our facilities to an IP-based network the Aura8-IP will fit right in.

In conclusion, I'm very pleased with the audio quality of our signals and streams. Coupled with the time and rack space I've saved using the Aura8-IP, I feel this has been one of the best purchasing decisions I have made.

For information, contact Jay Tyler at Wheatstone in North Carolina at (252) 638-7000 or visit www.wheatstone.com.