



The Evolution of Audio Monitoring

Decades ago, the method most commonly used to check audio at various stages in the transmission chain was to route the signal to an amplifier and a small, poor quality speaker propped up on top of the rack. These days, loudspeakers are often built into rack-mounting monitoring and measurement products, and the audio quality is light years ahead of that decades-old method.



TSL AVM-T-MIX

ACOUSTIC QUALITY

According to Martin Dyster, audio business development manager for U.K.-based TSL, the company has benefited from expert design assistance with some of its products. "They have been designed in cooperation with a company that we just acquired, Celtic Audio, and John Watkinson, one of the founders. John was instrumental in designing some of the enclosures, particularly on the AMU1-CHD+, the PAM1 and the PAM2 range, and the AMU1-3G," he reported.

Despite the effort, commented Dyster, "It's interesting to note that our push towards getting audio quality into small enclosures is not always appreciated. Acoustic quality is not something that is particularly important to some customers. Sometimes they just need to know that audio is present. You're not supposed to use [these products] for mixing program."

That said, "We do strive, particularly in the mid- to high-end product range, towards as high a quality as we can possibly get given the restraints of the enclosure," he added. And although these products are often little more than confidence monitors, "Some of our monitoring units end up in post production, where they're the only means of monitoring."

And some clients do need mix capabilities. TSL's brand new AVM-T-MIX, reportedly the world's first rackmounting touch screen-controlled audio mixer/monitor, incorporates a 4-way speaker system plus mixing functionality.

"The launch is being supported by a very large order from the BBC for their Manchester studios," Dyster revealed. "The fact that it has speakers onboard has been a considerable positive for the customer as they've dispensed with external speakers in many applications."

DOWNMIXING

TSL's mid- to high-end products are designed for multichannel environments, and as such typically include downmixing to the two speaker channels. "An ability to do a downmix, whether it's derived from Dolby metadata or from algorithms, is important," said Dyster.

On the new AVM-T-MIX, Dyster continued, "You can define channels as being 5.1, LCR, dual stereo, or multiple mono, derived from SDI, analog or AES. You can downmix and mix them together."