

PRO AUDIO REVIEW

Gear & Software Reviews For The End-User

REPRINTED FROM OCTOBER 2005

WWW.PROAUDIOREVIEW.COM

Live

BY ANDREW ROBERTS

During my time in the audio trade, I have come to recognize Lectrosonics as one of the audio industry's top wireless manufacturers. Some of my friends in broadcast audio have hurled so many Lectro accolades at me that I am starting to wonder when I'll see a tattoo with of the company's four-ring logo show up on their bodies. Indeed, I too have found Lectro products to be remarkably competent and reliable in nearly all situations. Therefore, I was very curious to examine the company's new Venue system that features multiple receivers in a rackmounted chassis with Digital Hybrid Technology.

FEATURES

The system I received for evaluation is based around the Venue receiver chassis (VRM) and it came equipped with three (out of a possible six) receiver modules. The modules, which operate on any one of 256 channels and must be within the VRM's frequency block, install in two rows of three on each end of the

Fast Facts

Applications:

Sound reinforcement, live sound, installation

Key Features:

Digital Hybrid Technology; up to six receiver modules per chassis; 256 channels.

Price:

VRM - \$1,205, VRS receiver modules - \$329, SM - \$1,650, LM - \$665, UT400VM - \$1,607

Contact:

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Lectrosonics Venue Wireless System



unit and are held in place with clips. The VRM incorporates Lectro's Digital Hybrid Wireless technology. This technology eliminates the need for companding (and all its associated artifacts) while still operating over traditional FM frequencies (utilizing the excellent range characteristics).

The system has some other interesting features too. In addition to the six-channel modular configuration and the Digital Hybrid technology, the system has "zero-gain" antenna amplifiers that allow internal distribution and pass through to other VRM units. The system also has features like DSP control (with associated software), a DSP pilot tone, backwards compatibility with Lectro 100, 200 and IFB series units, smart noise reduction, clear frequency scanning, headphone monitoring, smart diversity switching and much more.

The chassis itself measures one rack space high. The front panel features a power switch, an LCD display, function buttons, receiver selection buttons (to access control/display of

any of the six modules), a rotary menu select control, a headphone jack and phones volume control. The rear of the VRM has six XLR outs (one for each module), an RS-232 port, BNC antenna in and out jacks pairs, and a USB port.

The transmitters shipped with my review unit were the SM super-miniature beltpack, the UT400 handheld, and the LM full-sized beltpack. All these transmitters also belong to the Digital Hybrid Wireless family. Elements used with the beltpack transmitters included a Countryman Isomax E6 headworn omni and a Lectro M152 lavalier omni. The UT400VM came with Lectro's VariMic element that is an electret with a cardioid pattern. It is also available with an AKG C5900 hypercardioid (also with the VariMic preamp). The VariMic preamp has a three-band EQ and 15 dB attenuator.

IN USE

Compared to other current RF gear I've used, this system requires a little more studying

before jumping into a working environment. That's the downside. The upside is that this receiver and the companion transmitters have nearly every conceivable feature necessary for professional use. Heck, there are six choices for battery level monitoring alone! Because I didn't have any theatrical or broadcast gigs during the brief period I was loaned the VRM system, I wasn't able to use the Isomax with a bodypack in a gig. Nevertheless, I must say that it sounded great with both the SM and LM transmitters. In fact, I thought that this system is remarkably transparent sounding (regardless of the transmitter) and should satisfy discriminate users.

Because the system uses an FM carrier, one must have clear operating frequencies and fre-

quency compatibility. With its comprehensive scan function and some attention to frequency block compatibility, it is easy to establish multichannel productions in hostile environments.

I used the UT400VM as a vocal mic for a local band working the special event circuit. I thought the element and radio sounded wonderful. It yielded a full-bodied sound with lots of detail. I did pull the head and roll the bass attenuator back a bit to compensate for the singer's deep, bass-filled voice. When push came to shove and the band started rocking, I wished I had the hypercardioid element since the cardioid seemed to be fielding some peripheral noise (horns, drums, etc). Dropouts or RF hits were nonexistent during my use of the system.

SUMMARY

No surprise here. Lectrosonics has created another group of very capable high-performance products. If reliability echoes other products from their roster, this VRM/400 system is destined for wide acceptance throughout the pro audio world. I was particularly impressed with the SM transmitter for (a) its remarkably small size, (b) the unit's sonic quality, and (c) its level of adjustment despite the size. With surprisingly affordable pricing there are few reasons not to consider the VRM/400 system for your wireless needs. I'll keep looking for one of those tattoos.

Andrew Roberts is a sound reinforcement and recording engineer.

