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**Austin City Limits Anchors its Live Recording and Post-Production Capabilities with Solid State Logic System T Broadcast Audio Production Platform**

*"We're going to bring more clients in than we currently do, especially for the high-end quality recordings that they could get in the process"*

**Austin, Texas, July 13, 2023 — As Austin City Limits prepares for its 49th season, which will air on PBS stations across the U.S. in fall 2023, the production has upgraded its live music recording and post production equipment with the Solid State Logic System T broadcast audio platform. The new System T is the first mixing platform to be installed in 22 years in the audio control room at the 2,750-capacity Austin City Limits Live at The Moody Theater (ACL Live) venue, the show’s permanent home. The system comprises a 48-fader S500m console and dual TE1 Tempest Engines with a variety of Network I/O interfaces providing microphone preamps, multi-format connectivity and A-D/D-A conversion.**

“This is a major step for the show. It's going to put us in the 21st century, as well as up our audio game quite a bit,” says Randall Reynolds, Audio Supervisor for ACL, which is produced for PBS by KLRU-TV and is the longest-running music show in the history of U.S. television. During the decision-making process, he says, “One of the selling points for us during the demo was the mic pre’s. These are the best that there are. We're super stoked about this desk.”

**Pristine performance for live, recording or streaming**  
The first performance recorded through the new S500 console, a show in late April by MUNA, a Los Angeles-based electro-pop band, was tracked via the production’s transformer splitter and exclusively through System T’s microphone preamps. If permitted by the artist, ACL will simultaneously generate a live stream of the performance through the console. The audio control room also takes a stereo mix from the artist’s front-of-house engineer. That provided the first opportunity to really hear the System T in action for ACL Audio Director David Hough, who has mixed almost every broadcast since the pilot episode featuring Willie Nelson in October 1974. “When Sachiko [Robertson, Audio Recording, ACL] put up her mix, compared to the mix that was being fed to us from front-of-house, I liked hers better. It was sweet, it was smooth and it was creamy. It was just wonderful,” Hough says.

In addition to MUNA, Austin City Limits has also announced that Lil Yachty, Rodrigo y Gabriela featuring the Austin Symphony Orchestra, DOMi & JD BECK, Jenny Lewis, Margo Price, Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit, Tanya Tucker and Jorge Drexler are currently scheduled to record shows for season 49.

The show’s workflow involves two operators at the console during recording, one mixing the live stream plus a feed to the show’s director and one controlling the redundant 128-track Avid Pro Tools systems and monitoring the gains to the DAWs. A typical show uses around 100 channels, including talkback, but a large band, especially one featuring multi-instrumentalists, can require many more, Hough reports.

The show’s previous console operated in split monitor mode, with “tape” returns coming back into the left-hand input channels, Hough continues. “System T can be configured to work like an inline console, it can easily switch the monitor between what's going to ‘tape’ and what's coming back from ‘tape.’ So now we only have to label channels once, rather than twice. That’s one feature that I was delighted to find out about.”

**SSL System T makes the grade**  
The ACL Live venue hosts around 100 shows a year, 20 of which are captured for broadcast on PBS. Those performances are edited down to 13 one-hour episodes, with some ACL shows spotlighting a single artist and others featuring two. Artists such as Lyle Lovett and Steve Miller have also independently commissioned the ACL audio team to record their concerts at the theater. “That was one of the selling points of this console,” Reynolds says. “I think that more of these one-offs will happen once people see that we're running an SSL console in here. We're going to bring more clients in than we currently do, especially for the high-end quality recordings that they could get in the process.”

The standard PBS deliverable for all ACL shows is a 5.1 mix, but Hough is looking forward to being able to use System T’s native 7.1.4 immersive audio production toolkit. Hough says that when Chuck Ainlay mixed Lyle Lovett’s ACL season 48 performance for 5.1 broadcast, he also sent him the crowd microphone tracks so that he could create a Dolby Atmos mix, just to evaluate the potential of the show’s technical setup. “His response was that, with the eight crowd mics that I had installed out there, he felt like he was standing in the room,” Hough reports.

Having relied for years on the dynamic automation capabilities of the previous console, that was a must-have feature on any replacement desk, Reynolds says. “That's something that's really important to our post production, and something that the System T offered that other consoles did not.”

**The right solution from the house mix to broadcast**   
Hough has been using outboard stereo reverbs since the start of the show, he says, but now intends to utilize System T’s onboard processing once he begins mixing performances for the upcoming season. “For a mix that I have coming up, the lead singer has asked for a nice little slap effect on her vocal. I intend to use SSL’s on-board processing, and with SSL’s Dynamic Automation System (DAS) software, I’ll be able to recall all of those moves and then send her a reference mix and ask, ‘Do you want more or less? How many repeats?’” he says. There was a time when approvals would be done in-person at the console, he notes. “But now we're relying on emails to do all this.”

A performance by War on Drugs during season 48 helped persuade Reynolds that an SSL console was the way forward. “The band was running SSL Live consoles at front-of-house and at monitors,” Reynolds reveals. “I felt that the sound quality of that show, from house mix all the way to broadcast, was superb. Seeing those consoles doing their work was really attractive to me and pushed us into a System T demo.”

Ultimately, he continues, “I spoke to every single member of our team, both temps and full-time, a lot of whom have been on the team for over 10 years. And unanimously, when it came time to decide how we were going to go forward, they chose System T. Everyone on the team feels that this is the right solution.”

Key Code Media, guided by the company’s Senior Solutions Architect, Andrew Twenter, implemented the production’s first-ever Dante AoIP network, upgraded the DAWs and integrated the new System T into the control room infrastructure, Reynolds also reports. Additionally, Twenter was part of the console purchase decision-making. “Andrew had operated SSL boards prior and was very interested in continuing to work with the brand. He also hired amazing people to come in, do all the wiring and get all the I/O where it needed to go,” he says. “I was happy to have Key Code as an active participant.”

   
Twenter and Key Code Media specified two SSL Network I/O SB 32.24’s and four SB i16 Stageboxes units for stage Mic inputs, an A16.D16 providing AES and Line level Dante conversion, plus four MADI-Bridges and four MADI Opti-Coax converters. Together, the devices provide analog mic/line patching to the A-D converters, a pair of redundant (Primary/Secondary) Dante patches and four lanes of MADI over coax as well as fiber, totaling 496 channels of 96 kHz audio.

*Solid State Logic is the world’s leading manufacturer of analogue and digital audio consoles and provider of creative tools for music, broadcast, live and post production professionals. For more information about our award-winning products, please visit:* [www.solidstatelogic.com](http://www.solidstatelogic.com)*.*

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