

Desk Guide

The only way to learn how to use a sound desk is to try it out for your-self. Despite looking slightly different, most sound desks have the same basic composition; the buttons, faders and knobs may be in different places, but on each desk they will perform exactly the same function.



Channel 1



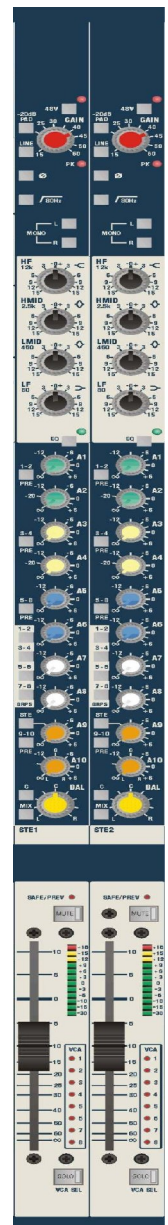
Each vertical channel corresponds to a sound source; be it your voice, the CD player, PC, your guest or MP3 player. Each channel will have a label telling you just which sound source it pertains to.

All knobs, faders and buttons on that particular channel affect that sound source, and that sound source alone.

So what happens if you're confronted with something like this fella here on the right? Well, straight off, don't panic!

The majority of those dials and knobs are pre-set by the studio technician for optimal sound output- you will not have to adjust them your-self!

You will be using the fader, gain control, PFL button and watching the overall desk levels.



The Fader

This is your basic channel control. When the slider is up/open, that sound source is going out on air. When it is down/closed, nothing on that channel is coming through. You can have as many channels open at one time as you like, but obviously, the more, the noisier!

Pre-fading & Gain Control

To listen to an audio channel without broadcasting it, you need to press the Pre-fade button marked PFL on the desk.

The point of pre-fading is two fold:

- 1) To ensure you are about to play the track you think you are.
- 2) To ensure the track is at the correct level.



ALL tracks, jingles, news feeds, microphones etc. should be prefaded. Watch the levels as the song progresses and ensure that it peaks at 4 1/2. If it is too loud or quiet, adjust the Gain control until the level is right. If the song starts quietly, just fast forward to a loud bit and set the gain there. When you have got the volume right, press the PFL button again. It will switch off, and the meters will display what is going out on air again.

When a PFL button is pressed, the audio from that channel goes to the presenter only, while the desk carries on broadcasting what ever it was before. PFL always goes to the presenter headphones, however...there is a button under the presenter headphone volume control labled Split PFL. This means that you hear what goes out on air in one ear, and PFL in the other. This can be for beat matching.

Levels



Your sound levels are incredibly important; too loud and the broadcast will distort and crackle, too low and it will be inaudible.

Most sound desks will have an indicating mark of what a good sound level to maintain is. Keeping to this level across all channels will make your broadcast sound infinitely more professional. Therefore it is paramount that you pre-fade sound sources, adjust them up or down as necessary, and keep an eye on the levels as the sound sources come though the desk.

That's it for basic sound desk operation. Your next step- try it out!

Golden Rules for Production and Presentation

1. Always watch your levels.
2. Pre-fade all sound sources- especially microphones.
3. Avoid dead air if at all possible.
4. Always have a track lined up in the CD player in case of emergency.
5. If you host a talk-based show, print out more material than you think you'll need.
6. Always fill out a running order- this is required by the BCI.
7. Remember that you're talking to strangers- they demand clarity, relevance, respect, and informative talk content.
8. The studio is a sealed box; listeners cannot see what's going on. Do not mention what is happening in studio unless it is relevant to the discussion.
9. If anything goes wrong during your broadcast, remain composed and keep the show going; listeners will not mind or pay much notice. Apologize briefly, if you feel it necessary, but keep it breezy and continue straight on as you initially intended.
10. Leave the studio and desk as you would like to find it- bin all rubbish, put recyclables into deposit bin, put away all CDs and straighten any displaced chairs. It is vital that if you change any wiring or equipment that it is restored to its original state in time for the next show.