

# Onyx marks, get set, go...

Mackie is now shipping the recently announced Onyx 80 Series. It's more than just another raft of live desks, says the designer...

**US:** The Onyx Series is the latest set of 'traditional' analogue consoles for sound reinforcement from Mackie, and the company hopes the range will find them new friends in the live marketplace. So it's a big deal for a company that has not had much of a presence there. *PSNE* asked product manager/designer **John Boudreau**, the same man behind Mackie's TT24 digital live console, to explain himself...

**John Boudreau (JB):** "We've identified a growing demand for large-format live consoles that provide the features and quality associated with 'high-end' desks, but enter the market at a lower price point without sacrificing in important areas such as sound quality, channel count and durability. Before the Onyx 80 Series, budget-limited customers had to choose between features, channel count, and sound quality – and sacrifices in one or several of these areas generally had to be made. The Onyx 80 Series consoles were designed to deliver on all of these fronts."

**What have these desks been developed from?**  
**JB:** "This was really a new project from start to finish. We began with the development goals stated above, and then set out to build the best large format live consoles we've ever made. Of course, much of the technology to solve the sound quality component of the

equation was already available in our Onyx small format mixers. As a result, the Onyx 80 Series consoles feature the same high quality mic pre's and exceptional Perkins EQ found in the smaller Onyx desks."

**So the key new technologies here are the preamps and the Perkins EQ?**

**JB:** "These technologies contribute significantly to the Onyx 80 Series' sound quality, but they combine with a feature set that is much more comprehensive than anything else in the 80 Series' price category – one that is mindful of both channel count and output mixes required for professional live sound environments. Put simply, the 80 Series competes successfully and favourably with 'high-end' consoles that sell for up to several times the price."

"Of course, it wasn't just about sound quality and features. We also set out to make the 80 Series both durable, and easily serviceable in the field. As a result, the entire 80 Series family utilizes a modular bucket design and a solid steel chassis. They also make extensive use of aluminum extrusion braces. All of these things contribute to the road-worthiness of the line."

"The 80 Series consoles provide eight stereo auxiliary returns with EQ and FX/monitor routing. This ensures that mic inputs will not be used up by stereo returns from outboard



effects and devices such as CD players, MP3 players, etc.

"Finally, the 80 Series utilizes internally balanced Main and Group buses, resulting in much better RFI, S/N and crosstalk specs. Most consoles rely on grounded chassis to protect against RFI."

**Where do you see the main use for these desks?**


**JB:** "Like all Mackie mixers, the Onyx 80 Series is a versatile line. We've already received orders from A/V rental houses, houses of worship, nightclubs, theatres, casinos, and even a few touring bands."

**Mackie is well known for the 1604 and the mixers that followed. Can the Onyx desks break into that larger scale format where you have not really had the presence so far?**

**JB:** "The Onyx 80 Series consoles definitely benefit from everything we've learned over the

years about how – and how not – to design and manufacture mixers both small and large. As I noted above, one of our primary goals was to make the 80 Series both durable and easily serviceable. In addition to the modular bucket design and steel/aluminum-chassis, we also ran extensive test procedures that include shake/vibration testing, heat/cold vibration testing, and even electromagnetic and RF rejection testing."

"As a result, these mixers are exceptionally durable. When you factor in the combination of features, sound quality and price, and in looking at initial interest, I'm confident the Onyx 80 Series is going to do exceptionally well."

**We'll be watching...** 

**DAVE ROBINSON**

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