Spectrum Multimedia has expanded to three edit suites and is using an ever-increasing array of video and audio systems. LEN DAVIES' welcomes Mutec's iClock into the fold.

We were desperately looking for a system that would be a single fix – our referencing needs were getting confusing to say the least – and we appear to have found it in the Mutec iClock.

The Mutec iClock is a single unit 19-inch module which from the front looks classy with its dark blue livery, blue backlit LCD, eight condition indicating LEDs and four selection cursor buttons, but rather deceptively unimpressive when you consider the power that lays behind it. The rear of the unit however tells a different tale as its true flexibility is revealed.

Starting from the left are two BNC sockets and an XLR AES/EBU connector which are designed to be inputs for external clock signals should they be required. Adjacent

So what happens if you receive a unit that requires a totally non-standard clock? Simple. You can set up a varispeed function inside the unit using as much as ±20%, which should cover literally every eventuality.

It may seem like I've skimmed over a few of the features here, but that's purely due to lack of space. This unit has a lot of depth which is covered very ergonomically in it's menu structure, is easy to understand and, once set up, works invisibly in the background, with the LCD capable of being put into a shut-down mode after being inactive for some time so it really does look like it's doing nothing.

Conclusion

These days it's very difficult to be genuinely surprised by

M U T E C
i C L O C K
CLOCK SYNTHESIZER

to these are six pairs of BNC connectors, two of which are for PAL/NTSC Video reference output, (but it's worth pointing out that an optional module is required to output Pal from one pair and NTSC from the other). The adjacent four pairs of BNCs are word clock outputs, which can be individually set per pair, and the range of synchronisable and generated clock rates is incredibly impressive from 8kHz to a massive 512 times 48 kHz (24576.0 kHz) for those without a calculator.

To the right of these are four XLR connectors, providing two groups of two AES/EBU outputs, and these provide generated clock rates of between 16kHz to 192kHz, as well as blank frame signals compliant to both AES3 –1992 (R1997) and AES11 – 1997 standards.

The two phono SPDIF sockets next on the right provide unbalanced digital SPDIF audio or IEC 60958 compliant blank frame signal output, and the final RS 48S interface port adjacent to them allows access for programming and firmware updates. There are plans for a remote unit that can control parameters over a network via this port in the near future.

A major feature for me on the back is the very chunky on/off rocker switch to the left of the IEC mains socket, as it's been designed to require a lot of pressure to activate preventing fumbling fingers from tripping it.

There are two blanked-off spaces on the rear of the unit intended for optional extras. One of these is situated above the reference input BNCs, and is designated for the 15 pin 'ic-alarm' add-on that warns when either external reference, power, or the internal reference oscillator fails.

The removable cover adjacent to the IEC mains socket on the right of the unit would become home for the expansion options of a second PAL/NTSC video sync generator and four wordclock output expansion card.

In Use

At this time the unit is in my Edit 2 facility which houses a Canopus Edius Pro 3 video system, Sony Digibetacam and DVCAM player/Recorders, two Yamaha 03D consoles and a Soundscape, and since I've set it up there's been nothing else to do. The front display is simplicity itself to use, and for the most part, the whole facility is powered faultlessly by the unit's internal oscillator, but naturally I had to test the external reference function, and these inputs will read practically anything (I kid you not).

a new product in the audio/visual market, and the fact that the iClock came along at exactly the time that we were looking and dreaming of such a device seemed serendipitous to say the least. There is absolutely nothing negative to say about it as it delivers exactly what it says on the tin and does it with style. The model I reviewed was the basic unit that works perfectly in a fixed 'non-live' situation, but the "DP" version has dual IEC mains sockets that provides dual redundant power supplies for confidence during more critical applications, and as this is going to be the heart of your referenced world during live situations I would give serious thought to investing that little bit more for the option.

These days more and more facilities are removing their patch bays as they become more redundant, and none of our suites have any installed. This led me to think of the one thing I would like to see added to this unit: a front input for external reference signals as on odd occasions we have to reference to a hired-in source and having to fight my way around the back is a complete pain, and as much as I hate having a cable hanging around the front, that's what I have at the moment.

While this is a perfect unit for Audio/Video facilities, it's uses extend way beyond that as it's perfect for mastering and duplication suites, and its capabilities make it pretty much future proof, with any emerging technologies being added with relative ease I would assume. This is truly a 'No Brainer' for anybody in a similar situation to myself, so get one and I'm sure you'll never look back. ◢◤

THE REVIEWER

Len Davies is an audio and video specialist, running Spectrum Multimedia in the UK. He continues to work on areas as diverse as DVD authoring and a significant role in Alien Sex Fiend... (true).

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