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Wheatstone Wins for NASCAR

Design Team Adds Two Radio Studios at the NASCAR Hall of Fame

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. — As an engineer, I've been fortunate to have a relationship with the NASCAR Media Group (NMG), the sports media, content and production

USERREPORT

group of NASCAR, that goes back more than two decades.

When the broadcast design team decided to add two radio studios to the extensive television facilities at the NASCAR Hall of Fame, they called me to ask if I'd shepherd the project, working with integrator Communications Engineering Inc., and I readily agreed.

NMG's state-of-the-art complex spans an entire city block in downtown Charlotte, N.C., providing compelling content for not only NASCAR fans but also clients outside motor sports. It consists of three television studios and control rooms, two radio studios and more than two dozen tapeless, nonlinear video and audio editing suites. Sirius XM Radio is the anchor tenant, and they broadcast "Tradin' Paint," a NASCAR-themed radio show, Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m.

FLEXIBILITY

When we designed the rooms, versatility was made the keystone.

We would have to accommodate a range of uses, from simple one-mic breakaway remotes to fully produced call-in shows. Each room would be fitted with a large complement of telephone and ISDN gear, and would provide for a host plus five guest microphones. The facility was going to need



a lot of mix-minus capacity that could be reconfigured quickly for different shows. Reliability was an important consideration as well. Failure was not an option.

Based on the features in which NMG's clients had expressed interest, I chose two Wheatstone Evolution-6 (E-6) consoles for this project.

I'd worked with Wheatstone equipment, and knew that installing and setting up the system would not be a problem, even on a tight schedule. The EN-8 Audio Network Switch and E-Series Satellite I/O frames were easy and quick to set up with Wheatstone's X-Point network configuration and monitoring software, and provided the redundancy needed to head off on-air faults. The intuitive console setup interface made it just as easy to set up the control surface characteristics.

Our time frame, already tight, got tighter at the last minute. The radio facilities, originally slated to open in June, would

be needed for the NASCAR Hall of Fame grand opening, three weeks sooner.

We burned some midnight oil getting things ready. We had little need for support from the manufacturer, but when we did have questions or concerns, we received quick answers the same day. We never had to wait for crucial information. We preset a configuration for the "John Boy and Billy Big Show" that would use the studios in the morning hours, and one for Sirius XM Radio's mid-day programming needs.

The day of the grand opening was a busy one, to say the least. Dignitaries such as the mayor of Charlotte and the governor of North Carolina were in attendance, along with many of NASCAR's most storied former drivers and champions. Two thousand people and dozens of TV crews were in the plaza as Sirius XM Radio and other radio broadcasters floated among them, doing interviews and live reports. The "John Boy and Billy Big Show" was on the air.

Suddenly, at 9:45 a.m., Mother Nature decided to make our day more interesting.

The heavens opened up, sending soggy people dashing for the nearest shelter. Sirius XM Radio's team, in need of a dry place to work, requested to use the studios as the morning show ended.

With a one-button reconfiguration of the console, it took only moments to reroute all of the mix-minus feeds and sources, and the three-hour "Trading Paint" show went on. Later, the Motor Racing Network (MRN) also asked to use the studio for guest

interviews, and with XPoint, I was able to rapidly reconfigure the console to accommodate that as well.

This flexibility and the E-6's ability to provide a mix-minus for every source on the console (plus four dedicated mix-minus buses and four auxiliary buses) got us through this clutch and made the day a success.

The system is a joy to work with, flexible and easy to operate, and the staff has commented on its clean look. For my part, with the Glass-E remote surface control software

and the net configuration interface, I can do anything from remotely pushing a button on the console to reconfiguring the entire system from my home computer.

The customer is planning to expand the system with an E-6 console for a TV news studio, taking advantage of the feeds we already have in place for radio. Overall, I can say that we're more than satisfied.

For information, contact Jay Tyler at Wheatstone in North Carolina at (252) 638-7000 or visit www.wheatstone.com.