USER REPORT

Ensemble Router Is Big Deal at Big Wheel

**by Mick Hitz**
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In the competitive world of corporate and agency work, we need all of our equipment to work flawlessly. Our Ensemble Designs router is the greatest little piece of equipment, because I don't have to think about it, it just works.

About half of our work is agency, and the other half is corporate. We have an Avid DS SD nonlinear editing system and SD and HD Final Cut systems. The machine room contains our Avenue router and video A-to-D converters, our source decks and a new Facilis TerraBlock server.

The Avenue 5440 8x8 router handles all SD feeds to and from the Avid DS and Final Cut editing suites. The Ensemble frame holds the router and several analog-to-digital converters as well. The router itself is a module that lives in an Avenue frame. As the frame holds 10 Avenue modules, we can have our video converters in the same frame as the router. The frame's front door is equipped with a built-in touchscreen for making router crosspoint selections and adjusting levels on the converters. It's really easy to make source and destination selections from this screen.
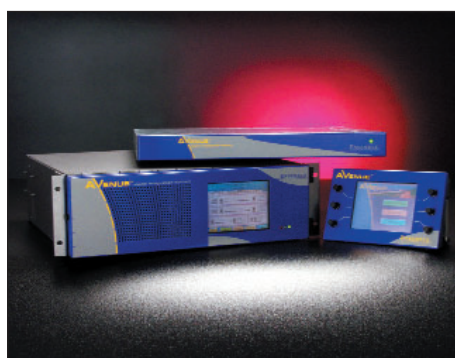
Avenue frames and control panels from Ensemble Designs

MANAGES SIGNAL FLOW

Avenue manages my signal flow in and out. All the Beta and DVD feeds go through the Avenue A-to-D converters and then into the 8x8 router. (Believe it or not, we still use an S-VHS deck as a source occasionally and that is fed into the Ensemble conversion and routing chain too.)

Ensemble handles just about any format—it serves as my in and out boxes for the edit suites.

The router has an analog monitor output that is useful in the machine room. We send this feed to a video monitor for convenience when we're bringing up sources. Any of the eight router busses can appear on the monitor output. There's a text overlay that displays the source name too.

COMPLETELY EXPANDABLE

The Avenue system is completely expandable. We are installing three new Final Cut suites to meet our client's HD demands and we'll be adding more HD Avenue modules to our existing system. There's no need to redo the whole thing—we'll be able to upgrade the system we've got by just adding some upconverters and an HD tri-level sync generator. We recently moved into a new building and a situation related to the move made me realize just how much we depended on the Ensemble router. After the move, we didn't have it wired correctly and my workflow just stopped. Things that used to take five minutes were now taking an hour. Converting a source and getting it into the DS took way too long. Rather than continue to struggle, we stopped everything and took the time to rewire the new facility. After that, our workflow returned to normal, as our Ensemble router was working and we were once again productive.

Mick Hitz has been editing for 15 years. He has worked in broadcasting and spent several years freelance editing before buying Big Wheel. He may be contacted at mick@big-wheel.tv.

For additional information contact Ensemble Designs at 530-478-1830 or visit www.ensembledesigns.com.