



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

NAB Report 2013

Exploring NAB 2013



By Richard Rudman

[April 2013] The NAB Show is almost always a blur for most of us. There is so much to see and so little time. Here is another view from the floor, provided by Richard Rudman.

Las Vegas never fails to produce some sort of event that either leaves me with an indelible memory – or sometimes with heartburn.

This year it was the afternoon picketing processions across Paradise Road by [striking taxi drivers](#). Taking the covered overpass was the answer, but the effects of the strike were still evident. Those striking drivers were L-O-U-D.



Picketing crowds outside the LVCC

THE POWER OF PRAYER

On a much more quiet note, I have been cruising the corridors of the Las Vegas Convention Cen-

ter since 1975 – having missed only two of these annual events.

This time, I stopped in my tracks to snap a picture of a room we all may want to find next year: N224.



It might seem appropriate while talking about a Prayer Room, to confess something: I had some specific stops to make this year on the NAB show floor so I certainly did not see everything. However, my “stops” may be valuable

to those of you looking for FM transmitters, audio processors, and satellite uplink and downlink equipment.

FM TRANSMITTERS

First, at the BE booth, I saw their new STXe 60 exciter. Those of you with experience on the BE

FXi series will see some new and potentially valuable features, some existing standard features beefed up, and a lower price point.



The BE STXe 60 Exciter

The design layout is much cleaner and open. It is built into a smaller and lighter chassis. The power supply has been completely redesigned from the massive and sometimes trouble-prone FXi version. BE claims improved audio quality over the FXi product line.

Among other features, the STXe front panel display departs from the quasi-TV screen on the FXi series. This should mean fewer front panel display issues. The STXe has an elegantly designed built-in Web GUI that is quite impressive and works with a laptop, smart phone, or tablet.

AUDIO PROCESSING

Audio processing is one of those parts of our profession where engineers usually have strong opinions if not prejudices.

All the usual players in this market were showing their wares. However, one manufacturer, Wheatstone, presented a paper on how audio processing might overcome some of the effects of FM multipath. They do this by reducing the amount of L-R stereo in the processed signal fed to the transmitter.

After conducting listening panel studies, they concluded that not only did most receivers fail to decode all the L-R transmitted, but that a lis-

tener's perception of stereo quality tolerated much less L-R than one might suspect.

Some engineers I talked to who heard the booth demo agreed with test panel results. Others did not. Time will tell as the product gets into use.

SATELLITE GEAR

For me the most exciting development I saw was in the IDC booth where they showed their new second-generation STAR Pro Audio satellite receiver for radio distribution.



The STAR Pro Audio receiver

Based on the latest DVB satellite modulation and MPEG AAC audio compression algorithms, their receivers more than replace the workhorse ABR-202A's most of us currently use – and are due to be obsolete at the end of the year. The STAR receivers are "fanless," a welcome departure from the old ABR design.

The DVB architecture is more space segment efficient. For multiple channel operations, a narrower slice may be all you need. For example: three 192 kbps stereo channels will fit comfortably in the space segment that the ABR has previously required for two channels.

IDC is offering a generous trade-in credit on the ABR-202's until the end of 2013, so you might want to consider upgrading an older system before repair parts for the soon to be phased out ABR series become scarce. At your uplink, you keep your existing dish, Block UpConverter (BUC), and your DMD-20.

Another change: the DAC-7000 used with the ABR configuration goes away – replaced with a Datacast P561 multiple channel encoder. Add AAC software and the audio improvement should be noticeable.

HELICOPTERS AND OTHER SIGHTS

One company was showing a \$600 gyro-stabilized drone helicopter that can carry a small wireless camera.

That was a showstopper if you judge such things by show floor aisle traffic jams. Some engineers were talking about using it for tower inspections. I would worry about RF interference to a tiny receiver that probably was not designed to operate near high RF fields. Surely someone will be trying it soon for that purpose and report back to us.

EAS EVENTS AT NAB 2013

As many of you know, EAS is very important to me. Looking back after a few days at home and work, the lack of a physical presence by FCC, NAB, and National Weather Service trench-level people on the floor and at the sessions was palpable.

A month before the show I and various other EAS stakeholders met with our Federal Partners during a NASBA/NAB event in Washington. The feeling I left with was one of renewed cooperation and dedication of all the Federal partners to improving public warnings. I looked forward at that time to seeing a repeat performance in Las Vegas – especially when the NAB provided us with a much larger room this year for our meeting.

Although the politics of “Sequestration” dashed part of that hope, having the FEMA support the

Broadcast Warning Working Group (BWWG) with a conference bridge for our Sunday afternoon meeting was welcomed and proved quite valuable.

Several FEMA personnel, along with several others were present via telephone and participated in the program.

If you want to look in on the meeting, [Alan Alsbrook kindly produced a video for us. \(Part 2 is here.\)](#)

Also present was the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children who, as a non-governmental organization (NGO) is certainly a partner with the Federal people because of AMBER EAS.

Next year we plan on continuing the tradition of an EAS “user group” meeting during the 2014 NAB Convention. This tradition was started and supported by Leonard Charles, Clay Freinwald and me as an SBE activity when EAS was launched. Now through the BWWG and NAB the tradition continues to serve the EAS stakeholder community.

The main takeaway: all of the Federal and different private EAS stakeholders will have to work together if we are indeed going to see better public warnings using the EAS.

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