



The

# **Broadcasters' Desktop Resource**

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

## **NAB 2018 Report** **An NAB Show 2018 Recap**



**By Kevin Kidd**

*[April 2018] Another view of this year's NAB Spring Show is from Kevin Kidd, head of the AM Ground Systems Company and KK Broadcast Engineering.*

My assignment was to walk the floor this year as usual and see what caught my eye, so I could share it with you.

In general, 2018 was not an astoundingly show for us radio nerds except for the Nautel Multiplex Digital tests and a few AOIP product offerings.

Prior to the beginning of the show, Nautel tested and was successful in encoding several adjacent channels worth of HD side-bands on a single Las Vegas area FM transmitter (under experimental license) and decode them from a common mobile HD radio. There were a number of odd phenomena and problems that became evident in the test but in general it was considered a success. It is not a licensable mode of operation now or probably in the near future

Other than Nautel's gathering, there were very few radio related training sessions or programs outside of the pre-show weekend.

### **ATTENDANCE**

This reporter is curious to see the exact attendance figures but my observance seemed to indicate that attendance was down somewhat from last year.

What was very noticeable was the large percentage of attendees from offshore markets. I am curious to see the demographics but will guess that attendance was as normal, heavily slanted toward TV (no surprise there) but also seemed pretty close to 40-50% non-US attendees.

However, the mood with both the attendees and exhibitors seemed to be more positive than in previous few years. Most of the exhibitors that I talked to (and believe) expressed positive feelings toward the coming year and had a productive show.

I was also told that neither Cumulus nor iHeart had a representative at Saturday's NRSC meeting. They reportedly attended via conference call but were not in attendance in person. There may have been someone from one or the other (or local clusters) on the show floor but I do not recall seeing them.

## GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

So, as I wandered around, here are some of my thoughts on what caught my attention at the Show.

1. There were more K's to be seen at the 2018 NAB show than at an American League baseball game: 4K, 7K, 8K, pK, etc. I am a pure radio guy and honestly any improvement much beyond 1080 is lost on my tired, pollen-clogged eyes.
2. And of course there were drones, drones, drones. Drones were all over the place.
3. **DANTE** was quite literally everywhere. Many manufacturers showed DANTE capable devices. These devices are very interesting *but* have the limitation that they are fairly limited outside of a hard-wired network environment.

FYI: DANTE does not work reliably over the public Internet but is very easily configured and routed within the safe confines of a private LAN.

4. Predictably, **Radio Design Labs** showed a host of new products this year. At the forefront of their new offerings were Dante enabled microphone interfaces, headphone amps, general audio interfaces, speaker amps (POE), and switch modules.



5. **Social Media:** There were many, many high energy exhibitor's touting their social media promotion, analytics and presence.
6. **New Video & Camera Technologies:** There were a number of affordable (less than \$300) 360 degree and action

cameras on display and being sold at the show. The Insta360 booth in the North Hall was causing quite a stir – and road block – with their ONE, NANO, and TITAN products. They were selling product over the counter as fast as they could scan cards and bag new toys.

7. **Monroe Electronics DASDEC:** A new firmware update for DASDEC is coming out that will clean up and reorganize an admittedly “busy” control environment.

However, a *major* item in the EAS world is their DASDEC HALO software.



The HALO suite allows a system manager to monitor and control an almost unlimited number of DASDEC units from one “backoffice” application. Pricing is based on scale and was not available at the show but *if* you have a number of DASDEC EAS/CAP units to monitor, HALO will almost certainly be of interest.

Depending on the individual DASDEC unit configuration, the control suite can even monitor the internal receiver signal strengths for a fleet of units.

HALO will be available as a dedicated system install OR as a cloud service as dictated by a client. Halo V1.0 is operable now but unavailable outside of factory beta test. V2.0 is under development

and will build upon the functionality of V1.0 with a better UI.

8. **Reasonably priced modern AM, FM, and WX receivers** for EAS and monitoring.

None seen. The Inovonics receivers are wonderful pieces of equipment with great sensitivity and selectivity, and will work in RF environments that destroy mere mortal receivers. However they also have a super hero price tag to match and in most of our environments, a cheap/simple RX is adequate.

During the Show, I specifically asked several RF and receiver related companies about whether they had considered adding reasonably priced, stand-alone AM/FM/WX (like the old TFT, Hamtronics and Dayton units) receiver rack to their lineup. Most said that yes they had considered it but had no immediate plans to do so.

9. **Large Scale Display Screens:** Holy Cow! How much larger and brighter can they make them?

Walking by some of the screens required eye protection and a fresh application of SPF 30. The interesting thing about the newer LED based screens was the lack of heat emanating from them.

10. **Comrex** was showing their new OPAL IP audio gateway which enables guests and remote talent to connect to the studio 2-way audio by simply clicking a link from an email. This using audio functionality built into most modern browsers without the need for a dedicated app download.

Comrex was also showing their new Access NX portable codec. It is a major

redesign of the older Access portable units that incorporates numerous error correction and network improvements.

11. **BE, GatesAir, and Nautel** had large well-staffed booths as did BW Broadcast.

Continental had a booth showing a new solid state TV transmitter and an Italian solid state 5kW FM transmitter built by RFE. There was a new Chicago area TV transmitter manufacture, Anywave Communication Technologies, showed equipment in the Radio Hall as well.

12. **Orban** was demoing a new high dollar AM processor. I was unable to get to a demo but the rumor mill was quite active considering its capabilities and price.

Said rumors are that it is a very powerful unit with a price tag to match.

13. **Barix** was showing their Redundix Internet connection “bonding” solutions.



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Redundix takes two separate Internet connections and applies time-diversity *and* divergent routing through separate networks. At the receiving end, the streams are buffered, compared and re-combined to correct any missing packets or errors.

Barix was also showing their new Store & Play Audio Player that will have uses in the broadcast industry and their new NiceCaster MP3/AAC streaming appliance, encoding for Shoutcast/Icecast *or* as a stand-alone stream server that will serve up to 50 simultaneous listeners.

14. **Jampro** had a couple of new FM antenna offerings at the show. One was an FM folded dipole vertical transmitting antenna that is good for about 300 Watts per bay.

Also a new 3-element Yagi with an advertised maximum power input of 5 kW was shown off. The new J3YF can be ordered either V or H.

15. And lastly, I noticed **SKB Cases** who were showing several new protective case offerings – as well as a case that

every well-organized engineer should have – at least the smokers among you.



## SUMMING UP

All in all, I did not see any really astounding new radio technology, but there were a number of new and better versions of existing products as well as a few new competitors in the arena.

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*A frequent BDR Contributor, Kevin Kidd, CSRE /AMD, is the proprietor of AM Ground Systems Company and KK Broadcast Engineering.*

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