

Focusrite RedNet Components chosen by Manny Sanchez



Picture: Shane Hendrickson

Having begun his audio career at the turn of the millennium working with analog tape machines and mixing consoles, Manny Sanchez admits that he had to be dragged into the world of digital audio. Now, almost 25 years later, Sanchez has a home-based personal studio outfitted for 7.1.4 Dolby Atmos immersive mixing with an AoIP infrastructure built on a solid foundation of Focusrite RedNet Dante-networked converters, interfaces and controllers.

“I started out on analog; I learned tape machines, I cut tape. Those things were second nature to me, so I went kicking and screaming into my first Pro Tools experience in the ‘90s,” Sanchez recalls. “Getting to this point, where I’ve got audio-over-IP and Dante, if you had asked me 20 years ago, I would have said there’s no way I’m doing that. I was such a brat about it all. But with just a little maturity and a little more knowledge, it’s come to make my workflow just so much easier and so much more solid.”

Sanchez started out as an intern at Chicago Recording Company (CRC) before building his own I.V. Lab Studios in the city, working alongside some of the world's best producers and engineers and forging relationships with artists such as Billy Corgan and Fall Out Boy. Fast forward a few years, and Sanchez, now an L.A. resident, swapped the long hours of music production for the more regular schedule of broadcast and audio post-production. In 2019, he became director of audio production at WGN America (now known as News Nation), going on to freelance with Hulu and FOX, and is currently the senior audio engineer at Paramount+, working out of his home studio.

Sanchez initially installed a Focusrite Red 8Line interface in his personal studio, taking advantage of the unit's built-in monitor control support for formats up to 7.1. As he eyed an upgrade of his room for immersive work, Sanchez started to crunch the numbers. "Atmos was around, but it wasn't on the forefront of everybody's mind yet, like it is now. The great thing about my relationship with Focusrite is that as soon as I started to see that the upgrade might be a real possibility, I could see it wasn't going to break the bank. Ultimately, I just had to add a couple more pieces of equipment from Focusrite to make it all work well. It's just perfect, and RedNet is so easy to use."

To configure the room for Dolby Atmos work, he upgraded to the Red 16Line and added a RedNet D16R Mk II 16-channel AES3 I/O as well as a RedNet R1 desktop monitor controller. The D16R, which offers 16 channels of AES3 I/O, was critical to optimizing his monitor speaker setup, he says. "If I'm really going to trust what I'm hearing with what I'm delivering to Paramount, I need to make sure the monitoring is right. I wanted to do 7.1.4 and to have room correction so I bought the Trinnov D-MON, which is 12 channels. And the easiest way to integrate that with my Focusrite setup was to get the D16R, because it has AES, and I could go AES into the Trinnov "

Now, he says of his mix room, "I love my setup. I hate having to go elsewhere to work. It sounds so good in here, and I know exactly how something is going to sound when it leaves here. I wish I could take this setup wherever I go." He has appreciated Focusrite's support as he's made the transition to an AoIP workflow. "They have been absolutely great to work with. There isn't another company that I work with that I have such personal relationships with. That is a key driver of my continuing to explore and use their technology."

Although Sanchez has been immersed in audio post for the past ten years, he hasn't left the world of music behind. Since 2014, he has mixed the live broadcast audio from the Sahara Tent at the Coachella music festival, working for Springboard Productions and company president Hank Neuberger, who was once his boss at CRC. Chris Shepard, chief engineer and owner of American Mobile Studio and another CRC alumnus, oversees the festival's other stages for broadcast. Sanchez works out of a truck provided by Media Stream Wave, which is run by Azuolas Sinkevicius, yet another former CRC engineer.

This year at Coachella, Sanchez made a relatively small but significant change to his mixing setup in the truck, he reports, integrating RedNet 6 and RedNet D64R units into his workflow for the Sahara Tent. In previous years, he explains, he would take a MADI input from either the Sahara stage's front-of-house or monitor console into his mixing setup in the truck. However, the sample rate of the live sound consoles used by the production provider defaults to 48 kHz, while Sanchez's Avid mixing rig operates at 96 kHz. "In order to maintain sync we had to ask someone at the front-of-house console or at monitor world to change the setting for each artist," he says.

Feeding MADI from the stage to the truck also involved a long run of coax cable for sync, he continues. "It's a live broadcast and to have that anxiety of not knowing if we're going to lose sync, or if I'm going to get clicks and pops or have it drop out completely, just became too much." It's a high-pressure gig, he adds, with the Sahara stage featuring major artists such as Post Malone, Mac Miller, Kid Cudi, Blackpink and, last year, the historic reunion of Blink-182's classic lineup.

In consultation with Focusrite's Dave Rieley and with Shepard, Sanchez says, "We built a whole new system based around the RedNet D64R. We took MADI from the live sound console into the D64R and converted it into Dante, getting rid of MADI altogether, and then ran everything off a Dante network. We ran an Ethernet line from monitor world to our truck and it was solid. We never had any issues or audio dropouts. As long as Dante clocks to the MADI, you're fine. It was the most successful technical experience at Coachella that we've ever had."

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