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USER REPORT

SBS Upgrades FMs With Omnia-6

by Mike Tocco
Chief Engineer
SBS Broadcasting

NEW YORK Here's a user report from an angle you don't often read. While it's true that I installed and initially set up our Omnia-6 processors, my involvement with them has almost ended there. In short, I have little to do with our Omnias. This is not because we "set them and forget them"; rather it's due to the impassioned involvement of WSKQ(FM) Program Director George Mier.

WSKQ is SBS's flagship FM station. No. 1 in the New York metro ratings for several books now, its ratings success coincides with George's affirmative programming advances and several technical improvements for which I'm responsible. One of those upgrades was installing Omnia-6 FM audio processors on WSKQ and WPAT(FM).

George asked that we switch to Omnia processing after hearing the bright, open Omnia sound on some competing stations. We purchased two Omnia-6s, plus one more as a backup. The backup unit has only been used once; it was on-air for a few minutes while we upgraded the DSP software in our main Omnias.

Upon initial installation I assigned unique IP addresses to the processors, and connected them to our LAN. This gave both George Mier and WPAT's PD Tony Luna direct, real-time access to their respective stations' audio processors.

I downloaded and installed Omnia Remote software on their PCs and spent a few minutes with them, learning about the processing adjustment controls and how to save and recall presets. At that point, George and Tony took control and we've



Tocco puts the cover back on the Omnia-6 after the firmware card replacement.

never looked back.

Almost two years have elapsed since. A few days ago, George recalled for me his thoughts about Omnia processing and being able to control WSKQ's signature sound.

"You know, I was a little frustrated at first. Spanish Tropical music can be hard to process, and I wasn't getting the 'punch' I wanted. I liked the remote control and Omnia's adjustment flexibility," he said. "We sounded good on the dial, but I knew we could be better."

Omnia had just released a major software enhancement, version 7. So Omnia's Kirk Harnack and I upgraded the processors with the new software late last summer. Version 7 software includes a new dual bass clipper that lets you balance two different types of clipping in the lowest frequencies. It's made a difference for our unique format.

George then had this to say: "This upgrade was what I needed. Tropical music often has different bass than other pop music. It's more string-based; not as much drum and synth. Plus, you have a lot of instruments in the mix — trumpets and other brass, acoustic guitars and lots of vocals.

"You have to be careful that in the pro-

cessing you don't compress all those instruments together. They must sound authentic. This is New York, so they've got to have a great presence on the dial."

George especially likes that he can customize the Omnia in every band. He doesn't have to compress or limit much to get the sound he wants; he can get it to "cut through" and still sound live at the same time. He tells me that even though WSKQ's loudness keeps up with the New York market, our time-spent-listening has improved because our processing doesn't fatigue our listeners.

If George or Tony have trouble with the settings, I'm here to help. Though my main jobs are to make sure the stations are reliable, have excellent coverage and that the PDs have the tools they need to define the stations' sound.

We're looking forward to broadcasting in HD, probably sometime in 2006. And my Omnia-6s are ready for that, too. The built-in HD processing path is pretty convenient. We may simplify things a bit more by adding the "Diversity Delay" option to our existing Omnia-6s — the "i" option — which puts the "traditionally processed" signal's delay inside the audio processor, rather than looping it through the HD exciter.

I'll conclude by stating the Omnia-6 processors have been and are performing well. As Omnia releases new software — and new hardware — the processors demonstrate their worth as an investment in our broadcast signals.

The Omnia-6 processors range in price from \$11,590 for the EX to \$12,580 for the EXi. The company offers the "i" upgrade for \$990.

For more information, contact Omnia in Cleveland at (216) 241-7225 or visit www.omniaaudio.com.