MIX
Professional Audio and Music Production

Solid-State-Logic's X-Patch

FIELD TEST

by Barry Rudolph

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Solid State Logic X-Patch Front Panel View

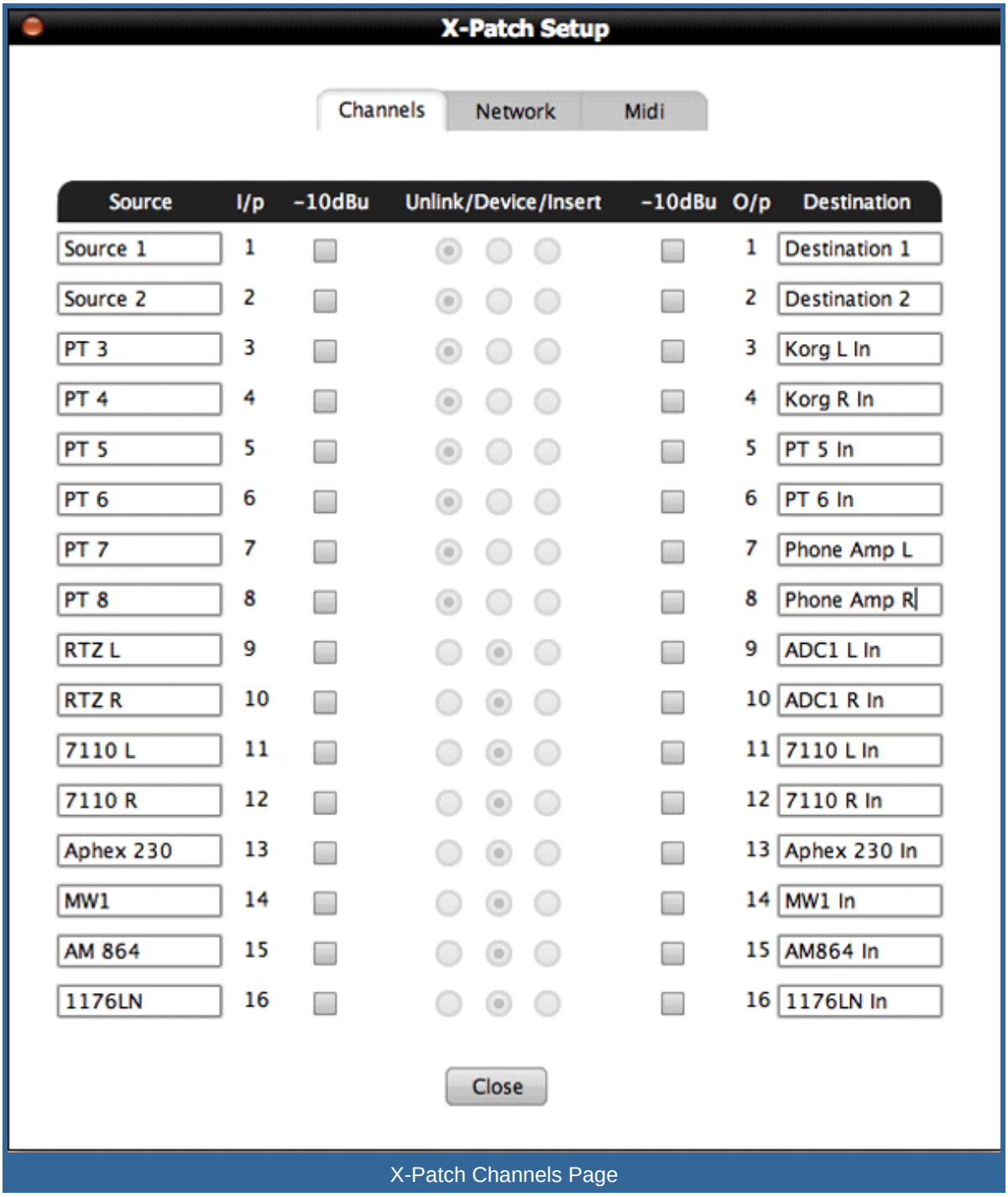
X-Patch is an analog line-level signal-routing matrix that uses SSL's SuperAnalogue™ technology and a JFET switching array borrowed from the company's Matrix console. SSL's Logictivity™ X-Patch Remote Studio Browser, an included Java-based application, communicates to X-Patch over Ethernet for setup, configuration and preset selection.

Up to 128 pesets can be programmed and retained in the unit after power off and without X-Patch Remote running. Setups can be backed up and stored as .xml files, and X-Patch Remote will control up to six X-Patches in parallel. A free iPhone app allows preset selection over WiFi.

Solid State Logic X-Patch Rear Panel View

This single-rackspace unit has 16 inputs and 16 outputs on four rear panel, 25-pin D-Sub connectors on the back panel. There is also a DIN socket for an external power supply, RJ45 jack, and MIDI jacks if you'd like to use MIDI to change Presets. The front panel has an on/off switch and a pair of convenient XLR Combi jacks wired in parallel across 1 & 2's inputs/outputs of the DB25.

X-Patch routes up to 16 outputs from your DAW, console, multitrack and outboard gear to 16 inputs that return to input I/Os and gear inputs. X-Patch's Remote Channels, Network and MIDI sub pages are provided to configure the unit. From the Channels page, you can label channel outputs (Sources) and inputs (Destinations), define channels types, and set +4dB/-10dBv levels for each I/O. With both balanced and unbalanced lines usable, this facilitates the integration of guitars, other musical instruments, guitar pedals or hi-fi gear into your recordings and mixes.



X-Patch Channels Page

The Network sub page determines whether X-Patch uses DHCP (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol) or static IP addressing. The MIDI page selects which channel receives Program Change messages, with program numbers equal to X-Patch Preset numbers. It's all simple.

In addition to controlling a basic 16x16 matrix, X-Patch Remote allows up to 128 oft-used processing chains to be "pre-made"--stored and then easily dropped into signal paths. Up to six analog processors can be organized into X-Patch Chains.

X-PATCH IN THE STUDIO

X-Patch's incredible usefulness was apparent once I connected my small collection of outboard and my HD192 to X-Patch's DB-25 connectors. They all became new "plug-ins" in my Pro Tools HD3 Accel rig.

The X-Patch software is intelligent enough not to require the engineer's mindset of connecting outputs to inputs; that happens automatically without the possibility of duplication--i.e., connecting the same processor twice or two outputs to the same input.

Changing patch setups and building chains was easy and fast. You must configure Chains first and then Presets, and before you change a route in a Preset or alter a Chain, you must first null the existing choice by selecting None.

I named, configured and connected all eight I/Os of the HD192, my RTZ Professional Audio 9762 mic preamp outputs (X-Patch is not for mic lines), Benchmark Media ADC1 A/D converter/clock, an 1176LN, Federal AM-864 compressor, Creation Audio Labs' MW1, an Aphex 230 Voice Channel, a pair of vintage JBL/UREI 7110 limiters and my stereo Korg 1-bit MR-2000S recorder.

I set up paths for connecting the outputs to the ADC1's inputs and/or sending outputs and returning inputs to and from Pro Tools. I used Pro Tools' analog I/O 3 and 4 for sending to the Korg MR-2000S during mixing, but during tracking, 3 and 4 became a parallel processor path for the Aphex 230 and the MW1 while 5 and 6 were used for the 1176LN and AM-864.

I found no sonic difference using X-Patch over XLR patch cables; in fact, switching between presets while audio is present produces no pops, clicks or even gaps when switching between similar presets--assuming there is unity gain and no DC offset. This makes changing presets on-the-fly possible when, for example, I would "reuse" the AM-864 already on the lead vocal track for processing a guitar solo. As soon as the vocal stopped, I automated this preset change using MIDI and then changed back when the solo was over.

X-Patch Chains/Presets Page

The front panel XLRs are great for connecting itinerant gear under review, but I wish there was a way to break those analog connections (via the software) from being paralleled to X-Patch's DB-25s.

X-CELLENT

PRODUCT SUMMARY

COMPANY: Solid State Logic
WEB: solid-state-logic.com
PRODUCT: X-Patch
PRICE: $1,199

PROS: 16x16 patchbay controlled by computer and iPhone.

CONS: Front panel XLRs are not on/off-switchable.

X-Patch is a great patching solution for any studio. A single X-Patch will increase the capabilities of all your outboard and offer instant system reconfiguration that is useful for changing in-the-box mixes to stem outputs and for song-to-song effect changes for front-of-house and theatrical sound mixing. Doing all this from my iPhone is fun, too.

Barry Rudolph is an L.A.-based recording engineer. Visit his Web site at: WWW.BARRYRUDOLPH.COM

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