

Studer Vista 9

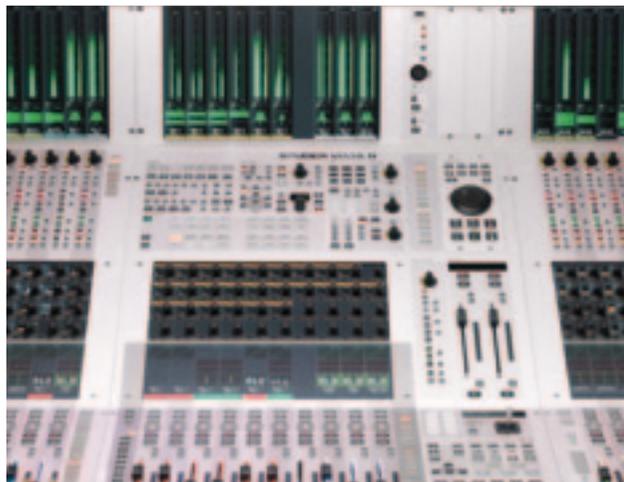
The latest iteration of the Vistonics generation adds some worksurface additions and some hidden enhancements. ZENON SCHOEPE looks at Studer's new flagship.



It surprised me that this is the fifth Studer Vista console I have looked at yet they continue to improve. With the progress of the Vista concept you can clearly see evolution at work driven by the dual natural forces of user feedback and technological advancement. You can't always see direct like-for-like product replacement but all the models have contributed to the progress. Putting the Vista family into context and chronological order for my own sake as much as for yours, let's just look back briefly at the genesis of the species and slot them in to the operational categories for which they were designed.

The Vista 7 was first and was targeted at the post community as it featured dynamic automation and majored less on broadcast features. You have to remember that at the Vista 7's launch in 2002 the rather old-school digital Studer D950 was riding high with broadcasters and was the firm's contender for that market. Soon they relented and released the Vista 6, which was a broadcast oriented version of the Vista 7 in as much as it had subtle tweaks appropriate to a production desk and most importantly did not include the timecode automation. We have to remind ourselves that the Vistonics worksurface when released on the Vista 7 was radical. It challenged a user to think a little differently even though, for all intents and purposes, the Vistonics panels depicted traditional pots and switches. Studer was very careful in its rate of roll-out so as not to scare the supposedly conservative broadcast horses.

Around the time of the Vista 6 Studer also introduced a new I-O system. Then came the iconic



Vista 8 as an update on the 6 and the 7 and the point at which Studer merged the postproduction features of the 7 with the broadcast features of the 6. You could boot the desk for static or dynamic modes according to the application and it did tap into a mood among some broadcasters who wanted to do live production and then a little post all on the same desk in the same room. Apart from this flexibility the 8 was the first desk in the series with faders across its full width. You also saw strong user feedback enhancements to the worksurface — this was an evolved desk and an important product for Studer that tipped its scale to wider acceptance.

A year after the Vista 8 Studer replaced the DSP



with the new S-Core Live platform, which equated to a five times increase in power. It was retrofittable across the range. For semi-portable and small truck use they then introduced the Vista 5 as a cut down version of the 8 but with sensible prioritisation of the controls that were left on the reduced worksurface.

There were also some added features all of its own. A ruggedised SR version for FOH use followed.

All Vista desks run the same software, use the same engines and the same I-O; a considerable feat.

The Vista 9 is a major update of the worksurface of the Vista 8 and it's the result of user feedback and new technology. There are subtle changes and not so subtle changes. The most obvious addition is the TFT metering but there's a sub-story to its implementation. All the Vistas until now have had to use fairly expensive multihead graphics cards for the screens. The 9 uses graphics cards on chips that have USB inputs and this has tidied up the under bonnet space. They're also cheaper and because of that Studer's been able to put a second PC motherboard in the system — one runs the desk surface and the Vistonics screens while the second runs the metering. With two PC motherboards you now have control redundancy — pressing and holding the Redundancy button on the overbridge switches the metering PC to run the desk without loss of audio and control. So, with the Vista 9 full control redundancy is standard.

The other obvious new feature is FaderGlow. This comes from the Soundcraft camp and enables you to effectively colour-code your faders according to function or membership. You can change the colours and the brightness and while it's tempting to go all Vegas it's not obligatory and FaderGlow makes much more sense when used sparingly on faders that are really important. The Glow colour is also reflected in a fader's associated meter.

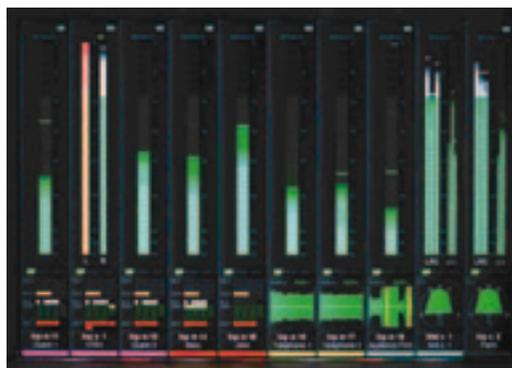
There's been some selective action in the control/centre bay area and things that get used more, like the monitoring selection, have been moved closer to the user. In the centre bay they've also added eight hardware buttons down by the panning joystick section for user assignable functions like talkbacks.

The Vistonic screen in the control bay has been freed from just dealing with central functions and can be made to behave more like the channel screens. There's also a Vista 5-style Channel processing strip, which makes this bay a lot more useful and ups the flexibility of the board as a whole.

The Control Bay meter section can be configured to show any choice of output buses and input channels and displays up to 40 meters at a time. Channel meters are able to show mono through to 7.1 in the upper section of the screen, while the lower portion can show bus assignment or an image of the surround composite. However, by far the smartest thing about the metering is that you can use this same section to display a function called History. This shows a scrolling waveform of the associated channel and when something overloads or drops out it reveals itself as a section of red or a gap in the waveform. This is a lifesaver for those times when something goes bang, your attention is somewhere else, and because you weren't watching you missed the source and now you're distracted and waiting for it to happen again. With History it would be simple to identify the culprit — it'll be the History display with the splurge of red on it and you'll be able to do something about it. The speed and zoominess of the waveform can be adjusted.

The smallest practical Vista 9 size is 32 faders with the biggest being 72. The frame itself has been reworked and as in the Vista 5 there are now monitoring I-Os on the back so you can actually connect speakers directly to the desk like you really should have been able to do from the beginning.

I've always liked the Vista 8 because you could feel the refinement in it over its predecessors. The Vista 9 makes the 8 look a little frugal by comparison now but again it is the result of another stage of refinement. Not everyone will really need the new metering but it



is the sort of feature that is now expected regardless. To me it is worth it purely for the History and I have to concede that things like the routing depiction, for example, really are quite intricately beautiful. Studer

has also passed on some savings internally in the worksurface and added extra value, like the control redundancy, as standard.

It had to be done because it could be done and it's interesting that good ideas from the Vista 5 have also been incorporated. It was always going to be difficult to rework the flagship model but they've done a thorough and inspired job. ■

PROS History; FaderGlow; more flexibility in the control bay; monitors connect to the surface.

CONS You either like Vistonics or you don't.

Contact

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