

CB Electronics TMC-1

The master of interfacing and control has applied himself to monitor remote control for a selection of boxes as **DAVID KENNEDY** discovers.

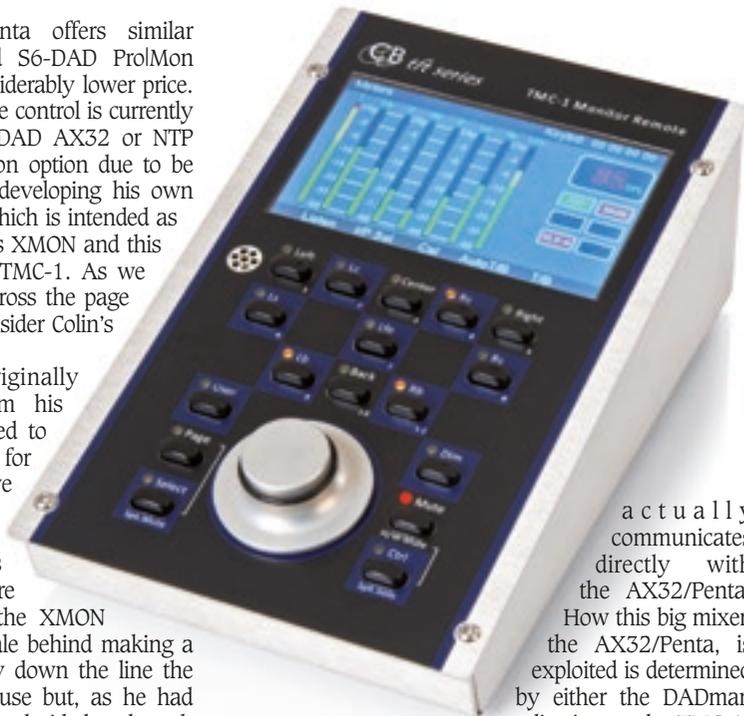
Colin Broad's TMC-1-Penta offers similar functionality to an Avid S6-DAD ProlMon combination but at a considerably lower price. The TMC-1 monitor remote control is currently available for Avid XMON and DAD AX32 or NTP Penta 720 with a Trinnov D-Mon option due to be released very soon. He is also developing his own analogue interface, the AMon, which is intended as an enhanced alternative to Avid's XMON and this too will be controllable by any TMC-1. As we have considered DAD kit just across the page it makes sense to specifically consider Colin's TMC-1-Penta here.

Sayonara XMON? Originally responding to a request from his Japanese agent, Colin, was asked to make a monitor control interface for the XMON. With more than five thousand XMON units sold, it must be one of the most easily obtainable monitoring units around. However, unless you are using an appropriate console, the XMON is not a lot of use so the rationale behind making a remote for it is clear. Some way down the line the Japanese took the project in house but, as he had almost completed the task, Colin decided to launch his own unit himself. A little over a year ago, he met with NTP who suggested he adapt the TMC-1-XMon for their own Penta. NTP gave him the protocol and everything else he needed to write the software and so the TMC-1-Penta was born.

At 190mm x 124mm, the TMC-1 is designed primarily as a desktop unit although it has flanges that allow it to be flush-mounted. On the front panel, there is an adjustable TFT display which is nearly the full width of the unit. Also here we have seventeen multifunction pushbuttons surrounding a large gain knob which itself also functions as a pushbutton. There is a built-in electret talkback mic too.

To the rear there is a ¼-inch headphone jack, a 3.5mm electret mic input jack, a USB port, an RJ45 port for network connection to an AX32/Penta and two 15-pin D connectors: a male for GPIO and a female for connection to an XMON unit. In the TMC-1-Penta, the XMON connector is available for analogue talkback mic with preamp and headphone connections. Also, by using a special cable, a D-Control or D-Command monitor control may be used to control the TMC-1-Penta (but not the other way around!) The unit draws its power from the USB port and, if connected to MIDI on a DAW, can also be used with MTC or HUI for auto talkback functions and timecode display.

With any standalone DAD unit, monitor control is achieved by a combination of the internal operations; gain control, summing engine, router and the DADman software application. The TMC-1-Penta is not a remote for the DADman software but

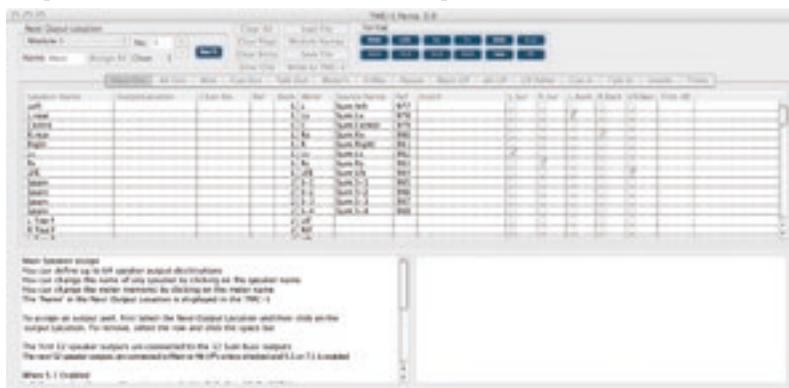


actually communicates directly with the AX32/Penta. How this big mixer, the AX32/Penta, is exploited is determined by either the DADman application or the TMC-1-

Penta. Both have access to the same building blocks but how they put them together is distinct: DADman was designed around the monitor capability of the Avid S6 control surface whereas the TMC-1-Penta provides a framework for you to define your own monitoring system. It diverges from its predecessor in this regard too, as the functionality of the TMC-1-XMon was defined by the XMON interface whereas the TMC-1-Penta builds on that and it defines the configuration of its AX32/Penta unit.

Physical monitoring systems are mapped out using the TMC-1-Penta2 software's Input Pallet which can define and name inputs and outputs as required. The TMC-1-Penta has two 64-channel inputs (Main and Alt) and four 12-channel inputs that may be selected from a pallet of 16 inputs. If the AX32/Penta has been fitted with the analogue mic/line input card then TMC-1-Penta can control metering, gain control, mic-line selection, mute, phase reverse and phantom power.

As the AX32/Penta isn't interrogated to determine its internal configuration this leaves the user free to model as much or as little of the physical system as they require although this does require a knowledge of the I-O cards present in the unit.



The TMC-1-Penta control panel provides access to all the available functions. There are a number of different pages that may be selected on the display and the legends at the bottom of the screen correspond to the button layout of the unit. The two main pages are Meters, the default, and Cue Sends. Pressing the Page key always returns the display to Meters where speaker and input mute and solo is available. There are dedicated speaker Solo/Mute buttons. On the Cue Sends page the source selection and gain for a given cue output is accessible.

There are too many other pages to list in detail here but the unit's functionality gives a flavour of what is available: monitoring of all cue sends, studio playback of any input and stem-style monitoring with up to 6 stems each of which can be up to 12-channels wide.

Various auto mode pages deal with applying auto-mute to the main speaker, studio speaker, talkback and listen-back defined by play and record states. This can be further refined to follow the American ADR-style of before, during and after automation. Auto record light control and two separate talkback destinations are also possible.

One area of the display is constant on almost all pages and shows vital information such as SPL level, selected source, talkback state, gain knob control destination. Dual calibration settings of 85 and 80 SPL can be set and, more generally, calibration settings can be protected from change.

On any given screen the current function for all the buttons around the gain knob and the gain knob itself can be displayed. Not all users require the same functions but too many buttons would be confusing so the compromise Colin has made is to make most buttons user programmable.

Colin's TMC-1-Penta's appeal is largely going to depend on what kit you already possess. If you have an S6 and an AX32/Penta then, especially with the recent DADman update and ProlMon software, I don't quite see the rationale for splashing out on a TMC-1-Penta. In the alternative scenario where you don't have an S6 but do possess an AX32/Penta then a TMC-1-Penta will provide the physical monitor control you are lacking. I think it worth considering too, for the more modest studio installation, that if an XMON's I-O is adequate for your purposes then a couple of hundred quid for a second hand one and a TMC-1-XMON might well be worth considering. ■

PROS Advanced and very configurable controller for the AX32/Penta; reasonably priced.

CONS Will require a concerted effort to set up; doesn't quite have the bling factor of DAD unit or S6!

EXTRAS Original TMC-1-XMon: UK£800 (All prices + VAT), is without the Ethernet and so



cannot be upgraded to Penta or DMon versions. TMC-1-XMon with Ethernet £900; TMC-1-Penta (and TMC-1-DMon will be) £1200; TMC-1-DMon upgrade for a TMC-1-XMon will be £310. No paid-for upgrade license will be required to control an AMon from a TMC-1.

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