DESK AND RECORDING BASICS

The only way to learn how to use a sound desk is to try it out for your-self. Despite looking slightly different, most sound desks have the same basic composition; the buttons, faders and knobs may be in different places, but on each desk they will perform exactly the same function.

Channel 1

Each vertical channel corresponds to a sound source; be it; your voice, the phoneline, PC, your guest or MP3 player. Each channel will have a label telling you just which sound source it pertains to.

All knobs, faders and buttons on that particular channel affect that sound source, and that sound source alone.

So what happens if you're confronted with something like this channel here on the right? *Well, straight off, don't panic!*

The majority of those dials and knobs are pre-set by the studio technician for optimal sound output- you will not have to adjust them your-self!

You will be using **the fader**, **gain control**, **PFL button** and watching the overall **desk levels**.

The Fader
This is your basic channel control. When the slider is up/open, that sound source is going out on air. When it is down/closed, nothing on that channel is coming through. You can have as many channels open at one time as you like, but obviously, the more, the noisier!

Pre-fading & Gain Control
To listen to an audio channel without broadcasting it, you need to press the **Pre-fade** button marked **PFL** on the desk.

The point of pre-fading is two-fold:
1) To ensure you are about to play the track you think you are.

2) To ensure the track is at the correct level.

ALL tracks, jingles, microphones etc. should be prefaded. Watch the levels as the song progresses and ensure that it peaks at 4ish. If it is too loud or quiet, adjust the **Gain Control** until the level is right. If the song starts quietly, just fast forward to a loud bit and set the gain there. When you have got the volume right, press the PFL button again. It will switch off, and the meters will display what is going out on air again.

When a **PFL button is pressed, the audio from that channel goes to the presenter only**, while the desk carries on broadcasting what ever it was before. PFL always goes to the presenter headphones, however…there is a button under the presenter headphone volume control labeled Split PFL. This means that you hear what goes out on air in one ear, and PFL in the other. This can be useful for beat matching.
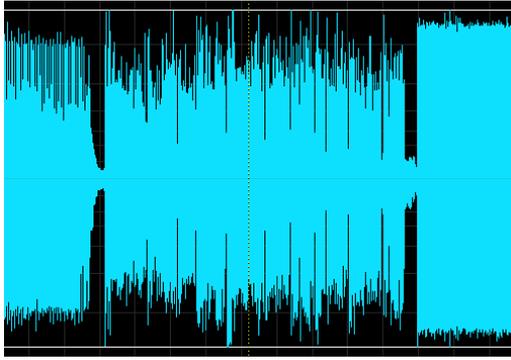
Levels
Your sound levels are incredibly important; too loud and the broadcast will distort and crackle, too low and it will be inaudible. **You cannot fix badly distorted recordings, and listeners will not tolerate distorted audio – they'll turn off.**

Most sound desks will have an indicating mark of what a good sound level to maintain is. Keeping to this level across all channels will make your broadcast sound infinitely more professional. Therefore it is paramount that you pre-fade sound sources, adjust them up or down as necessary, and keep an eye on the levels as the sound sources come though the desk.

That's it for basic sound desk operation. Your next step- try it out!
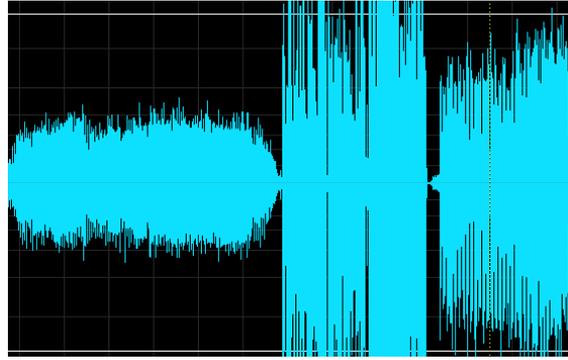
"Good" levels   *"Bad" levels (not so good to listen to)*

Golden Rules for Production and Presentation

1. Always watch your levels.
2. Pre-fade all sound sources- especially microphones.
3. Avoid dead air if at all possible.
4. Always have a track lined up in the CD player in case of emergency.
5. If you host a talk-based show, print out more material than you think you'll need.
6. Always fill out a running order- this is required by the BAI.
7. Remember that you're talking to strangers- they demand clarity, relevance, respect, and informative talk content.
8. The studio is a sealed box; listeners cannot see what's going on. Do not mention what is happening in studio unless it is relevant to the discussion.
9. If anything goes wrong during your broadcast, remain composed and keep the show going; listeners will not mind or pay much notice. Apologize briefly, if you feel it necessary, but keep it breezy and continue straight on as you initially intended.
10. Leave the studio and desk as you would like to find it- bin all rubbish, put recyclables into deposit bin, put away all CDs and straighten any displaced chairs. It is vital that if you change any wiring or equipment that it is restored to its original state in time for the next show.

Adobe Editing Tips

Keyboard Shortcuts

FUNCTION	SHORTCUT KEY(S)
Delete selected	Del
Back to start of file	Home
Skip to end of file	End
Play/Pause track	Space Bar
Repeat last command (open dialogue box)	F2
Repeat last command (without dialogue)	F3
Undo last command	Ctrl + Z
Select all	Ctrl + A
MULTI-TRACK SHORTCUTS	
Splice track	Ctrl + K
Insert track into multi-track	Ctrl + M
EDIT SHORTCUTS	
Copy selection	Ctrl + C
Cut selection	Ctrl + X
Paste selection	Ctrl + V
Paste selection to new file	Ctrl + Shift + N
Toggle between Edit, Multi-track & CD	8,9,0
Toggle between cursor types	R, S, V, A

Right-clicking on files and sound clips brings up a **Context Menu.** The context menu changes depending on what you're working on, and can save you a lot of trips to the menu bar.

When you see an asterisk* beside a file name, that means changes to that file are as yet unsaved.

In multi-track: to change the colour of clips; right-click on the clip in multi-track for the context menu. The change colour option is near the bottom. This option is useful for keeping track of different interviewees in documentaries.

Never stop a piece of music in a programme without fading it out, preferably under the link.

If someone has changed the layout of the screen, you can reset it by going to **Window/Workspace/Reset Current Workspace**.

You can save your most commonly used editing commands (Hard Limiting, Remove Subsonic Rumble etc.) under **Favourites.** This is a fantastic time-saving tool.

The **quality you save sound at is paramount**. Always check Options in the Save as dialogue box to ensure that you are saving at a correct bitrate (for mp3, wave files have no compression). 128 is fine for speech, 192 is the bare minimum for music (for FM broadcast), but 320 is best.