

Radio World®

Reprinted from February 14, 2001

USER REPORT

All-in-One Matrix Goes to Mexico

Combo Product From Comrex Circumvents Most Trouble While Retaining Ease of Use

by Allen J. Singer
Assistant Engineer
WRRM(FM)/WMOJ(FM)

CINCINNATI Today's radio engineer works in a fast-paced environment. The engineer must keep the stations on the air and the equipment working at its peak performance. He or she might have to double as the network administrator and must coordinate remote equipment with the promotions department.

When multiple stations are involved, and any of the stations is remote-intensive, equipment coordination can get hectic.

The arsenal

A typical station might have ISDN units and Marti RPU equipment. ISDN requires additional phone company installation and hefty fees. Marti requires a clean shot and preferably little atmospheric interference. Sometimes heavy moisture in the air can ruin a good shot.

In typical cases the RPU will provide good, mostly clean audio. ISDN, of course, is usually excellent.

The engineer does not work in a perfect environment. The engineer must deal with multiple simultaneous remotes on a given weekend.

Also, how many times has he or she heard a promotions person say on a Tuesday, "We're doing the afternoon guy's show live this Friday across town. You knew, didn't you?"

What to do? No time for ISDN, and the Marti is tied up that afternoon and wouldn't work at that location anyway.

Comrex has stepped in to make remotes easier for the promotions department and engineers — especially the engineers.

The HotLine has been around for a few years and provides good POTS codec audio. At WRRM(FM) "Warm 98" and WMOJ(FM) "Mojo" in Cincinnati, we have both the HotLine and the new Matrix.

The Matrix uses the same codec as the HotLine and Vector, but has added flexibility for future expansion and changes in technology.

The Matrix is a strong addition to our remote broadcast equipment arsenal. Warm 98 does a fair amount of live remotes, but Mojo — a jammin' oldies station — requires live broadcasts and constant live appearances.

Even if a remote consists of three breaks an hour, we need equipment flexibility. That is why we use both the HotLine and Matrix, sometimes simultaneously.

The HotLine is basic: one input, mic or line — a POTS codec. If that's all you need, it's perfect.

The Matrix contains a two-channel, mic/line mixer, a POTS codec, an optional eight-hour battery backup and a slot to add expansion modules. Currently, Comrex offers a module adapter for a GSM wireless phone and



Warm 98s 'Jim and Randi in the Morning' live on remote using the Comrex Matrix

an ISDN module. Thus the system has the ability to become a portable ISDN unit or a wireless phone codec.

Live from ...

The unit also can connect to our studio HotLine and, if we bought the ISDN module, we could connect it to the Telos Zephyr.

Just like the HotLine, the Matrix can be plugged into any POTS line — preferably a stand-alone line, not one that goes through a phone switch. The connection ends up staying stable and the audio is quite good. The unit also provides for talkback over the same phone line, which obviously helps a lot for jock cues.

Warm 98 and Mojo have been using the Matrix for almost three months in



Comrex Matrix

shopping malls, nightclubs and bars. One of the first times the Matrix was used was when we did "Mojo Mexico."

The morning show broadcast live from Cancun, Mexico, in October 2000. We had arranged for a phone line to be installed and the line worked the night before the broadcast. The morning of the broadcast, the line had been pulled.

The chief engineer, my boss, was on site

in Mexico. I was at the station in Cincinnati running the show there. He ended up plugging the Matrix into a hotel phone jack — which Comrex did not recommend — and I had to call the hotel front desk using a phone plugged into the studio Matrix and ask the clerk to connect me to that extension.

I then switched the Matrix to connect when the far-end Matrix answered. After we figured out how to do that, the remote went fine.

Our staff likes the flexibility and portability of the Matrix. We don't need an external mixer when we use the Matrix and the promotions department can easily break down the equipment after a broadcast without engineering help.

Because the Matrix contains its own mixer, the extra equipment needed is minimal. Normally all we need is the Matrix, a couple of mics and headphones. And with this small amount of equipment and a phone line, we can do a remote practically anywhere.

For more information call (800) 237-1776, e-mail info@comrex.com or visit www.comrex.com 