

GRANGER COMMUNITY CHURCH *Chooses Lawo*

When it comes to deciding on a new digital audio console, churches will often turn to half-a dozen established high-end manufacturers.

BY ANDRES CAAMANO

BEGINNING IN LATE 2015, Granger Community Church started to investigate how to best upgrade their trio of consoles. The search was on at WFX in Nashville that November, notes Granger's production director Tony Staires, after getting the go-ahead to look for new consoles from church leadership. At that point, the church's system was outdated. "We have a life-cycle at Granger that is about 10 years, so it was time. as we owned demo models, about 13 years old," tells Staires.

In Nashville, after stopping by a conference booth for one of the well-known console manufacturers that serve the church market, Staires visited a neighboring booth out of curiosity.

That booth was operated by Lawo, well-

known for being a leader in the professional broadcast field, and headquartered in Germany. Only in recent years has Lawo begun branching out, offering technical solutions for worship spaces.

"Shortly after the conference," recalls Staires, "Lawo called us right back. They were very honest with what they could offer. They talked to us about what their consoles could do, the quality of their consoles, and how they are better than other consoles out there."

In the ensuing months, Staires and other members of the Granger Community Church staff continued to be on the lookout for the right console manufacturer for their church. That included traveling to other churches to listen to various manufacturers' consoles.

With no Lawo console having yet been

installed at a church, Staires traveled to New York City to hear to a Lawo desk at a recording studio. He also found himself impressed upon learning the company's consoles were used last year during the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Upon narrowing their prospects down to two console manufacturers, Granger coordinated demo periods last year with both. The first demo was with a competing company's desk over the summer, followed by a Lawo console last October.

"We knew it was very important to have the manufacturers allow us to demo (their desks)," says Staires. "That was the deciding factor—how it sounded in our space."

The church's verdict was to go with Lawo, as Granger purchased two consoles and associated infrastructure. Granger's system



now features a mc²56 console handling their front-of-house duties, with a 48-fader frame, and a mc²36 console for monitors, with a 40-fader frame. In addition, the church added one Nova37 router, two compact I/Os and a DALLIS frame that has 72 inputs and 48 outputs.

Staires notes, “the compact I/Os are located on the church’s stage and in our broadcast room. With the implementation of the Nova37, it allows us to interconnect all of our consoles, stage boxes and I/O in a cloud format, where you can easily access all of the inputs and outputs of the system. It also allows us to expand in the future.”

While Granger went with a mc²36 and mc²56 console, the mc²36 is fully capable of operating on its own. The mc²36, though, can also be networked with other



A view of the stage in the worship space at Granger Community Church in Granger, Ind., recently during a worship service.



The worship band performs at Granger Community Church in Granger, Ind.

mc²36, mc²56, or mc²66 consoles, allowing it to be easily incorporated into any future expansion.

To Staires, he sees the new console system as one primed to grow for years without limits at their Granger location (the church has a second campus in Elkhart, Indiana) that averages more than 3,000 each Sunday.

“It can grow, to a full broadcast mix, or we can integrate it with our other location, or by utilizing other resources,” he elaborates. “We had a robust system in terms of channel counts, inputs and outputs. With this system, though, we can continue to grow; we are not limited at all. That’s what we love, that it’s seamless and we are not stuck.”

As part of its current configuration, Granger’s mc²36 console controls its monitors. It includes up to 192 DSP channels, and has an impressive linear frequency response of just 0.03dB, between 20 Hz and 20 kHz, and an impressively low THD rating of 0.0006 percent. The church’s FOH console, the mc²56, is even more impressive, capable of a maximum of 888 fully configured DSP channels. In addition, the mc²56 has 144 summing buses of signal process-

ing, along with 8,192 x 8,192 mono-channel matrix capacity.

Both the mc²36 and mc²56 are designed with 21.5-inch full HD touchscreens.

What really stood out for Granger’s production director, though, was the extent to which Lawo went beyond permitting the church to demo one of their consoles.

“Lawo gave us a console for two weeks, but we also had an engineer for three days (from Lawo) walk us through the demo,” explains Staires.

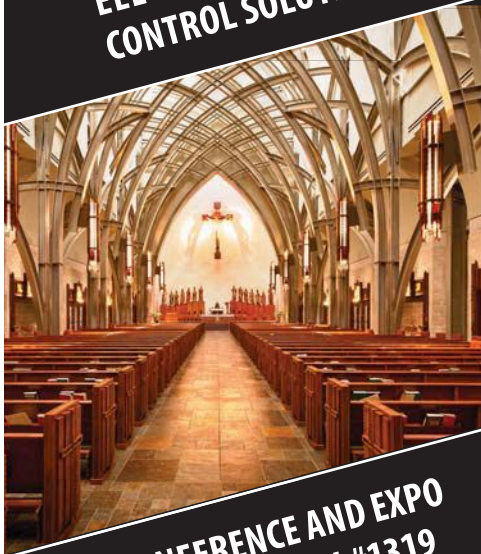
Even when acknowledging the prospect of being the first church to install a Lawo console might be seen as risky, “Lawo’s level of professionalism, honesty and openness,



Granger Community church production director poses with the recently installed Lawo mc²56 console.



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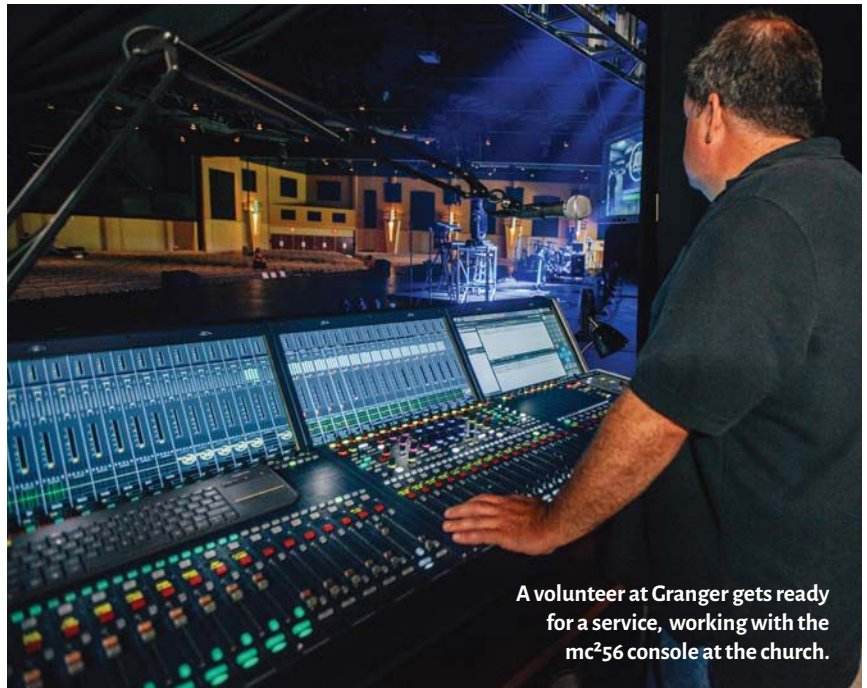


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A volunteer at Granger gets ready for a service, working with the mc²56 console at the church.

telling us what their desk could do, we felt really good about it," he shares.

"The channel count was huge to us. With other desks, you can quickly get limited in terms of channel count. With theirs, though, the sky's the limit," tells Staires. In addition, he found how the mc²56 and mc²36 consoles interact within the network was another factor in their decision.

"The (Lawo) desk just sounds amazing," Staires replied. "It is one of the few desks, in my 17 years of mixing that has made me say 'Wow.'"

In the months since the install, it continues to impress on a regular basis, he notes. "With our type of worship environment we need to have consoles that are very flexible, and they have done that really well.

The goal was to do the install prior to Christmas, says Staires, adding, "We got it completed in a week. It was the week before our biggest service on Christmas Eve. It went really well."

And during that week, the work at the church, founded in 1986, was completed without needing an integrator. The project



A Granger staff member stands over the Lawo mc²56 console in the front of house during rehearsal.

was done with the church's staff pairing up with an engineer from Lawo.

Staires outlines that the work was squeezed between two weekends, preventing any service delays or cancellations. By Thursday of the install week, enough work was finalized for the church to hold its regularly scheduled rehearsal that night.

When asked whether there were any challenges with the install, particularly since the install was done without an integrator, Staires commented, "Installing our old equipment (10 years ago) was harder than this new equipment. There were some initial challenges with them customizing, specifically the (mc²36) monitor desk to function for a live environment, but they were quickly able to resolve those issues."

While many churches come to fear what level of support awaits them following an install, it became clear to the church's production director that Lawo had no intent of leaving Granger on their own post-install.

"The church's verdict was to go with Lawo, as Granger purchased two consoles and associated infrastructure."

"Not only have we been able to buy Lawo equipment, but there has been a partnership," he notes. "They understand our workflow, and they have customized our equipment (to our needs)."

The customizations that were completed following the install resulted in the system being fully commissioned by March, according to Staires. The church's staff had compiled a series of requested changes over three months, and Lawo representatives returned to complete them. In the interim, he adds, "We weren't limping along by any means," before those changes were made.

"They came back to make sure what our work flow was, after which they did the customizations," says Staires. "When we demoed other consoles, we'd ask if we could change this or that, and we would be told 'no.' But with the Lawo console, we were



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told 'yes.'” Also, with each passing month, he notes, “With the regular updates to their software, it’s getting even better.”

As Staires acknowledges, any church that transitions to another console manufacturer, will have to contend with many changes. In particular, to how “it takes time to learn a new work flow.” Playing a significant role at lessening the learning curve, though, was Lawo, Staires points out.

Even after Lawo came to complete the customizations in March, an engineer returned in May. At that time, they helped for three more days of “continuing education, and more tweaks to the console,” explains Staires. That visit also including hearing “the vision about what the future updates could be.” The three days in May, was on top of the three full days of training that staff and volunteers received during the October demo period. That was soon followed up by an additional week of training during the December install. And while the system was being customized in March,



Among the items that were installed at Granger included a LAWO digital 8 analog-to-IP interface race unit (left). A volunteer (top) helped to install the equipment in December 2016. The Lawo mc²56 console is shown (center) prior to the completion of the install.

three more days of training were scheduled.

With so many examples of provided training, Staires emphasizes, “These were things that I didn’t ask for, or beg for. They initially told us, if this system is not for you, they would be OK with it.” They were not trying to push it on us. We figured out quickly that with their system, it would not only meet our needs and expectations, but exceed them.”

Beyond just the training opportunities that Lawo has provided Granger over the course of the last 10 months, Staires adds, “Any time we have questions, we have engineers that we can contact directly for support ... which has not been very often.”

Lawo’s willingness to being so involved from the outset, beginning with the demo and months after the install, he explains, stood in stark contrast after years of frustration over a lack of support from the church’s prior console manufacturer. “When we knew we were in the ballpark in terms of finances (to purchase the Lawo equipment, and that we would have ongoing support, we knew it was right for us.” **WF**

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