



Allen & Heath

GL2800 and GL3800 Mixing Consoles

By Mark Amundson

When I first started shopping for an entry-level "professional" console, I purchased the Allen & Heath GL2200. And when I mixed on most of the club install rigs, I usually had Allen & Heath GL2200 or GL3300 consoles to work with. So when Allen & Heath put together the GL2800 and GL3800 consoles, I knew they had to work hard to make improvements on these GL-series workhorses.

And all that work and customer surveying, by Carey Davies and crew at Allen & Heath, really paid off on the new GL-series consoles. Right from the start, I knew the very clean mic pre's and EQ sections of the ML-series went into the new Mix Wizards, and were destined for the GL-series. So, to check out the improvements, I had 24-channel versions of both the GL2800 and GL3800 sent to me for review.

The GL2800

While the GL2800 and GL3800 share many of the same features and architecture, the GL2800 takes on the look and feel of the GL2200 predecessor, with its stereo/mono channels at strip 15 and 16 and a straight,

Running down the basics for you Allen & Heath non-believers, the preamps are high-quality transistor front-end circuits for +26dBu headroom (without the 20dB pad) and have a +6 to +60dB gain control range to handle every possible signal source. The line input on each channel strip has a TRS input jack and the 20dB pad inserted for a -14dB to +40dB gain range. Standard front-end features like 100Hz, 12dB/octave high-pass filters, polarity and phantom switches accompany the pad switch to fill out the pre-insert electronics. After the TRS insert jack, the switchable four-band EQ section has

with inputs from an external line source, the eight subgroups and L-R-M masters. Besides the now-standard group/aux flipping switches,

(There are two other versions of the console that include up to eight stereo channels.) But the GL3800 does upgrade the 100mm faders to a higher quality dual-rail fader. While some may dispute this, I preferred the GL3300/GL3800 console in permanent install applications because the meter-pod grows the roadcasing into very large sizing.

GL2800



single-rank work surface with an eye toward many features at an economical price. The big changes are the eight subgroups from 4, and 10 auxes from 6. The channel strips got a minor revamping with the EQ section taking on the new mid-sweep ranges of 35Hz to 1KHz, and 500Hz to 15KHz with a Q of 1.8 for fairly narrow tweaking.

Gone are the internal power supply and BNC jack for console gooseneck lighting. Replacing the mini-switcher PSU are two metal connectors for one or two RPS-11 external power supply units. The RPS-11 units are built like tanks, and are highly reliable, three-rack-space, linear-regulated units. As with other newer Allen & Heath consoles, the console lighting has two or more four-pin XLR sockets rear-mounted for secure and generous task lighting. And Allen & Heath promotes its new LED-based 18-inch gooseneck lights for low-heat, high-brightness usage.

80Hz and 12KHz shelving bands along with the fixed-Q swept mid sections.

The auxiliary sends are grouped as 4 + 4 + 1 stereo, for 10 send busses. Part of the logic for the last pair of sends is for monitor use, where the console can be switched to eight wedge sends and three stereo IEM sends by using auxes 9 and 10 and the 12-by-4 matrix outputs. In the fader section, the 100m dust-sealed channel faders have the pan control (L-R) and channel assigns for the usual L-R, M, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8 subgroups. Four mute group assigns are added, plus wider angle visibility four-LED channel metering for -12, 0, +6 and peak indications. The peak LED illuminates about -5dB away from strip supply rails to give you fair warning.

The GL2800 and GL3800 master sections are about identical with two spare stereo line returns for effects or recorded source material. The 12-by-4 matrix mixing section is equipped

the subgroups get the 100mm faders and more four-LED metering with L-R pans and L-R, M assign switches. Also in the master section is the cue wedge, or mono mix flip switch, to go along with FOH or monitor position dual functionality. And these consoles get the usual Allen & Heath treatment with extensive talkback and monitor source configuration switches and level controls.

The GL3800

The GL3800 is the "more, please!" version of the GL2800, in that it borrows the GL3300 meter-pod bridge with 11 VU meters for us old fart mixers who prefer the averaging ballistics of needles besides peak-reading LED metering. The version of the GL3800 that I received, in keeping with the GL3300 heritage, loses the channel 15 and 16 stereo/mono strips, so you will have to burn pairs of channels on stereo effects or CD playback returns.



GL3800

The Gigs

I took each console out to a couple of gigs to see if I could find something to write about. The biggest thing to note is that the improved quality of the mic pres and EQ sections, just took my mixes to the next level in sound quality. While the earlier GL models could hold their own against the MI and prosumer console offerings, they could not compete well with the new consoles brought out by competitors within the last year. Now with the GL2800 and the GL3800, Allen & Heath has the GL-series performing with the best of the mid-market professional consoles, and at prices that are about the same as the legacy models.

Looking for niggles, I really did not find anything in the consoles to complain about. The closest thing to a niggle for me was that the mid-sweep bands have the new design, and experienced GL2200 and GL3300 users will need some finger and ear retraining. I was hoping these consoles would have appeared a year earlier, but timing is only for Allen & Heath sales managers to fret about. ●

What it is: Workhorse mid-market monitor mixing console.

Who it's for: Anklebiters and local/regional soundcos that need reliable consoles for "C" rigs.

Pros: Economical, plenty of feature flexibility, quality signal processing.

Cons: None.

How much: GL2800-824 \$4,599 MSRP, GL3800-824 \$6,599 MSRP.