

Going The Wrong Way?

It all depends upon your perspective

By Fletcher

Religion and politics: Two things you should refrain from discussing in bars. Two more to avoid: analog and digital. But here we go.

It's Friday, I'm at 33,000 feet, sipping Glen Morangie on the way back from London, confronting some of my fears and prejudices.

For more than 25 years "they" have been telling me that digital is perfect. It isn't, but at least in the last few years it's reached the point of acceptability for cranky old guys like me. With a good converter set and an excellent clock it can actually sound fairly musical.

ON THE FLY

But this is a magazine dedicated to the art and craft of sound reinforcement, not a place for the age-old analog versus digital storage device debate that has raged in the studio world since the '70s. Digital in the "live sound" world comes in the form of crossovers and desks and delays and reverbs... And we're talking about on the fly.

Me, I'm an analog desk jockey, always have been, and kinda sure I always will be, although the concept of using a digital desk in a recording environment is far less daunting to me than the abject paranoia of using a digital desk in a live application. I have friends that think I'm a complete and total moron luddite for backing away from the wonders of the available technology.

To heck with that - I just don't trust it. I want one knob, one function. However, more and more brothers are doing it all at the digital console, and I have to say, some of the shows I've



heard lately have sounded absolutely brilliant, I mean way, way, better than the record. Me, I'm still way too chicken to give it a go.

But earlier in the week, as I was wandering through the Underground tube (subway) station where Tottenham Court Road intersects with Charing Cross Road (it's way easier to walk through the tube station than to try to cross the street there), the thought dawned on me: it's all a matter of what you're used to.

How does walking through a tube station bring on an epiphany? Well, I'm an American (Or a "Merkin" as LBJ used to say). This means I walk on the right, the up escalator is on the right, I drive on the right, what's right is right... Except when you're in England, where what's right is wrong. The up escalator is on the left, they walk up the stairs on the left, and they drive on the left.

The only thing they do to the right is look that way when they're crossing the street, and they even paint warn-

ings to do so on nearly every corner to keep idiot "Merkins" like me from getting killed on a regular basis.

GET USED TO IT

By the end of the week, as happens every time I'm in a "driving on the wrong side of the road" country, I was comfortable with the escalator on the left, walking on the left side of the hall, going up the left side of the stairs, getting into the front seat of someone's car on the left (even though I knew I wasn't driving). It's simply an adjustment of getting used to something new.

I realized that, yes, with a bit of time and training, in a marginal, non-emergency situation (spelled "devoid of panic") and comfort level, I could get my sorry self behind a digital desk. I could rally around equalizers which had to be summoned instead of grabbed, I could deal with dynamics that needed to be assigned instead of patched, and I could indeed move - kicking and screaming - into the modern world.

So maybe I'd be willing to try playing with a "control surface" as opposed to a proper desk, or at least think about the possibility. Now the only remaining question is whether or not I'll get killed when I walk out of Logan Airport's Terminal E upon arrival because I looked to the right instead of the left before crossing the street

Bleeping British think they know everything... ■

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