

tie novels, so for normal humans, the text is organized in a logical fashion and well-indexed, making it quite simple to locate a description or term if time is of the essence. Got a question on a specific MIDI parameter? Easy to find. In addition, Huntington's website (controlgeek.net) offers free video lectures to accompany each chapter of the book – an incredible resource on its own.

When considering additions to my technical library, I look for resources that are extremely relevant or will allow me to learn something new and interesting about another aspect of our profession, and "Show Networks and Control Systems" definitely checks both boxes.

SOLVING DAILY CHALLENGES

When I was young, I had a great mail-order catalog called "Things You Never Knew Existed....and other items you can't possibly live without!" It was full of interesting novelty items and was certainly fun to browse, but whether or not you can't live without Fish Feet Sandals or a novelty Infinite Pouring Beer Fountain is up for debate.

However, there's another company that comes much closer to an accurate interpretation of that title for audio engineers: AV Lifesavers. Upon first visiting the website (avlifesavers.com), I went from general curiosity to "Wow, I need to order one of those" in about 30 seconds.

AV Lifesavers offers a wide selection of handy little assembled-in-USA problem solvers that seek to address those little annoyances that audio folks deal with on a daily basis. There's a whole range of mute switches and toggles, microphone splitters, mini mixers, and interfaces. It's only after learning these things exist, and then heading back out to a gig, do you really start to realize how useful these products are.

A board on which I regularly mix has no talkback button – a problem deftly solved by the Mini Mic Switch. It rides alongside the console in the road case and gives me a red momentary talkback button that is surprisingly satisfying to use. There's also an XLR mute pedal that proved perfect for allowing a drummer I work with to easily mute his vocal mic when he's not singing so it's not bleeding into his IEMs.

The XLR Mic Switch pedal – available with or without indicator LEDs – was a definitive solution that allowed a band I mix to set up a squawk mic system without having to add more



The Mini Mic Switch that adds a talkback button to a console.



A selection of handy tools from AV Lifesavers.

microphones on their already-crowded stage. A quick press of the pedal routes the vocal signal to an alternate input on their console which feeds only the IEM system, allowing the band members to communicate with each other (and me) without having to walk over to a dedicated talk mic.

There is a dizzying number of products that allow comms systems to be interfaced with audio systems, headphones, headsets, mixers, and anyplace else you'd ever need to send a comms signal. There's even a solution to the age-old problem of being unable to hear the intercoms inside a loud concert venue (or if you're like me and hate wearing a comm headset at front of house). The AV Lifesavers Com to Text interface allows you to plug a Clear-Com line into a smartphone or tablet and convert the comm chatter to *readable text on screen*. (That might actually be cooler than sliced bread.)

The stuff is passive and robust, and I definitely believe it will take the beating that comes along with a touring act. But just as important as the gear is the person designing it, and a large component of the AV Lifesavers experience is the man himself. Lonnie Bedell has been involved in audio since the mid-1980s in addition to being a graduate

of the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

At least three times in the last few months, I've been asked questions about comms interfacing and referred those people to Bedell. Much like a good audio integrator, he doesn't just offer the equipment – he knows exactly which tool is best for what you're trying to accomplish. My knowledge of comms systems doesn't extend much past how to properly use them, so I'm glad to be able to call upon the comms guru when necessary.

"I started AVLifesavers to solve real world audio problems that weren't being addressed by larger manufacturers," Bedell told me when I asked about his motivation to start AVLifesavers. "By listening to users who experience these problems first hand and combining it with my own 30-plus years of hands-on audio experience, I can come up with solutions to problems the big companies don't even know exist."

That's as accurate an assessment as any. However, the jury's still out on the Fish Feet Sandals. **LSI**

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