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ETC Gio @5 Console

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Choosing the right console can be an agonizing decision, one that you have to live with for a long time. You'll spend hours and hours sitting behind it, pressing its buttons, dialing its encoders, setting its faders, and staring at its displays, and if you make a poor choice, those hours can feel torturous. The good news is that there are lots of really good consoles from which to choose. The bad news is that there are a lot of really good consoles from which to choose, which can make the decision that much more difficult. But it helps to narrow your choices if you have a preference for a particular operating system and already have experience with it. It helps even more if the console you're considering is made by a company known for its control systems, and it has a console that fits your needs and budget.

ETC might be that company, and its new Gio @5 could be that console. It's a more compact and affordable version of the full-sized Gio (@5 is the syntax for setting the intensity to 50%), and it recently started shipping. It fits nicely in the Eos family of consoles (positioned between the Ion and the Gio), and because it runs the same operating system as the Eos Ti and the rest of the line, chances are you already know how to program it.

Much of the hardware is identical to the full-sized Gio. The Gio @5 has the same backlit control keypad and navigation keys as does the Gio, but it has one touch screen instead of two, and five motorized playbacks and load buttons instead of 10. The end result: The @5 is a medium-sized console with a 25.5" (641mm) footprint weighing about 50lb. It's small enough that one person can lift it out of its case and carry it (I carried it up the stairs to

my office), although in its case it's much too big to fit in an overhead airline bin and you'll probably need a second person to help lift it.

I have always liked programming consoles using the command line, probably because I'm a fairly decent touch typist, but nothing beats a good touch screen for easy direct selection and control of fixtures, especially when

allowing you to expand your playbacks 10 or 20 faders at a time. The @5 also has one master fader pair and a keyboard drawer with a backlit keyboard. You can also connect two external monitors with or without touch or multi-touch control with resolution of at least 1280 x 1024, which you can find starting at about \$200 or \$300, depending on their size.



The Gio @5 shares a lot in common with the full-sized Gio console, including its backlit control keypad and navigation keys. The Gio @5 has a 17" touch screen, five motorized playbacks and load buttons, and 24 customizable hardkeys.

you use magic sheets. The multi-touch LCD display is the same size as the Gio (17"); it folds flat for transportation but can be angled for use while you are standing or sitting.

The four encoders on the @5 have haptic feedback, and the five motorized faders have 100 pages with which to work. If that's not enough, optional Motorized Fader Wings are available,

In a couple of areas, the @5 actually outdoes the Gio. First, it has 24 customizable hardkeys while the Gio has 12, and, second, the @5 has four DMX output ports while the Gio has only two. On the other hand, the Gio has a MIDI in and a MIDI out, while the @5 does not. But you can use one of the seven USB ports to connect a USB-to-MIDI adaptor, which you can buy at



The multi-touch LCD display articulates with the touch of a button. It can fold flat for transportation or it can be angled for use while you are standing or sitting.

any music store for about \$30 or \$40, and it will behave exactly as does the Gio MIDI function.

The Gio @5 is available with 2,048 to 32,768 outputs (or DMX slots) and it can be upgraded in increments of 1,024, 2,048, or 4,096. It comes with a total of 16,000 control channels (or fixtures), but they can be labeled any number between 1 and 99,999. There are two individually configurable Ethernet ports, and the networking capabilities of the Eos family of consoles are as good as it gets. Eos, Gio, and Ion consoles can be networked and partitioned among up to 12 users with restricted access using assigned channels, and they can be used for backup with live tracking, and show data automatically backed up to consoles on the network.

It's not new to Gio @5, but one of my favorite features of the Eos family of consoles is the ETCnomad off-line editor. It can run on a Mac or a PC, and it doesn't require a lot of comput-

er horsepower. It runs well on my Kangaroo PC, which costs all of \$100, and with my Dell 22" touchscreen monitor I can get a good jump-start on programming a show.

If you don't yet know how to program the Eos family of consoles, you have no excuses. The documentation is very good, and ETC hosts a lot of great classes around the country. I've taken Ellen White's Ion programming classes, as well as David Kane and Matt Ardine's pixel-mapping class, and, when I need a refresher, I often rely on the online tutorials hosted by Nick Gonsman and Steve Aldridge.

But the truth is, you don't really know a console intimately until you've spent some time programming a show when the clock is ticking and people looking over your shoulder, breathing down your neck, and expecting you to create magic on demand. The next best thing is to woodshed with the console and put it through some paces, which is what I had a chance to do with the Gio @5. Having some familiarity with the Eos line of consoles and the Eos OS, it's not hard to draw the conclusion that I would love to have this console on a show. I've always associated ETC consoles with theatre, but the company says the Gio @5 "has everything a programmer needs to rock small, live gigs—right out of the road case," and "the short-throw motorized faders are designed for efficient busking, but if more hands-on control is needed, the console can serve as a base for a customized, expanded work surface of plug-and-play Motorized Fader Wings, external touch screen, monitors and other accessories." I think the 24 customizable hardkeys on the front panel might also help in that regard if you can figure out some good macros for playback. And it might be that the new version 2.5 software has some improvements in that area as well.

Either way, I'm sold. 📶

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