The Village upgrades for *Spider-Man 3*

Under a tight deadline, this audio pro decided to try Mackie's new Control Pro.

CULVER CITY, CA — In the middle of a hectic 80-hour work week, getting music ready for the *Spider-Man 3* mix, synthesizer producer Adam Barber did the unthinkable.

In most cases, you'd have to be a little nuts to integrate a new technology at this point of a film mix. But recognizing the potential of the new Mackie Control Pro, Barber, who is currently working at Village Recorder (www.villagestudios.com), decided to take the leap and put it front and center in his workflow, and it was easy. "I took it out of the box, plugged in the USB cable and — bam — here was my session, ready to go," he says. "The USB aspect was a huge asset. I could just grab the unit and hook it up to a different computer, swapping back and forth between Pro Tools and Logic. All I had to do was unplug the USB cable."

While the easy set-up kept their schedule on track, it was the capabilities of the Mackie Control Pro that led Barber to integrate it in the first place. "First and foremost was the clarity of the unit," he says. "You have a bright background with dark writing, which was so much easier to look at and read."

THE WORKFLOW

On *Spider-Man 3*, Barber was working with composer Christopher Young at Ilsley Music in Culver City. They had also worked together on *Ghost Rider*. Barber's role with Young is to make sure everything in the post music creation process flows to the composer so he can do his thing.

"We conform the music and prep all the mock-ups for the recording session," he says. "That's stems, sound design and any additional audio we feel may be needed at the stage. It really was a workhorse for all of the above. The only place we didn't use it was on the dub stage. But it was there for everything else — stemming, MIDI mock-ups, premixes and even some sound design."

Barber went all out, integrating a Mackie Control Universal Pro (MCU), the additional C4 Pro instrument and plug-in module, and an eight-fader Extender Pro. "I like to have my C4 on the right hand side of the MCU Pro," he says. "I see the C4 as an extension of the right side of the MCU Pro. When I use the MCU Pro with my right hand and want more control, my hand just moves a little more to the right, lands on the C4 and just like that, there is a ton of control. And

the design — I just think it lends itself to be on the right hand side while the Extender makes visual sense being on the left. Not to mention that the C4 is perfect for working with plug-ins in Logic."

This style of working is also reducing the need to move back and forth between the computer keyboard and the MCU. Instead, he's doing it all intuitively with the Mackie Control Pro. "For example, I'll input data with my right hand. Then, instead of reaching for the QWERTY keyboard, my hand slips right over to the transport, nav buttons and jog wheel area. My hand stays right there while my left hand begins to manipulate the faders. The lower right corner of the MCU Pro and right part in general just has great functionality with the automation buttons."

All together, the MCU, C4 and Extender comprised a complementary system that helped in every aspect of the scoring team's post work, Barber says. "The MCU became my primary interface for manipulating MIDI and track automation. I'd use the C4 to interact with channel strips and plug-ins. I

Adam Barber with the Mackie Control Pro. Sony Pictures' *Spider-Man 3* **featured a score by Christopher Young of Islley Music.**

mostly wrote automation on the MCU Pro and Extender for volume rides and instrument pannings. I'm finding new ways to use it every day — like having my MCU Pro manipulate audio tracks and having the Extender just manipulate MIDI tracks. This is a neat trick I figured out in Logic."

And what about the new faders? "They're touch-sensitive and they're just so smooth," he says. This also enabled him to take his hands off of a mouse and keyboard and mix the way nature intended. "Basically my workflow went from using a mouse and keyboard to using the MCU Pro most of the time. Volume rides, switching between MIDI information, mixing audio, manipulating plug-ins — it all became even quicker then I imagined."

And this from someone who is no stranger to using control surfaces. He's logged his share of hours on Logic Control, ProControl, and DM2000 units, and was a big fan of the original Mackie HUI. How does the MCU Pro compare? "First off, the faders feel better than the [HUI]. It also just felt like it was built sturdier. The quick access nav buttons, transport and the pan pots are the most helpful improvements. Since we are attempting to reproduce an orchestral palette we are very conscious of where instruments sit in the stereo field. Those new pan pots are just wonderful."

Barber liked the system so much, he put in orders for two MCU Pro units, one designed for his new room at the Village Recorder in LA and another for the road. He added the C4 and Extender too.

"I'm so happy that it worked straight out of the box for [*Spider-Man 3*]," he says. "I wish dating was that simple!" ▪POST