

Sound That Moves

Inside the Move from the CL/QL Series to RIVAGE PM

By Alex Earnhardt, Audio Engineer - based on interviews and conversations with Ben Cochran, John Merkel, Landin Hull and Nate Will, audio professionals at Christ Community Chapel (CCC).

A System at Its Ceiling

"We'd pushed the platform well past its intended use case," recalls CCC's audio director. "By the end, the CL was basically an expensive MIDI controller for Waves."

Where the Old System Broke Down

CCC's annual Christmas concert became the stress test. With roughly 90 inputs and complex routing requirements, the team found themselves operating with no margin for error.

"Any small patch mistake - or a Dante preset not recalling correctly - the whole thing felt like a house of cards," one engineer explains.

The pain points were clear: limited I/O headroom, heavy dependence on external processing, and multi-console workflows that were difficult to manage under pressure.

The Rental That Changed Everything

To evaluate next steps, CCC rented a Yamaha RIVAGE PM5. The impact was immediate.

"It just did everything we needed - without the gymnastics," the team says. "Patching simplified. Virtual soundcheck became a single-button operation. Stability improved noticeably."

RIVAGE PM wasn't a foregone conclusion. CCC also considered two other major console ecosystems, each offering compelling strengths: flexible mixing workflows, sophisticated routing architectures, and modern user interfaces.

However, one option required multiple layers of signal conversion to integrate into CCC's Dante-based infrastructure - adding cost and introducing new failure points. The other leaned heavily on custom scripting to



Christ Community Chapel Audio team (from left to right): Ben Cochran, John Merkel, Landin Hull, and Nate Will, pictured with Alex Earnhardt

unlock its advanced automation, creating engineering overhead that didn't align with CCC's volunteer-driven model.

In the end, only one system delivered the balance CCC needed: sonic character, operational efficiency, stability, and seamless network integration - without increasing complexity.

Why RIVAGE PM - and Why RPro

CCC ultimately selected a Yamaha RIVAGE PM5 paired with RPro I/O and TWINLANE, rather than remaining fully Dante-based with Rio units. Four factors drove the decision.

First was sound. "I'm always chasing saturation," Merkel notes. "With the transformer circuit, it's already there." The system delivered greater headroom and clarity, requiring less corrective EQ and enabling more musical gain staging - especially on transient-heavy sources.

Latency was another decisive factor. The IEM signal path dropped to roughly 5 ms end-to-end, crossing into a range where the improvement was immediately apparent.

"Volunteers heard the difference before we even told them anything had changed," says the monitor engineer. "It just sounds bigger, smoother, clearer."

Mixing After the Upgrade

Running at 96 kHz with TWINLANE, CCC's mixes opened up. Transients felt smoother. Low-mid buildup diminished. External DSP usage dropped dramatically. "We're finally spending our time mixing - not troubleshooting," the team says.

Just as important, RIVAGE PM retained Yamaha's operational "language." CL/QL operators transitioned quickly, and the move to a single-desk environment eliminated orchestral splits, DSP juggling, and the fragility of multi-console workflows.

Investment Rationale: A Buyer's Perspective

CCC approached the console decision as a 10-15-year capital investment - one that needed to reduce operational risk while delivering tangible gains over time. With the previous system fully amortized, continued investment in aging I/O offered diminishing returns.

When the team modeled true system costs - format conversion, external DSP reliance, added failure points, and integration engineering - the delta between a mid-tier upgrade path and a RIVAGE PM platform was smaller than expected. Reliability, sonic headroom, and operational simplicity tipped the balance.

Keeping roughly 98% of processing on the console, minimizing plug-ins, and consolidating to a one-desk workflow translated into faster setups, tighter rehearsals, and fewer variables during high-pressure seasons like Christmas and Easter.

Scalable I/O allowed CCC to size the system for 50-plus weekends a year and rent additional cards for rare peak events.

Crucially, the team valued serviceability and self-sufficiency. No bespoke scripting. No dependency on third-party specialists. Less friction - higher ceiling.

Practical Takeaways for Churches

- **Do the math. Don't assume flagship consoles are out of reach - compare full system costs, not list prices.**
- **Think long-term. You'll live with the platform for a decade or more; choose for longevity and operational fit.**
- **Prioritize sound and workflow. Saturation, headroom, latency, and reliability matter as much as I/O counts.**
- **Consider stepping up. "Step up past what you need today," the team quips, noting the smaller-than-expected delta once the full ecosystem is considered.**

Bottom Line

"The goal isn't for congregants to notice the console - it's for them to be fully immersed in the moment," says CCC's FOH lead. "From spoken word clarity to the weight and warmth of full orchestra and layered vocals, everything now feels more open, more controlled, and more musical."

For Christ Community Chapel, RIVAGE PM isn't merely an upgrade - it's mission insurance. It's the difference between hoping the system holds and knowing it will. Sundays are protected. Peak moments are unleashed. And when the room fills, the lights fade, and the first note hits, there's no hesitation - only confidence, power, and a mix that carries the moment without ever letting go.