

The Dangerous Music Master

setup and operation manual

The Dangerous Music Mastering controller represents the culmination of the design and implementation of custom mastering equipment in many of the worlds top mastering studios by the designers at DMI. Fifteen years of experience have been distilled down to a two rack space unit of exceptional ergonomic and sonic performance at a price about a third of the designer's previous attempts. In conjunction with the Dangerous Music **Monitor**, the addition of one's favorite analog processing equipment and A/D/A converters, the Master makes the setup of a quality analog mastering system easier than it has ever been. This manual explains the features, controls, connections, and suggestions for the operation of this unit.

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Safety Review

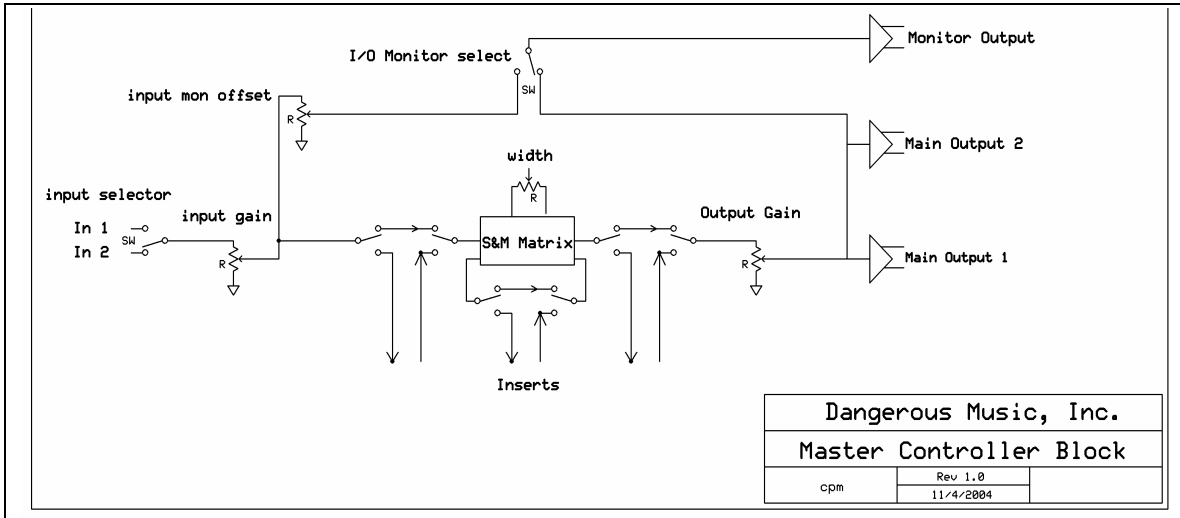
Certain precautions should be taken when using electrical products. Please observe the safety hints by reading the manual and obtaining qualified help if necessary to adhere to the precautions. **The power supply must be switched to the proper mains voltage. Please check the red window on the power supply to verify the correct setting.**

1. Always use a properly grounded power supply cord with this product. Please do not defeat the ground pin on the mains plug. This connection provides earth to the chassis and signal grounds inside the device for clean and quiet operation. The “Internal jumpers and adjustments” page can help clear up a buzz problem if one develops.
2. Avoid high temperature operation in equipment racks by providing air circulation. The number one killer of electronic gear is HEAT. The life expectancy of electrolytic capacitors (the usual casualty in a heat situation) goes from 10 or 15 years to 10 or 15 weeks if the temperature *inside* the box is allowed to rise beyond 140 degrees F. Vented rack panels may look like wasted space to an interior decorator, but they look like *beauty* to a technician or equipment designer! If the front panel is hot, it is roasting inside the box.
3. Avoid areas of high magnetic fields. The steel chassis of **Master** is designed to shield the circuits from EMI and RFI (magnetic and radio interference). When installing equipment in racks, it is prudent to put power amplifiers and large power supplies at least several rack spaces, if not in a different rack, away from equipment that deals with low level signals. Separation of high level and low level equipment can pre-empt trouble caused by heat and EMI.
4. Care should be taken to avoid liquid spills around equipment. If a spill occurs, please shut off the gear. A qualified technician should investigate accidents to prevent further equipment damage or personnel hazards caused by spills.
5. Every attempt has been made by the designers to provide versatility in the set-up and calibration of **Master**. As such, there ARE user serviceable jumpers and calibrations inside. If one is uncomfortable with opening gear and changing jumpers or making adjustments, please seek qualified help if necessary.
6. If adjustments or jumper changes are required, please unplug the power before opening the top. Dropped screws or tools on a live circuit board can manifest themselves as burn marks and smoked components. While we feel your pain, (been there) subsequent damage is not covered by the warranty.

Dangerous Music Incorporated reserves the right to change the specifications or modify the designs of its equipment. Sending in the registration card is our way of keeping in touch with users of our equipment should this become necessary. Registration information is always kept confidential and never disclosed to third parties for any reason. DMI wishes that the contents of this manual not be disclosed to third parties without the consent of the designers.

Overview

The Dangerous **Master** is easy to set up and use. It is designed to be the platform that turns a few pieces of analog outboard processing gear, a D/A or analog source, and an A/D hooked up to an editing computer, into the backbone of a mastering rig.



An analog source is fed to the input where the input gain control let's one precisely set the level and balance into the insert stack.

Your favorite analog processing gear is hooked up to the inserts. When an insert button is pressed, that loop is in line. The second loop can work in stereo or "Sum and Minus" mode. In S&M, one can alter the center pan information of a mix without affecting the sides and vice versa. For instance, the lead vocal is too bright but the guitars panned to the sides are dull? Use stereo EQ in S&M to fix both problems! This kind of processing makes a mastering engineer so equipped "King of the Mountain". The Width control allows adjustment of the stereo image width. It works even when Insert 2 is not pressed when S&M is selected. Remember, while S&M is fun, too much can be a bad thing!

The writer's favorite suggested processing goes like this:

Insert 1 gets a stereo EQ to set the tone correct for the rest of the stack.

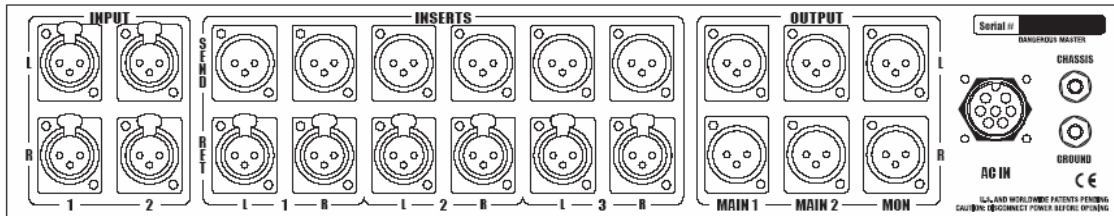
Insert 2 gets a parametric EQ, De-Esser, and Limiter to fix any problem with a mix.

Insert 3 gets a Compressor to control dynamic range for loudness.

The Output Gain control let's one precisely 'hit' the A/D converter at the correct level.

The Input/Output Monitor Selector let's one compare the dry and processed signal and there is an Input Monitor Offset control so that comparison can be made even after adding several dB of loudness to the mastered signal. This also allows an easy way to tell how much apparent loudness has been added to the signal (by matching the apparent levels and reading the difference on the IMO gain control).

Rear panel connectors



DANGEROUS MASTER REAR PANEL

An analog source is fed to the input connectors. There are two sets, selectable by the 'IN 1-2' switch on the front panel. This makes it easy to have a D/A normaled to the first input and the second input wired to a patchbay or tape machine.

The inserts are to include analog processing equipment. It has been found by the authors after extensive experimentation that 3 insert loops provide the correct number of insert points versus the minimum number of relays to get the job done. More equipment is accommodated by 'ganging' as explained on the previous page. The insert points can be run to a patchbay if the added flexibility of patching is needed (to re-route the order of processing for instance). More connectors and cable may not equal better sound quality.

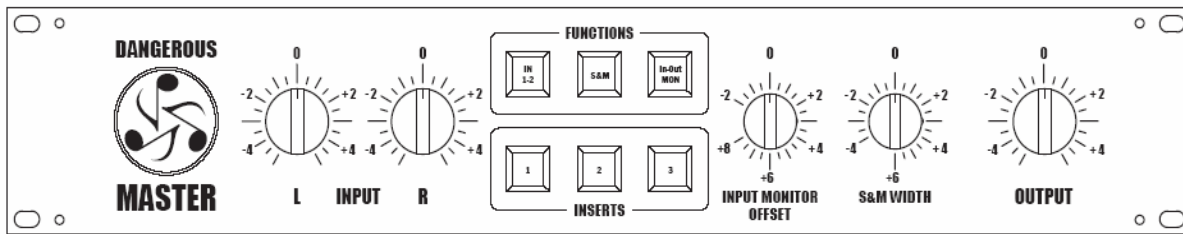
There are 2 'Main outputs' to feed A/D converters, a tape machine, or patchbay depending on the user's preference. The authors use 2 different A/D converters to select the best one for 'flavor' depending on the program material.

The 'Monitor' output feeds the Dangerous Music **Monitor**. The input signal (post Input level and Input Monitor Offset level controls) or the output signal (post processing) will be sent to the **Monitor** depending on the position of the 'Mon Out' switch on the front panel.

The 'AC IN' connector goes to the power supply. Please check that the supply is off before plugging in this cable. Hot plugging will result in burned contacts.

The 'CHASSIS' and 'GROUND' banana jacks are strapped together at the factory. The strap may be removed to isolate the chassis and audio grounds. The jacks can be used to quiet down a troublesome piece of audio equipment (Sontec) with a ground wire if necessary.

Front Panel controls



DANGEROUS MASTER FRONT PANEL

The Input Level Controls let the engineer set precisely, the operating level and balance that will go through the equipment selected by the Insert buttons. The range is 10 dB in 0.5 dB steps.

The top row of buttons under 'Functions' select the following:

1. 'IN 1-2' selects which input is processed.
2. 'S&M' selects whether or not Insert 2 is in Stereo or Middle Sides mode.
3. 'OUT MON' selects whether the Monitor Output jacks have the Input or Output signal sent to the monitor section.

The Input Monitor Offset level control adjusts the level of the Input Monitor. This is very handy to match the input and output levels to listen to the effect of processing without the level difference clouding one's judgment. The engineer can also match input and output level, look down at the scale, and determine the relative gain obtained from the mastering process. This control has a scale of -2 to +8dB in 0.5 dB steps.

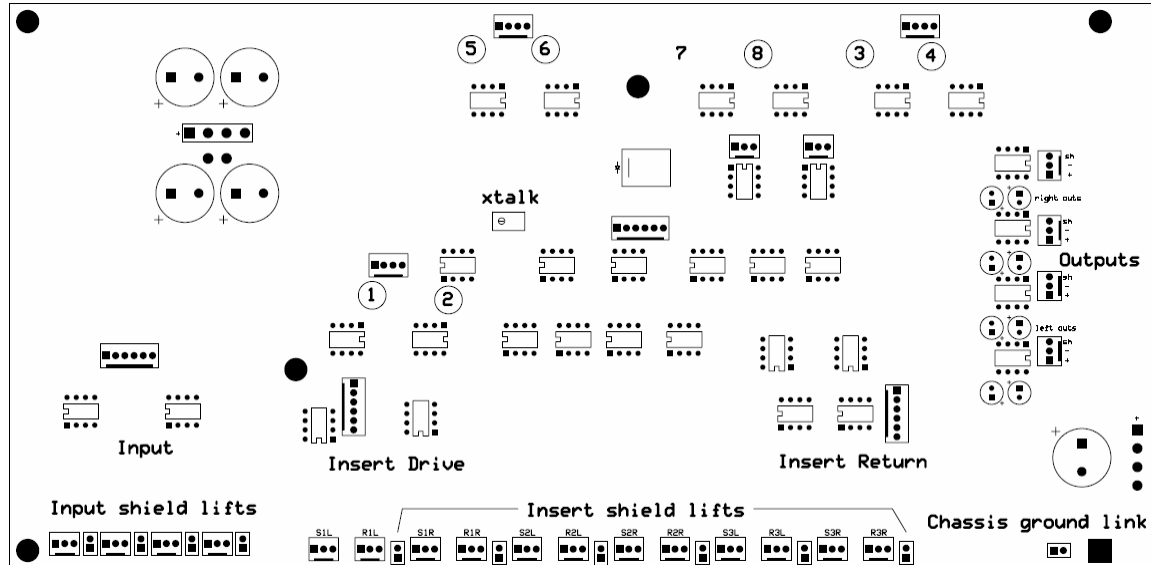
The S&M width control adjusts the stereo image width when the S&M button is pressed. Please note that activating S&M without 'Insert 2' selected still passes audio through the matrix.

The Output level control let's one set the final level presented to the A/D converter. The range is 10dB in 0.5 dB steps.

The level controls are all stepped attenuators for accuracy, repeatability, and highest sound quality. The attenuators are built with what we feel are the highest quality switches and resistors available at any cost. It is useful to **gently** 'run the switches through' their travel every so often to spread the lubricants around inside and wipe the contacts clean. This helps keep the switches quiet. The use of contact cleaners is not necessary and will damage the switches by washing the grease out.

Internal Jumpers and Adjustments (please see step 5 on page 2)

The motherboard has input cable shield ground selection jumpers to accommodate different grounding schemes. It is recommended that all electrical equipment in the studio is properly grounded by making sure that power cables have 3 pins and that the third pin is connected to ground. The use of 'ground lifts' to clear up a buzz problem is frowned upon by the international consortium of electrical safety agencies. If a ground noise problem occurs, it may be cleared up by switching the jumper position on the connector associated with the piece of gear that is having the buzz problem.



The shield lift headers have 2 posts. A jumper placed over both posts connects the chassis ground to the cable shield. To lift a shield, pull the jumper off of the posts. It is a good idea to put the 'unused' jumpers on one of the posts to keep from losing the jumper.

Master should not need to be calibrated but in case it does, here is the procedure:

1. Obtain a calibrated oscillator and level measuring device. These should be lab quality (HP, Tektronix, Neutrik, Audio Precision, etc.)
2. Place the **Master** on a clean, well lit table with a pad under it to prevent scratches.
3. Remove the top to expose the motherboard for calibration.
4. Hook up the power supply and turn on the unit.
5. Set all controls to unity gain with all Function and Insert switches out.
6. Set the oscillator for +4dBu and plug into Input 1. Feed both channels.
7. Activate 'Insert 1' and measure the level coming out of the 'Send 1' jacks.
8. Adjust P1 and P2 to measure +4dBu.
9. Deactivate 'Insert 1' and adjust P3 and P4 to read +4dBu at 'Main Output 1'.
10. Adjust P5 and P6 to measure +4dBu at the 'Monitor Output' jack.
11. Activate the 'OUT MON' function and adjust P7 and P8 to read +4dBu at the Monitor Output jack.
12. Pull the right channel's input. Activate the 'S&M' function. Adjust the 'xtalk' pot for minimum signal at the Right output. The signal should null below -70dBu.

Dangerous Music highly recommends the Mastering furniture built by Sterling Modular Systems to facilitate installation. Please check out their website.

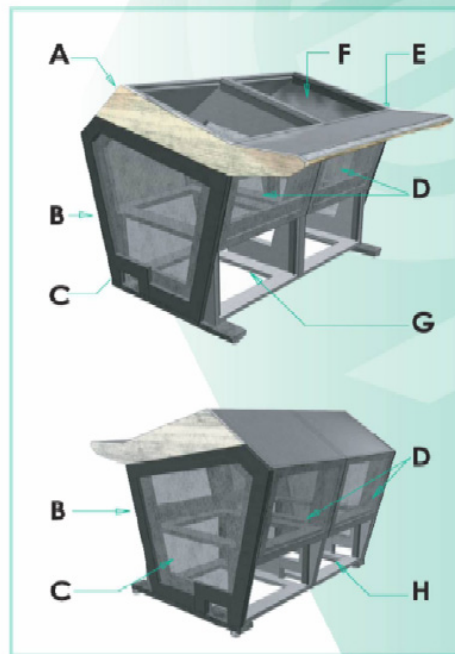
"Acoustics Matter"

Every console is designed with the largest amount of acoustical, venting and "pass-through" holes possible. Its angular shape and low profile reduce the amount of sound reflections and obstructions.

Its ergonomic design, generous equipment space and available configuration options, make it the perfect console for any mastering or audio suite

Check the rest of these features....

- A) 3/4" solid Red Oak side panels, and 1 1/2" thick desk nose.
- B) Side leg profile finished with durable texture paint.
- C) Side leg vent insert is made of fabric to reduce metal "ping or rattle".
- D) Front and rear removable panels are also open and covered in fabric to allow for sound pass through and reduce rattle.
- E) Desk top surface is laminate to match other surfaces of the rack "Pod".
- F) 12ru of desk top rack space in each rack "Pod".
- G) 6ru of rack space in the lower front of each rack "Pod".
- H) 6ru of rack space in the rear lower section of each rack "Pod".
- I) Heavy gauge steel foot assembly with heavy duty levelers.



 **Sterling
modular**
2234 Farmington Avenue
Boyertown, PA. 19512

phone 610-369-5802 fax 610-369-9003

www.sterlingmodular.com