

Product Of The Month: AS-62DS Socapex Dimmer Pack

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Lightronics

What it Does

The AS-62DS from Lightronics is a six channel portable dimmer pack with a Socapex connector. This is an interesting adaptation of the traditional "shoe-box"-style dimmer pack. With a form factor that allows you to hang it from a pipe as well as in a truss, you can now have light trees or a truss section that can be cabled neatly. You can add a breakout with the connectors and length of your choice. This dimmer pack may be a good choice for small corporate projects as well as for churches and schools, especially where you need a few extra circuits.

The unit has six 1,200W dimmers that can also be set to function in a relay mode. It can handle a 7,200W continuous load and features Uni-Sink construction for heat dissipation as well as durability, and the body is constructed from anodized aluminum so the unit won't rust. It can handle DMX and LMX control protocols and multiple control sources simultaneously. The Socapex connector and circuit breakers come as standard, as do options for either 208/220V 50/60 Hz power.

"The unit is designed to provide dimming tailored to lighting truss sections which are commonly found on medium to large stages," says Don Poppendieck, technical director for Lightronics. "These truss sections are typically pre-wired for six dimming channels and use Socapex-style cabling between the dimmer packs and the lighting fixtures. The AS-62DS is a very compact unit which can be mounted directly on the truss, which eliminates the need for costly cable runs back to the floor. The unit has a maximum capacity of 1,200W per channel so you can comfortably run 1,000W PAR lamps on a channel. The AS-62DS is mounted using standard lighting equipment clamps and may be operated in any orientation."

"The dimmer pack gets its power through a single four conductor power cable," continues Poppendieck. "A fast acting circuit breaker in each channel eliminates fumbling around with fuses in the event of a channel overload. 40A triacs are used in this unit to provide 200% overhead capacity in the internal electronics. And 350 microsecond filtering and soft-start techniques provide noise reduction and lamp life extension."

"The AS-62DS may be addressed through the full 512-channel DMX range and will accommodate the older LMX [generically known as multiplex] protocol," says Poppendieck. "Pairs of channel may be operated in a non-dim or relay mode to provide control of equipment which must be switched on and off remotely but cannot tolerate a dimmed power source. True AC line zero crossing switching is employed in this mode. The unit can also provide stand-alone chaser operation. In this mode, an operator may select one of eight preset chaser patterns which will run without the use of a lighting console. The operator can also control the speed of the chase, which can range from a fast 1/2 second per step to a very slow 64 seconds per step."

How It Came To Be

"There was a popular band out on tour, and one night, they were scheduled to play at a 2,200 seat venue," says Shannon Heederik, marketing director for Lightronics. "With it being such a big venue, the larger touring racks were brought in to light the show. The large touring racks require a whole lot of Socapex cables to be run throughout the stage."

"The next night, the band was playing for a private party at a small bar," continues Heederik. "One of the large touring racks had to be brought in. There was barely any room for the rack and really no need to bring in such a large system. The production manager made a comment along the lines of 'wishing someone made a small dimmer pack which would just hook up to a Socapex cable and go.' Our projects director at that time just happened to be there at the private party hanging with the production manager. He immediately thought of our AS-62 compact dimmer packs and figured he could use this product to solve the guy's problem. Once back at the office, calls were made to our dealers and to many well known production companies to see if this small venue problem was common. We came to find out it was. Many ran into the exact same problem — putting on a show, on a small stage, during a tour and having only a large system to light the show."

"Next, the idea of putting a single Socapex connector on the AS-62 was presented to our engineer," says Heederik. "More thoughts and ideas were tossed around. Then the AS-62D Socapex was born. It's a great product and a great solution for a problem that many people run into."

What's Next

"The next idea is an AS-62D Socapex dimmer that is waterproof," says Heederik. "This will be great for any outside venues."

What End Users Have To Say

Norm St. Germain, owner of Academic Production Services, LLC, based in Merrimack, NH, uses the AS-62DS dimmer packs for a variety of applications. "I like the fact that I don't have to worry about individual Edison jumper cables feeding out of a dimmer pack," says St. Germain. "I also don't need to have different length jumpers; I can have a breakout that is built to the right length. We use the dimmer pack on trees and truss, where we place the pack at one end and use a staggered breakout so the short tail feeds the first unit and the longest tail to the furthest unit. We use the Lightronics dimmer pack for all kinds of production work, including corporate events, schools, community theatre, etc. I have been using it for a while now and really cannot think of anything to improve upon it." Academic Production Services is a production company as well as a supplier of theatrical products, services, and supplies.

El Paso, TX-based HB Electronics, Inc. not only sells and rents the Lightronics Socapex dimmer pack, but also uses the dimmer pack for smaller productions. Alberto Bordier, vice president of HB Electronics, really likes the unit and how flexible it is. "I really like the portability; we use it for the smaller jobs with our PAR bars," says Bordier. "We do production for local bands and local concerts. We have PAR bars with 500W and 1,000W PARs, so most of the time, we use one of these dimmer packs to run a PAR bar without having to take our regular dimmer rack. So, for the smaller jobs, it is a great little unit. We use a lot of six-circuit multi-cable for our projects, so it works with our existing inventory. Sometimes, we use them on trees and sometimes on a truss across the front of the stage." Bordier is happier to see the AS-62DS dimmer packs handle a 7,200W continuous load, since the previous Lightronics dimmer packs were rated at only 4,800W.