

iLoks: The Fine Print



One downside of software plug-ins is copy-protection schemes—typically, the \$50 iLok key that carries user authorizations. On the plus side, engineers can simply show up at a gig, plug the iLok into a USB port and access all their fave plug-ins. Even in the worst possible scenario—disk crash, replacement system with no installs, etc.—copies of the programs can be loaded from CD/DVD-ROMs or downloads in short order, and the show goes on with the authorizations from your iLok.

However, this is not to say everything's always rosy. "Coming back from a European tour, someone in airport security decided to empty my entire computer bag," Morgan recalls. "Then, 15 minutes before I board, I notice my iLoks are gone. There are \$40,000 worth of licenses on that iLok. I panic and sprint back to security where they had the iLok, the backup iLok and two USB drives with all my console settings. I was always told to keep an iLok backup in a separate place, but when you're touring, what can you do? I'm not going to keep my iLok in my suitcase, which could wind up in Istanbul. So now we have something called 'Do I have my iLok?' panic, but, fortunately, the only thing I lost from that was an LED flashlight."

Evidently, the condition is contagious. "I have nightmares about losing the iLok, especially since the tour manager lost his and all his other dongles," Ashton confesses. "We discovered just how useless all these 'protect your licenses/iLok replacement, blah, blah' packages really are!"

Every FOH engineer has experienced that "left my walk-through music CD in the player at the last venue" feeling, but the situation is far more serious with an iLok. "The nice thing about an iLok is that once the desk is turned on, you can pull it out," says Madix, offering his solution. "I have a lanyard on mine and keep it around my neck. I carry four iLoks for different purposes, but I can only imagine what a company like Clair Bros. has to do to keep track of what's installed on what desk or what authorizations go on what tour, moving them back and forth into their account. It's a major juggling act on that scale."

—George Petersen