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BY BARRY RUDOLPH

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PreSonus BlueTube DP V2 Tube Pre-Amp

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The PreSonus BlueTube DP V2 sells for \$229.95 MAP and is a two-channel microphone pre-amplifier with features and build/design qualities found on high end pro units costing over 10X as much! PreSonus' popular XMAX Class-A solid-state preamp drives a 12AX7 tube output stage. It is 1U high, has cool-looking backlit VU meters, uses a 12VDC external power supply module, and comes in an all-metal case with balanced XLR 1/4-inch Combi mic/instrument input/output jacks.

My tests began with comparing the BlueTube DP V2 to my copy of a Class-A Neve 1272 microphone pre-amp that's designed to sound 'perfect' all the time. Apart from the sound of the Neve copy's transformers, both pre-amps sounded wonderful in all cases--virtually noiseless, transparent sounding and easily handled all sources from loud singers to the percussive peaks of close-miked drums.

With inexpensive mic pre-amps, in order to obtain a clear and pristine sounding recording, important considerations are low noise and dynamic range because they describe the ability of any analog amplifier to reproduce music and vocals equally well for super quiet moments (low noise) but also without distortion at or near maximum (loud) input or output levels (dynamic range.) With the PreSonus XMAX pres, you've got all that by its design but if you would also like to have the option to "vibe up" and fill out a clean sound using the colorful distortion characteristics of a tube amplifier's personality, read on.

When the variable Tube Drive saturation control is fully CCW, the tube stage for that channel is bypassed but start cranking it CW and switch on saturation of any source while recording or during a mix as an outboard effect. Because PreSonus' BlueTube DP's saturation effect is fully adjustable on a track-by-track basis, on vocals, bass, or keyboards, it is like setting an EQ or compressor. Set subtle amounts of pleasant-sounding tube coloration or going fully CW on the TD knob will 'fuzz out' an otherwise perfectly good-sounding vocal adlib track! For my mixes, I like to rough up the sound of a bass guitar or direct electric guitars that sound too clinical.

There is a lot going on here check out: www.presonus.com/ for more.