mailing list: latest mailout
you@your email GO

sonicTALK PODCAST
listen here
Recorded LIVE! Weds at 4pm GMT

drum-percussion .com

In-depth Feature: Presonus TubePre - mono preamp/D.I.

Presonus' latest wont break the bank, but does it sound a million bucks?

Albert Potts writes:

Page **1** 2 3 of 3 NEXT

Introduction

Preamps are all the rage these days. Many home and pro studio users are looking to upgrade the existing preamps on their mixing boards, or to add a different colour to their musical palette. There is currently a plethora of offerings available, with prices ranging from "anyone could afford this" to "how could anyone afford this"?

The TubePRE is part of a range of small footprint, stackable units, designed for the mobile recordist or spatially challenged studio owner.

Overview

The new Presonus TubePRE fits neatly into the "anyone could afford this" category, with a list price of $129 and a street price of around just $99. The TubePRE is a single channel (1/3 rack space) solid state/tube hybrid preamp that also features a DI instrument input (impedance on the DI input is 1 meg Ohms). The front panel sports tube drive and gain controls, plus lighted push button switches for phase, -20 pad, 48v phantom, and 80Hz filter. Also featured is a backlit analog VU meter, a nice touch on a unit in this price range, or any price range! The tube inside this unit is a 12AX7.

The rear panel has the expected XLR mic input and balanced XLR output, as well as an unbalanced 1/4" instrument input and 1/4" line level output. Also on the rear panel is the power jack for the external wallwart power supply. While I am not generally a fan of wall-warts, the design makes sense in this case. Primarily, as the wall-wart keeps the size and price of the TubePRE very small indeed.

More Resources **Articles - full listing**

- Presonus WWW
- Presonus Products @ Zzounds.com
- TubePre PDF Manual

Page **1** 2 3 of 3 NEXT

0 Comments...

Post a comment | Read more comments

Copyright Sonic State Ltd. 1995-2012. All rights reserved.
Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without express written permission from Sonic State is prohibited.
About us - Ad enquiries - Contact - Privacy Statement

mailing list: latest mailout
you@your email GO

Recorded LIVE! Weds at 4pm GMT

In-depth Feature: Presonus TubePre - mono preamp/D.I.

Albert Potts writes:

Page PREV 1 **2** 3 of 3 NEXT
...continued

In Use
I tested the TubePRE in a number of situations: as a keyboard DI in my studio, as a bass DI used on an acoustic bass with piezo pickup, and of course as a preamp. This little box tested quite clean in my opinion. Not that heavy dirty dark tube tone that one might expect from a budget tube box. This box sounds a bit more hi-fi than that, the tube coloration being lighter and subtle, rather than darker and dirtier.

TubePRE as Keyboard DI

The TubePRE manual recommends that keyboards NOT be plugged into this unit. Not that damage will be caused to it, but that the 1/4" instrument input isn't designed for line level input signals, and distortion may result from feeding it signals that are too hot. Of course, the first thing I did was hook it up to my line level keyboard outputs!

With the drive and gain controls all the way down I didn't hear any distortion and was actually able to dial in some tube drive and gain without any ill effects at all. Indeed, as mentioned before, the tube drive on this unit is surprisingly clean. I found I had to turn the knob to past the one or two o'clock position to get into distortion.

In fact, I found that I preferred to use the drive control as a trim, and add gain from there with the gain control. That gave me the "most cleanest" gain from the TubePRE, as the tube gain is refreshingly clean.

In any case, using the TubePRE with my keyboards gave me the option of adding some subtle tube gain to those synths with too low output levels, without compromising their sound. I did not experience the distortion the manual warns of until I boosted the gain pretty high. However, if you are using very loud keyboard sounds with their outputs turned all the way up, and midi velocities at 127, it is entirely possible the volume level would be too much for the DI inputs on the TubePRE.

TubePRE as Bass DI
This got interesting. I'm currently performing a show with LA session bass player Paul Morin, and we tested the TubePRE on his acoustic bass with piezo pickup during live performances, as well as in the studio. We also tossed it into the heat of a DI a shootout alongside several much more expensive DI's.

Again, the TubePRE was remarkably clean in all tests on bass. During the live show it sounded accurate on the bass tone, and the bass sat nicely into the mix. Paul wanted more from it though, as far as tone (he's picky). Compared to another much more expensive tube DI we also tested, it didn't impart the same warm glow or as heavy tube characteristics.

However, in the studio it compared shockingly well to much more expensive DI's. It didn't beat them, but hung in there with DI's that cost 3-4 more. The expensive DI's had a more refined sound and polished tone, but we are talking about picking nits here. What became clear is that the TubePRE is a great value for the money, as you get a DI that hangs close to some of the more expensive solid state models for a fraction of the price. If you want that ultimate performance of course you have to pay for it, but if you want to get reasonably close for a price, then this is a contender.

More Resources **Articles - full listing**
- Presonus WWW
- Presonus Products @ Zzounds.com
- TubePre PDF Manual

Page PREV 1 **2** 3 of 3 NEXT

0 Comments...

Post a comment | Read more comments

Copyright Sonic State Ltd. 1995-2012. All rights reserved.
Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without express written permission from Sonic State is prohibited.
About us - Ad enquiries - Contact - Privacy Statement

mailing list: latest mailout
you@your email GO

sonicTALK PODCAST listen here
Recorded LIVE! Weds at 4pm GMT

drum-percussion .com

In-depth Feature: Presonus TubePre - mono preamp/D.I.

Albert Potts writes:

...continued

As a Mic Preamp

Although it has DI features that extend it's usefulness, the Presonus TubePRE is primarily intended to be used as a microphone preamp. And it is in this role that I felt the TubePRE shone the brightest. Readers will no doubt be interested in the TubePRE versus the BlueTube, so let me offer just a little commentary on that, being somewhat familiar with the BlueTube. To my ears, the TubePRE is a bit quieter and cleaner than the BlueTube, and gives the subjective impression of being a higher quality sound. The BlueTube seems slightly darker and more "tubey" to me ("valvey" for you Brits!).

Running my own voice through the TubePRE without tube drive, the result was accurate and real sounding. The recording was quiet, as in no objectionable noise was added. Then, recording my voice again adding in the tube drive, and a subtle bit of fullness entered the tone. Not dramatically different, but pleasantly richer, a nice contrast. Next, recording cello, I felt the TubePRE was nuanced and picked up good detail. This mic preamp sounds better than its price would indicate it should. I felt I had enough gain, actually more than enough, especially considering the tube drive feature.

The recording tests were done using an AKG C-BULS 414 mic, running from the TubePRE into an assignable input on my Tascam DM-24 mixer.

Conclusion

The TubePRE is a bang for the buck kind of item. While you could spend a lot more for a top of the line preamp, and get the kind of tone that big money buys, that kind of budget is far beyond many home studio recordists and music hobbyists. The Presonus TubePRE fills a need for those on a budget who still want to make a good clean recording and have the kind of tonal variety a tube can add.

Especially nice features that set the TubePRE apart in its price class are the VU meter and the 80Hz filter, both of which come in handy in everyday use. It's small size and weight were also appreciated, as I could literally set the TubePRE in my lap as I sat at the mic and adjust the drive and gain controls while watching the VU meter. The DI instrument input makes the unit versatile, allowing guitarists, bassists, and keyboardists to use it on their rigs in addition to getting a nice little preamp. On the down side, there is the external wallwart power supply, plus no power switch. Both not my favorite designs, but I think fair tradeoffs to meet this price and size point.

Overall, the Presonus TubePRE is an excellent value for the money and a nicely designed budget preamp that should appeal to a lot of people. The competition has really heated up in the low price preamp department, and the TubePRE at $99 street is a worthy entry in the category.

More Resources **Articles - full listing**

- Presonus WWW
- Presonus Products @ Zzounds.com
- TubePre PDF Manual

0 Comments...

Post a comment | Read more comments

Copyright Sonic State Ltd. 1995-2012. All rights reserved.
Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without express written permission from Sonic State is prohibited.
About us - Ad enquiries - Contact - Privacy Statement