

TapeOp Magazine, Jan/Feb 2004 Eureka



By Larry Crane

I've been curious about PreSonus products, as they make a nice selection of lower cost yet well-designed audio gear that is built in the U.S. The Eureka is a one rack space channel strip-type unit, with an optional 192 kHz/24 bit digital audio output card. The first thing that struck me about this unit, given its cost, was the number of features one might not expect. Variable mic input impedance allows you to select between five different ohm values, though I usually found 1500 to be best. +22 dBu of headroom meant I never heard a snare mic crap out the pre, and this without engaging the 20 dB pad. The compressor has a soft knee option, plus a variable hi-pass filter (10 Hz to 10 kHz) built into the side chain for frequency dependent compression. The three band parametric EQ has variable Q (width) on each band! You can even select if the EQ is pre or post compression, and whether the old-style VU meter is output level or gain reduction. But is this box good at what it does? I think it's very good. The mic preamp, which has an input transformer, provides 55 dB of gain. With the sound of the preamp I never felt as if it was compromising any of the sources I recorded - the lows and highs were solid - and it was similar to my Allen & Heath Saber console's pres. There's a "saturation" knob on the pre section that is supposed to add harmonics and warmth to the signal, but I was unable to detect much besides a slight muddying at 100% when using it. Since the unit has a line input on the rear (which bypasses the preamp section) I was also able to use the compressor and EQ on inserts while mixing as well as while tracking. The compressor is excellent, reminding me of the functionality of a dbx unit. It was able to gently reign in a lead vocal track or flatten out an electric bass. On percussion it was good, but to my ear the attack wasn't extremely fast. I used it on several mixes for vocals, drums and bass - and on all it worked very well and I enjoyed the complete array of controls. The EQ has 10 dB of cut or gain on each band, plus the bands all overlap to a degree. The sound of the EQ was far better and more functional than a low cost console, and the variable Q helped dial sounds in. In all, this unit is an amazing deal: A transformer-coupled mic pre, fully functional EQ and compression, many features not found on any equipment in its price range, optional digital outputs and a low price

should make this a great tool for many studios. Really, you will not find as many features on a channel strip of this quality for this price anywhere else.