

MindPrint DTC

Interesting presentation and a distinctive take on the dual tube channel processor model are what make this device different. Dig a little deeper and you'll discover a box of character.

GEORGE SHILLING



THIS GAUDY LOOKING unit is a move upmarket for MindPrint, whose previous processors have mostly been relatively budget 1U devices. This 3U dual input channel processor incorporates microphone, line and instrument inputs, high and low cut filters, parametric EQs and limiter/compressors, with each channel arranged horizontally one above the other.

At the far right is a window to view the glowing valves – a MindPrint trademark feature. The valves are used in the compressor section and appear to be running at a fairly low voltage. The window is cleverly lit with blue light to show up an etched pattern, and four LED meters surround the window in arcs, making for a stunning effect. The front panel surround is very thick, and the initial impression is of a well-built device. However, there are an enormous number of knobs on the front, and some cost savings appear to have been made with these; some of them feel a tiny bit 'scrapey'. They all worked fine though, and are grooved down their sides making it relatively easy to read their settings. The pushbuttons all glow yellow when pressed in, apart from the Phase Reverse, Insert and Link buttons, which light up red.

The back panel is well-legended, with XLR mic input sockets, which have no latches but still click positively into place, and combi XLR/jack sockets for line input. There are separate XLR and unbalanced jack outputs, the latter useful for a latency-free monitoring signal when recording to a computer. There are also separate balanced jack input and output sockets for the switchable inserts which allow for external processing to be introduced after the filters but before the EQ. As with previous MindPrint models, there is an option to fit the company's DI-Mod digital I-O (not fitted to the review model).

In use the microphone amplifier exhibited plenty of gain and sounded richly detailed, probably due to the exceptionally high input impedance. It had a slightly exaggerated and overly exuberant upper mid for some applications, especially with already hard-sounding dynamic mics. It has a slightly less naturally warm bottom end than the UA 2-610, and seemed a little

coloured and boomy down low. However, the overall character is very enticing, and if you are after something with slightly more bite and energy than a more neutral sounding unit (for example, the Aphex 207) then you will almost certainly enjoy the sound of this unit.

The high and low cut filters are steep 24dB/octave curves, but they work smoothly and effectively over wide ranges.

The EQ section is surprisingly sweet, and dare I say 'musical' (EQ review Cardinal Sin number 1. Go back two spaces. Ed). It never sounds harsh and appears to retain more phase integrity than many EQs, probably due to some clever design by the MindPrint team. Their 'PureParallel' technology divides the signal into the four bands (each has a separate bypass switch) and sends them through parallel filter circuits, and boosting similar frequencies on separate bands will allow no more than 20dB of gain, even though the knobs indicate a maximum boost of 15dB. Rather, the shape of the filter curve will change. The high and low bands are shelf only, but unusually these include a Q control which at the steepest setting puts in an opposite curve just before the corner frequency, much like adding both boost and cut on a Pultec EQP.

The two mid-bands' variable bell curves are narrower for cut than boost, and are wide-ranging in frequency and bandwidth. The EQ section nods towards the sound of the GML 8200 and the Manley Massive Passive, and is most impressive.

The unusual limiter/compressor is very simple to use, although I found that the way the internal gain structure was set it was difficult to avoid compressing to some degree with a normal healthy +4 signal. However, the input line trim can be lowered and the output knob raised to reduce compression. As the Limiter knob is turned clockwise, the limiter threshold is lowered until the indicated 0dB point, which guarantees not overloading a digital input. This is not a 'brick-wall' limiter, but rather a soft-knee circuit that only gradually reaches limiting. Beyond this point the threshold is lowered further into the indicated compressor section.

The only other knob in this section adjusts release over a range from 20ms to 2s. However, there is a degree of what MindPrint calls 'AdaptiveResponse' which varies attack and release settings depending on the signal. The Filter button usefully reduces the low frequencies in the sidechain. A Link button enables stereo operation using the left channel's controls only. This soft-knee circuit uses the valves and optocouplers and sounds very smooth. The meters around the window indicate gain reduction, and the adjacent level meters are switchable for input or output indication, although the switch for this is a long way from the meters. Bypass switches off the EQ and limiter/compressor.

Much thought has gone into the design of this unit, and although a lot of that has been directed at the appearance, an equal amount of effort appears to have gone into development of audio circuits that are very impressive. I would be happy to use it as a general all-round project studio device for recording right through to mastering; all sections work well and have a pleasant character. Although by no means a cheap unit, it compares very favourably with more established names. ■

Contact

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PROS

Looks unusual and impresses clients; excellent audio performance; detailed and characterful sounding mic amp; sweet sounding EQ; simple to use limiter/compressor

CONS

Knobs a little flimsy and some scrape; overly bright/middly mic amp for some applications; DI-Mod digital boards cost extra; no hardware Bypass when using line in

EXTRAS

The DI-Mod 24/48 is a stereo 24-bit Delta/Sigma convertor operating at 44.1/48kHz with coaxial SPDIF I-O.



Includes AD-in and DA-out for a second channel and can be retrofitted to a variety of MindPrint boxes. There's also a 24/96 interface.

Other MindPrint processors include the Dual Tube Channel, En-Voice channel-strip/tube voice processor, T-COMP 2-



channel tube compressor, and the AN/DI Pro 24-bit 96kHz 2-channel A-D convertor with two microphone input stages with phantom power and balanced insert.