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PRODUCTS AND PROFILES FOR THE AUDIO PROFESSIONAL

Product Tests

Radial Engineering Workhorse Cube & 500 Series Modules

By Dan Weston

The Radial Workhorse Cube is a unit designed to house three 500 series units and offers some nontraditional extra features (which seems to be a trend for Radial). The Cube comes with an Omniport connection input for each module. This additional communication path between the outside world and 500 series rack is prescribed by the manufacturer to add flexibility to a module. The Omniport can be used as additional I/O, key-sidechain inputs, and anything in between. The Cube also features both XLR and TRS inputs and outputs on every module, which we can all agree is awesome. More awesome is the switch on the back to have any module (except the last) feed its output signal to the input of the module to its right. You can have one XLR going in, one going out, and have all three units in the signal path. Brilliance!

Let's get into a bit of detail with the modules: the PhaseQ adjustment tool, Q3 equalizer, and Komit compressor.

PhaseQ

There is a lot more than meets the eye with this thing. The normal pitch for these types of units is to line up drum mics, but you can also use the PhaseQ as a powerful tone shaping tool. In addition to phase adjustment, there is a low pass filter and blend knob. The filter sounds great and is quite flexible, working between 300 Hz-38 kHz. The blend adjustment also offers up some truly cool features. For instance, having the blend control at 50 per cent and adjusting the phase sounds like this crazy adjustable filter that brings out different elements as you tweak. Having the phase set to 0 and moving through the blend knob can also roll off the extreme high end and almost act as a de-esser or LPF. Another use is having this on one side of a source that is mono and needs some life. Turn the knobs until you have something you like. This unit is too cheap not to buy.

Q3

When was the last time you opened up a PDF to use an EQ? I don't mean that to be negative; this thing just behaves like no EQ I have ever used, which is cool. After putting some audio through it and quickly turning

the knobs around, I had to know what was going on with this thing. The Q3 is all about presets. Each knob on the Q3 (Bass, Mid, High) has 11 preset EQ curves with unique frequency points and cut or boosts. The bass and high only boost; the mid only cuts. A Shift switch beside each knob will make the cut or boost more subtle.

The frequency points and boosts kind of jump all over the place, and some definitely cross over into what some people might refer to as mids. For example, position 1 on the bass control renders a +3dB boost at 400 Hz; position 4 is a +11dB boost at 500 Hz. Most of the boosts are between 100-500 with the last preset giving you +18dB at 60 Hz. Bottom end! It really has a nice sound. It feels like a parallel filter of the bass is tucked underneath a completely untouched signal. There is no smearing or hollowness happening at all. It would be nice to have a bit more control over the boost as even with the shift button on, it can be a lot. With some other source tracks like guitar, bass, and keys, the other Bass presets reveal similarly pleasing results with other settings. It can be a bit tricky not knowing what is going on with the presets, but it also kind of turns into a fun "turn the knobs 'til something cool happens" type of box.

Komit

A compressor and limiter in one box. Instead of actually limiting the signal, a type of clipping is implemented. When using the limiter you don't get the sound of gain reduction, which is nice, but pushed over the top it can go from mildly clipping to absolute madness with the limiter set to a low threshold and the gain up. It is intense! A lot of fun ways to use that—room mics come to mind—and if you have it next to the PhaseQ you can filter out some of the mayhem after. Komit is a VCA compressor and has a distinct grab to it, especially in medium mode. It has a higher bandwidth and more musical sound than most VCA comps. The Komit seems to quickly catch transients and then leave the picture. Very unique. With more



time with this piece, I think it would get a lot of use, even for the limiter alone.

I am consistently impressed with Radial's commitment to bringing useful tools to the masses that may not already exist, or simply don't exist at the price point they manage to stick to. The Workhorse line is a forward thinking, affordable way to get into the 500 series game, and these modules would make good additions to any box.

Manufacturer's Comment

The 500 series is a great companion for today's digital recording world. The new Workhorse Cube not only makes for a great housing for 500 series modules; it is safe for use and has plenty of current to feed the most power hungry modules.

Peter Janis
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