

High-End Channel Strips

By GeorgePetersen

Originally designed for studios, channel strips — in this case, single-channel units offering a mic preamp, EQ, dynamics (and sometime more) — have become popular with sound reinforcement users. Besides adding a different flavor to your mix, these are an ideal solution for putting a little “frosting on the cake” for that featured performer’s “money channel” or a bit of analog warmth, punch or sizzle to your console. We checked into some single channel units with street prices in the \$1,000 and up range. Check ‘em out!

Aphex Channel



Preamp: Tube
EQ: Single band parametric; HP filter
Dynamics: EasyRider compressor, logic-assisted gate
Other processing: Big Bottom, Aural Exciter, de-esser
Dimensions: 1U; 6 pounds
Extras: Hi-Z input; AES and S/PDIF digital outs
Price (street): \$999

aphex.com

API The Channel Strip



Preamp: Solid state 512c type
EQ: 550a type with three sweep bands plus shelf HF/LF; HP filter
Dynamics: 527 type comp/limiter
Other processing: Thrust circuit for added punch.
Dimensions: 1U; 9.5 pounds
Extras: Hi-Z input; inserts at all stages and external muting access
Price (street): \$2,545

apiaudio.com

Avalon Vt-737sp



Preamp: Tube
EQ: 4-band with sweep mids and shelf HF/LF; HP filter
Dynamics: Compressor/limiter
Other processing: None
Dimensions: 2U; 22 pounds
Extras: Hi-Z input; 11 selectable HP points
Price: \$2,475

avalondesign.com

Buzz Audio ARC-1.1



Preamp: Solid state
EQ: 4-band with sweep mids and shelf LF/HF; HP filter
Dynamics: Optical compressor; FET limiter
Other processing: Clean/transformer insert switch
Dimensions: 2U
Extras: Hi-Z input; variable input impedance
Price: \$2,695

buzzaudio.com

Chandler TG Microphone Cassette



Preamp: Solid state
EQ: EMI Curve Bender EQ circuit; HP filter
Dynamics: Opto limiter based on EMI design
Other processing: None
Dimensions: 2U; 8 pounds
Extras: Hi-Z input; preamp based on the EMI TG12428
Price: \$2,849

chandlerlimited.com

dbx 676



Preamp: Tube
EQ: 3-band with sweep mids; HP filter
Dynamics: Overeasy compressor; limiter
Other processing: Post-tube gain for adding harmonic content
Dimensions: 2U; 8 pounds
Extras: Hi-Z input
Price: \$999

dbxpro.com

Empirical Labs EL9 Mike-E



Preamp: Solid state
EQ: “Colored” HP filter
Dynamics: Unique CompSat compressor/saturation section
Other processing: None
Dimensions: 1U; 10 pounds
Extras: Hi-Z input; transformer output optional
Price: \$1,599

empiricallabs.com

Focusrite ISA430 Mk II



Preamp: Solid state
EQ: 4-band with parametric mids and shelf HF/LF; HP filter
Dynamics: Compressor (optical/VCA switchable); expander/gate
Other processing: De-esser; soft limiter
Dimensions: 2U; 16.7 pounds
Extras: Hi-Z input; input impedance switching; “Air” band boost
Price: \$1,999

focusrite.com

Grace Design m103



Preamp: Solid state

EQ: 3-band with parametric mid and shelf/peak HF/LF; HP filter

Dynamics: Optical compressor

Other processing: None

Dimensions: 1U; 4.5 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; ribbon mic mode raises input impedance

Price: \$1,795

gracedesign.com

Joemeek oneQ2



Preamp: Solid state

EQ: 4-band with sweep mids and shelf HF/LF; HP filter

Dynamics: Optical compressor

Other processing: HF enhancer

Dimensions: 2U; 6.6 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; "Iron" switch for two transformer flavors

Price: \$999

joemeek.com

Manley Core



Preamp: Tube

EQ: 3-band Baxandall EQ

Dynamics: ELOP compressor; FET brickwall limiter

Other processing: None

Dimensions: 2U; 8 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input

Price: \$2,000

manleylabs.com

Millennia STT-1 Origin



Preamp: Tube or solid state (switchable)

EQ: 4-band with parametric mids and shelf HF/LF; HP filter

Dynamics: Optical compressor/limiter

Other processing: De-esser

Dimensions: 2U; 22 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; Twin Topology with tube or solid state circuit in any section

Price: \$3,067

mil-media.com

Pendulum Audio Quartet II ME



Preamp: Tube

EQ: 3-band shelf/dip/peak; 75/100 Hz HP filter

Dynamics: Compressor and peak limiter

Other processing: Transformer input switch; input loading switch

Dimensions: 2U; 15.8 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; inserts on all sections.

Price: \$4,600

pendulumaudio.com

Retro Instruments Powerstrip



Preamp: Tube

EQ: 2-band passive Pultec-style EQ; HP filter

Dynamics: Variable-mu tube compressor

Other processing: None

Dimensions: 2U

Extras: Hi-Z input

Price: \$2,895

retroinstruments.com

Rupert Neve Designs Portico II Channel



Preamp: Solid state

EQ: 4-band (parametric mids; peak/shelf HF/LF); HP filter

Dynamics: Compressor with switchable feed back/forward modes

Other processing: De-esser

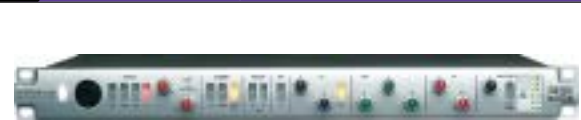
Dimensions: 2U; 17 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; parallel comp/uncomp blending; Texture harmonic control

Price: \$3,145

rupertneve.com

Solid State Logic XLogic Alpha Channel



Preamp: Solid state

EQ: 3-band with parametric mid; HP filter

Dynamics: "Lite" limiter

Other processing: Variable Harmonic Drive adds 2nd/3rd harmonic distortion

Dimensions: 1U; 7 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; S/PDIF digital out

Price: \$1,229

solidstatelogic.com

SPL Channel One



Preamp: Tube

EQ: 3-band; sweep LF/MF and shelf Air band HF

Dynamics: Compressor/noise gate

Other processing: De-esser; FET distortion control

Dimensions: 2U; 9.2 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; headphone monitoring section

Price: \$1,599

spl.info

Summit Audio ECS-410 Everest



Preamp: Hybrid tube/transistor

EQ: 3-band passive, each with six switchable frequencies

Dynamics: Compressor with "Classic" and "Tight" modes

Other processing: Drive gain distortion processing

Dimensions: 2U; 26 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; touchpad processing order routing

Price: \$3,499

summitaudio.com

Tube-Tech MEC 1A



Preamp: Tube

EQ: 3-band with semi-parametric mid, shelf LF/HF; HP filter

Dynamics: Optical compressor

Other processing: None

Dimensions: 2U; 12 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; all-tube design

Price: \$3,999

tube-tech.com

Universal Audio LA-610 Mk II



Preamp: Tube

EQ: 2-band with 3-stepped frequency shelving

Dynamics: LA-2A T4-style optical compressor

Other processing: None

Dimensions: 2U; 12 pounds

Extras: Hi-Z input; transformer I/O; switchable input impedance

Price: \$1,599

uaudio.com