

ART Voice Channel | £419

The 'everything-in-a-box' knob-fest that is the channel strip gets the ART treatment. **Robbie Stamp** checks out what 'everything' sounds like...

WHAT IS IT?

Valve amplified 2U channel strip with digital interface

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Switchable valve supply voltage
- 2 Quality preamp
- 3 Excellent external routing and digital connections

Ever since someone ripped out a mixing desk channel and put it in a rack box, manufacturers have been

lining up to offer their take on the audio jack-of-all-trades that is the channel strip. Trying to cram amplification, dynamics processing and equalisation into a 1U or 2U package as well as multiple metering and signal routing options can result in some scary. ART's penchant for creating budget conscious quality audio tools has inevitably led them to offer up the Voice Channel as their ultimate all-in-one-box recording solution.

The preamp section comprises of mic, line and instrument inputs via front- and rear-mounted combo XLR/jack sockets. After the usual pad, low-cut, phase invert and +48v buttons there is a mic impedance knob to allow for the use of low-impedance ribbon mics as well as frequency response tailoring for most other mics. Next in line is the dynamics section with threshold, ratio, attack and release controls for the compressor. There is no

on/off button but the 1:1 ratio is labelled 'off' as it has no dynamic effect, which saves on front panel space but makes A/B checking less instant. The Voice Channel features a de-esser, but instead of making this a separate

section it has been added into the compressor (with threshold and frequency controls) and allows for more compression at the selected frequency.

The final part of the dynamics section is the expander/gate (a button above switches modes) and this features a single threshold control. A light next to the gain reduction LEDs indicates when the expander/gate is working it's magic.

High voltage

Above the expander controls, stranded all on its own, is the tube voltage button that switches the valve supply voltage between 'normal' and 'high'. The lower voltage allows the valve to distort at a lower gain level and thus impart more of a 'valve sound', while the high voltage increases headroom and bandwidth. The EQ section comprises of a high- and low-shelf with two switchable frequencies: 50Hz/150Hz and

Digital Connections and Analogue Routing

Like many channel strips, the Voice Channel has a mic preamp output and insert input at the rear. These are both ¼" TS jack sockets and offer a few possibilities. The mic preamp output and insert inputs can be used on their own to record a pre-EQ/dynamics signal and bypass the valve amp stage for an external signal respectively. In conjunction they work as standard send and return external processing loop.

There are a pair of A/D insert points that can be

used several ways.

Plugging an external source into the right A/D insert (using a TS jack) adds this signal to the right digital output. The A/D can be used on its own by plugging in an external line level source (TS jack) to both A/D inserts. Using TRS jacks (ring as send and tip as return) the mono Voice Channel signal can be processed with a stereo effect (e.g. reverb) and then sent to the A/D.

The Voice Channel has a number of digital

output options. Two channel S/PDIF and AES/EBU (via phono coaxial and XLR respectively) are available up to 24-bit/192kHz. External sync can be achieved via the wordclock input or the ADAT In.

The ADAT input acts as an external sync source as well as allowing channels three to eight to be passed to the ADAT output. The optical output is switchable between ADAT and TOS (two channel S/PDIF up to 24-bit/192kHz).



