

Elysia xfilter 500

£714

Elysia once again buck the trend for slavish retro designs and create a unique stereo EQ filter to aid the creative process. **Robbie Stamp** slots one up

INCLUDES AUDIO

WHAT IS IT?

500 series (two slot)
Class A four-band
stereo equaliser

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Massive range of tone shaping capabilities
- 2 Switchable resonant high/low filters
- 3 High quality signal path and plenty of headroom

The triumvirate of recording building blocks (preamp, compressor, EQ) have been reshaped to the point where

choice becomes a chore, picking through the Neve/API/SSL clones. Occasionally someone will produce a unit that stands out by virtue of function or aesthetic, and for Elysia it is both. The crisp dark blue fascia and distinctive silver knobs are always arranged around the backlit brand logo. For the xfilter 500 the eight knobs control four bands of stereo EQ and filtering on this double slot 500 series unit.

The xfilter 500 offers four overlapping EQ bands: high shelf, low shelf, low mid peak and high mid peak. The mid peaking bands have $\pm 13\text{dB}$ of cut/boost, two bandwidths (narrow and wide Q) and range from 45Hz to 16kHz. The shelving bands feature a cut/boost of $\pm 16\text{dB}$ and can be switched to resonant low/high cut filters. In this latter mode the gain knob becomes a resonance control. There is a fifth filter included, the Passive Message, a fixed frequency passive LC (inductor and capacitor) filter which gives a few dB of resonance around 12kHz before sloping off the high frequency range.

Get your tweak on

The xfilter 500 is a stereo EQ with a single linked control set of 41 step detented potentiometers. Though not in the same league as Grayhill or Elma stepped ladder controls, with a thorough selection process the two sides can be (and have been) closely matched – I found a maximum of 0.3dB difference in a few spots between channels, but mostly 0.1dB if at all. Thanks to the double slot size the controls are easy to work with and allow non-sausage fingered users to get a proper two-handed tweak on, which with the high and low filters in resonant cut modes is a must as it's a lot of fun.

The only drawback of the layout is that the depth of the knobs obscures the legending – it works best around eye level.

Working with the xfilter 500 it quickly becomes clear how much the band ranges overlap, making for a very flexible and creative EQ. Cutting with a shelving filter and then boosting within that range using a peaking EQ (or vice versa) is a classic shaping technique that can gently shape a source, or radically re-voice it at higher gains. It is important to note that one can easily use the full gain range of this unit without encountering any headroom problems, except for whatever follows it in the chain. I've never been a fan of variable Q controls on parametric equalisers as it seems just another choice to make, so a single switch for each of the mid bands between wide and narrow Q is about as much as I'd want. I found both useful depending on the application, though I tend to be a wide Q kinda guy.

Complete control

Before I get to the bit that really excites me it is worth saying that the basic EQ functions of the xfilter 500 are excellent and yield top quality results on all manner of sources: mixes, drums, vocals, synths (mmmm, big pads), anything with a reverb to pick out, etc. This will definitely work well strapped across a mix buss for a little top and tailing, and yet it'll let you get radical with a bass synth or drum loop.

The detented controls make it easy to step back and forth to make incremental changes, and yet I could sweep around as an effect without hearing the stepping, which is the strength of detented pots over stepped ladder attenuators... but that's another story. The shelving filters can reach extremely high and low allowing you to



