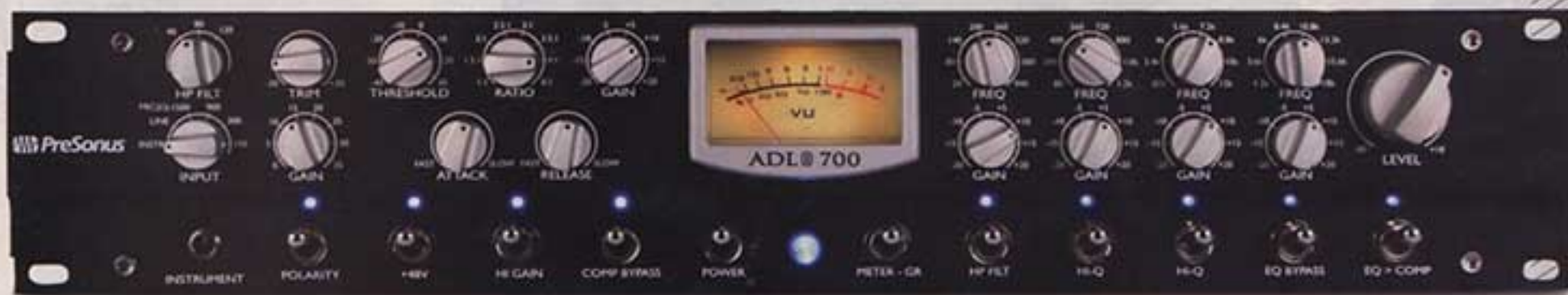


Tech // reviews

PRESONUS ADL 700

Channel Strip With Tube Warmth, 4-Band EQ



I'm a big fan of using channel strips and typically travel with one or two of my favorites when I am recording away from my own studio. They allow me to make quick decisions to create the sounds I'm looking for without having to patch in a lot of extra gear. For this review, PreSonus sent me the ADL 700, manufactured in collaboration with legendary tube and analog circuit designer Anthony DeMaria, who had input into the design of the company's ADL 600 dual-channel mic preamp.

POWER PLUS

I unpacked the ADL 700 and noticed right away that the unit is very sturdy. However, I was disappointed that the knobs didn't feel a bit more high-end; I wanted metal, not plastic. [Ed. Note: PreSonus reports that current units have metal knobs.] The ADL 700 incorporates a high-voltage (300-volt power rails), all-tube (one 12AT7 and two 6922 vacuum tubes), Class-A, dual-transformer design with selectable input source switching. You can also choose variable microphone impedance (150, 300, 900, and 1,500 ohms), which is a feature I have grown to love and tend to reach for first before an EQ. The ADL's impedance settings are very useful, and I tended to favor the higher settings the most. There is an unbalanced ¼-inch instrument input on the front panel, along with XLR balanced line and mic inputs and single balanced XLR output on the back. There is a dual-mode VU meter for monitoring output and gain reduction. A master level control on the right side of the unit adjusts the overall output from -80 to +6 dB.

The ADL 700's gain is selectable in 5dB increments via the eight-position gain switch (35 dB of gain/73 dB overall), and the fully sweepable variable trim adjustment allows a ±10dB gain

change, which is useful for fine-tuning or riding gain. Different sensitivities for mic, line and instrument inputs result in varied and eminently useful gain adjustment ranges for each: +18 to +72 dB for mic; -12 to +40 dB for line; and -5 to +42 dB for instrument outputs. Other features include 48V phantom power, polarity reverse and a -20dB pad that allows the user to control the input stage for hotter source signals.

The FET compressor provides transistors to emulate triode tube sound, and results in faster attack times and better repeatability than the optical compressors sometimes found on similar channel strips. When the threshold is turned fully counterclockwise to the ST position, the onboard controls are bypassed, and compression is controlled externally via a Stereo Link connection to a second ADL 700.

The 4-band semi parametric EQ (with bypass switch) and accompanying -12dB octave highpass filter (0 to 200 Hz) are all sweepable knobs that you can tweak to desired settings. The EQ was designed with musicality in mind, combining isolated filters and optimized, per-band Q to provide subtler signal shaping without harsh artifacts. All bands have Gain (±16 dB) and Frequency controls, with overlapping frequency ranges and fixed Q (0.6). The low and high bands are switchable between shelving and peak. When the LF Peak switch is engaged, the low band becomes a standard peak filter with a fixed Q of 0.6. When it is disengaged, the low band is a shelving filter. When the HF Peak switch is engaged, the high band becomes a standard peak

TRY THIS

Warm up a harsh or brittle-sounding signal by sending it out of your DAW into the line level input of the ADL 700. Saturate the signal with the tube preamp and/or compressor/EQ to suit the track you're working on.

filter with a fixed Q of 0.6. When it is disengaged, the high band is a shelving filter. The ADL 700 includes a switch that allows the user to engage the compressor before or after the EQ, a nice touch when you desire a bit of sweetening after the compression shapes the sound in certain applications.

ALL TUBED UP

After warming up the ADL 700, I first tried it on acoustic guitar with songwriter Kyle Andrews. We recorded a bit of each take with a Universal Audio 6176, a Pendulum Audio Quartet II and the ADL 700. After some critical listening, we decided that his Gibson blended

PRODUCT SUMMARY

COMPANY: PreSonus

PRODUCT: ADL 700

WEBSITE: presonus.com

PRICE: \$2,495

PROS: Anthony DeMaria design. Simple yet detailed front panel.

CONS: Compressor ratio stops at 4:1. Lower-grade knobs.

into the existing tracks perfectly through the ADL 700. The tube pre really warmed up his soft touch and also the additional high-string acoustic guitar we incorporated on a few songs. Some subtle EQ and compression balanced the overall sound and level, and we were able to nail down the parts very quickly.

I next used the ADL 700 on a drum session for South Dakota rock band Showbaby. One of my favorite go-to sounds when mixing is a

mono room mic placed a few feet off the drum set between the kick and snare. I tend to squeeze that track considerably with compression and back the attack off quite a bit, then play with the release time, depending on

the drummer's amount of activity song to song. I've found channel strips to be perfect for this way of tracking, as I can stay focused on one unit's controls and dial in the sound to taste. The drums and drummer for this session are both incredible, so it didn't take much to get the sound in place. I found myself struggling a bit with the limited amount of compression, as the ratio tops out at 4:1. I felt like I needed a bit more over the top here, more like 10:1 or 20:1 in some cases, and I wished that the ADL 700 included some higher ratios. I loved the sound that it was providing, but I wanted it to go to 11, so I disengaged the compressor and added one that went for more after the pre and EQ.

Finally, I tried the unit with Columbus, Ohio, indie pop band Fever Fever, to see how the ADL 700 would react to the subtle vocal delivery of the band's singer. I wanted to first test it with just the preamp, and then add some EQ and compression to the chain. The preamp sounded great, but I wanted a bit more air to pop out from his vocal, so I added 4 kHz with a sharp Q, and then some top around 8k with a wide Q. I noticed I had to dig in with gain a bit more than expected, but nonetheless achieved the sound that I was after. I then employed the highpass filter around 100 Hz, and a bit of compression at 2:1 with a fast release and attack to balance the dynamics in his voice.

COMPLETE PACKAGE

Many of my clients ask what the key is to getting good sounds at home like we do in the studio. I always suggest upgrading their signal path with a mic pre, and often suggest getting a channel strip of some kind. It allows the user flexibility of employing different stages of signal coloration plus helps them understand what each part of that path is doing to achieve the desired sound. After putting the ADL 700 through a variety of applications, I would certainly recommend taking this channel strip for a test drive and adding it to your arsenal of channel strips.

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