



The **Broadcasters' Desktop Resource**

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

Checking it Out

RDL's HR-MCP2 Dual Microphone Compressor

by Mark Shander

[August 2012] RDL used to be best known for its simple and easy to use "Stick On" modular products. In the past few years, though, the company has begun to expand its line with some worthy items. Mark Shander found one of them rather irresistible.

Have you ever put off doing something you know you have to do out of fear?

That is exactly what happened to me when I agreed to review Radio Design Labs half-rack, dual microphone compressor – the HR-MCP2.

What did I have to fear? How about falling in love with a product and obsessing over possessing it, and then buying five or six more for consistency – so I do not have to be without it regardless of which studio or site where I am working.

Let me warn you upfront: this is definitely one of those products you will fear obsessing over.

PREAMP AND COMPRESSOR

The HR-MCP2 is an award-winning combination of two very successful existing RDL products.

One is their popular microphone preamp, the other is their microphone compressor. In many studios there is a demand for these two products together with EQ, peak limiting and leveling for voice channel processing,

However, this particular product eliminates the need for additional controls by taking care of dynamic settings for you and by providing very

clean audio channels regardless of the level of gain reduction selected.

QUICK RESPONSE

One of the nice things about running microphones through this product – whether using dynamic microphones or switching on the phantom power – is the fact that you can depend on very consistent audio levels at the output.

The HR-MCP2 reacts to a wide range of levels by maintaining a fairly consistent relationship between the peak and persistence of the signal; taking a look at the output on a loudness monitor just makes you smile. It is visual confirmation of what your ears are telling you.

In fact, you can literally shout into the microphone and find that the HR-MCP2 reacts quickly enough to provide a clean signal at the output. That having been said, you can have a normal conversation using a microphone, and the attack and release levels seem to be just right.

SIMPLE TO OPERATE

The HR-MCP2 takes up a half-rack and rack-mount screws are included in the package.

The inputs and outputs use XLR connectors. On the other hand, you can also use the terminal blocks in the back of the unit to wire it more permanently into your studio.

The HR-MCP2 is powered with a wall-wart.

The controls are very simple: just dial in the amount of gain reduction you would like by rai-

sing or lowering the input gain knob for each microphone channel. The quality of the sound is consistent across the frequency response of the unit; a low-cut switch helps in situations where the microphone itself does not provide one if needed.

In most situations, the biggest issues problems in getting good audio from guests are when they drift off-microphone and/or use poor microphone techniques. This unit really does help keep guest microphones sounding great.

The HR-MCP2 helps to keep a certain sound of “presence” even when a guest does a fair amount of head-bobbing during an interview.

While I had heard this unit provided great vocal processing – and it turned out to be true – I just had to try to push it beyond what I believed would be its capability by using it while micing some acoustic instruments.

PUTTING IT THROUGH ITS PACES

The first test was strings, followed by woodwinds. The music we selected to test with was from *Videogames Live*, with arrangements written by Tommy Tallerico. I have heard the segments played live and I have heard them recorded. This time I listened to them isolated with a single instrument and single microphone.

Although the unit may not have been designed for the purpose, the HR-MCP2 provided clean, fat, consistent audio that could have been used for multi-track acquisition. It was very impressive.

Raising the gain during soft passages provided a very subtle sound, without pumping or overpowering the level through the channel.

Another thing I noticed: the quality of the sound permitted the pickup pattern of the microphone to really shine through. When the microphone was supposed to reject reflected sound, the HR-MCP2 did not try to compensate by increasing gain and providing reflected sound.

After this varied series of tests, all in all, I would have to say this unit performed like those that carry many times its MSRP.

USEFUL IN MANY CONFIGURATIONS

The HR-MCP2 is a fantastic addition to any mobile studio configuration and it seems to be at home in a portable equipment rack as well as in an engineering rack.

The HR-MCP2 easily can be your primary voice channel processing. But it really seems to shine as the voice channel processor for guest microphones, making the production quality of everything produced with it sound like it was professionally engineered for broadcast.

And it is priced right.

See! You already fear that you need several of these units in your facility.

Go ahead, try one out.

You will not be sorry.

There is more info on the HR-2MCP at the RDL website: www.rdl.net

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