

SPL Qure Parametric *Tube Equalizer*

An EQ that you may not know is there, but you notice when it's not

BY MIKE SOKOL

boost/cut with proportional Q.

The unit is built with overall attention to detail. Both XLR and 1/4-inch TRS connectors are included, and the significant weight of the unit implies a hefty power supply. There's also some very interesting switches labeled "Qure On" and Shift Qure." These switches turned out to be the stars of the show...as it were.

clipping can be helpful for both level control of the peaks and overall fattening of the sound. These are benefits sometimes missing in the sterile environment of the digital world. Plus, it's more intuitive to sweep the frequency band to the area desired rather than mess with a bunch of sliders on a graphic EQ. This makes it easier to demonstrate the effect to a



I like a good parametric equalizer for studio use — and the Qure by SPL certainly qualifies as a good parametric EQ. As soon as I opened the box, I knew there was going to be some fun. I patched the Qure into the inserts of my console for a mixdown session of several live-recorded ADATs of a local band, The Blue Comets. I had done the live recordings without any limiting or processing a month earlier. My intention was to add all of that in the final mixdown. But, first, the technical details for all you circuit-heads...

The equalizer section proved to be properly functional with the detented controls operating as designed. The only strange thing being that the 0-dB position is offset slightly clockwise from 12:00 on all the controls. Go figure. The midband filter uses a non-reciprocal response, providing a very deep and narrow notch with up to 36 dB of cut, which is great for problem feedback frequencies. Both the low and high bands have a more standard 15 dB of

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client. So when the Blue Comets showed up for their mixdown session, I was ready to play.

After all the initial equalization

EQ LAB REPORT

MANUFACTURER: SPL (Sound Performance Lab). Distributed by beyerdynamic, 56 Central Avenue, Farmingdale, NY 11735. Tel: 516-293-3200.

APPLICATION: Vocal processing or mastering equalizer for field or studio use. Tube processing makes it useful as final EQ in a digital sound chain.

SUMMARY: Professional dual-channel 3-band parametric equalizer with additional low- and high-cut filters. Proprietary "Qure" processing uses a pair of Sovtek 12AX7 tubes in an adjustable network that adds variable tube harmonics in the final output stage. Optional input/output transformers are available.

STRENGTHS: Very responsive dual 3-band parametric equalizer with detented controls and lighted switches; hard bypass switches on each filter band; offers XLR and TRS in/out connectors; additional Qure circuitry adds adjustable tube harmonics.

WEAKNESSES: The manual is not well-translated into English — there are a lot of syntax and spelling mistakes, as well as wording that's difficult to understand.

PRICE: \$ 1799

EQ FREE LIT. #: 140

and dynamics were patched into the individual tracks, I adjusted the overall balance and added some [Yamaha] REV 7 reverb. The bottom end wasn't convincing, so I added a little overall bass with the low band of the Qure. The controls fell easily to my hands, and soon we had a real nice mix. Then we switched-in the "Qure" circuit. *Wow!* The vocals seemed to really take on new life. This wasn't like the effect of a BBE or Aphex unit, but something totally different.

My only complaint concerns the user's manual. It's full of spelling and grammar mistakes — something I consider less than professional. True, the manual doesn't have an impact on the engineering or the sonic integrity of the unit, but it shows a lack of customer concern that I find disturbing. SPL should hire a good English proofreader.

The controls allow you to dial-in the center frequency of the processing from 2 kHz to 6 kHz, and the shift control changes the range to the adjust-

ment from 400 Hz to 2 kHz. An overall silky quality was added to the vocals, and the instruments seemed more defined. The clients loved it, and made me promise to leave it in the patch for the rest of the mixdown session the following week. "No problem," I said. Anything that makes me look good with so little effort stays in the rack.

Next I loaned the Qure EQ out to a recording studio in Morgantown, WV to get their feedback. The principal engineer there has done worldwide touring with major acts like Ziggy Marley, The B-52's, and Stone Temple Pilots, so I knew he wouldn't be fooled by some advertising hype. He used the device in a 24-track mixdown session and called after a week to say it really "made" the album. He used some of the parametric functions, but thought the Qure processing was the best part of the unit. He noted that it could easily be adjusted so that you didn't seem to notice anything different while it was in the patch, but as soon as you bypassed it, you knew something important was gone. The ability to provide subtle control of the sound made it the star of the session.

The nice thing about using a tube parametric as the final equalizer is that the additional harmonics and soft-clipping can be helpful for both level control of the peaks and overall fattening of the sound.

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