

Rane PEQ 55 Parametric EQ

by Craig Anderton

Price: \$999

Contact: Rane, www.rane.com

Strengths:

- Unique shelving response
- Real-time control over all parameters
- Wide-range parametric EQs
- Overload indicator and bypass switch for each stage
- Universal voltage internal power supply

Limitations:

- No preset storage or MIDI control
- No digital I/O

Like the DEQ 60 graphic EQ (reviewed 5/03), the 2U PEQ 55

features digital processing with analog control. Configurable as 5- or 10-band linked stereo, dual 5-band mono, or 10-band mono, each of the ten filter sections has three switch-selectable ranges that, in total, span from 12.5Hz to 20kHz. Rounding out the unit are high- and low-cut filters along with high, mid, and low tone controls.

Each channel can set one filter stage to high shelf and one to low shelf, using Rane's unique "accelerated slope" technology that creates a steeper slope to reduce influence on the midrange

frequencies. Compensation keeps phase shift, normally an issue with increased slope, under control (see the white paper at www.rane.com/-pdf/acceler.pdf).

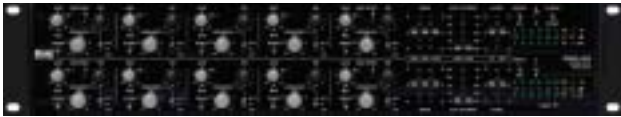
As befits the price, the PEQ 55 has a pro vibe, from the XLR/1/4" TRS/Euroblock analog I/O to the sturdy construction and solid control feel. One great feature is that each filter stage has its own bypass switch and overload indicator, so you know instantly which stage is clipping. There's also a per-channel master bypass.

The A or B group of knobs can control either channel. For example, to link, you switch both channels to A, and use its knobs. You could have a different setup on the B knobs and switch to those (which brings new meaning to the term "A-B" comparison), or

switch one channel to A and one to B for unlinked operation.

However, there are no presets — after all, the point is real-time tweakable control (which also makes the PEQ 55 well suited to onstage use). As someone who regards EQ tweaking as part of the "performing" aspect of mixing, the PEQ 55 performs admirably: You don't hear stair-stepping with drastic control twisting, and there's enough space between controls to make tweaking comfortable.

If you just need some stages of parametric EQ, the PEQ 55 is probably overkill. But if you also need shelving, you haven't heard shelving until you've heard the accelerated slope technology, which brings a welcome, unexpected additional flexibility to the PEQ 55.



Ursa Major SST-206 Space Station

by Mitch Gallagher

Price: \$1,395

Contact: Seven Woods Audio, www.sevenwoodsaudio.com

Strengths:

- Convenient "remote control" form factor
- Wonderful, character-laden Space Station reverb and delay
- Lush room algorithm
- Knobs for each parameter

Limitations:

- No bypass switch
- Digital I/O only
- No preset storage
- No high sample support



Christopher Moore of Seven Woods Audio designed the Ursa Major Space Station in 1977. His goal at the time was to create the best possible low-cost reverb. The original processor, with its 11-bit converters and 7kHz bandwidth, went on to become legendary for what some of its users called its "garage grunge" sound.

Now Moore is back with a new unit, the Space Station SST-206. But his approach has changed: Now we're talking 24-bit resolution and 22kHz bandwidth. In addition to re-

creating the sound of the original Space Station, he's added a high-quality "room" algorithm. The old unit was a 3U monster; the new one is tiny. In fact, on opening the box, I assumed I was sent just the remote control by mistake. In fact, the "remote control" is the SST; the entire thing is smaller than a DVD case. A breakout cable comprising AC power and AES/EBU digital I/O (the only connections available) is permanently affixed to the unit.

The unit is covered with knobs. At the upper left are input and dry signal level, lower right is a knob that selects one of four modes: SST Reverb, SST Echo, Room, and "Program," which is currently unused. In between are various parameter controls; high and

low decay, pre-delay, early reflection levels, room size, and so on. A 4-stage LED ladder displays level.

Sonically, the SST-206 can provide everything from slapback delay to comb-filter-like echo "clouds" to metallic reverbs to lush, realistic rooms. The user interface is excellent — grab a knob and make the change you want. Version 2 software has just been released, which doubles delay times in the Room and SST-Echo algorithms. Existing units will be updated free — contact Seven Woods Audio.

The original Space Station has a lot of devotees, and Seven Woods Audio is providing an affordable way to get an updated version. Add in a great-sounding room algorithm, and you have a winning combination. **EQ**