

Chandler TG1 Limiter

It's a fact of life that certain items of old equipment are deemed more classic and therefore more desirable to emulate than others are. The audio industry has a long and illustrious past and new candidates for imitation are emerging; others have simply been missed on previous passes.

GEORGE SHILLING



HAVING BEEN LUCKY enough to use an EMI TG console for a couple of projects a few years back, I was eager to try this unit, which is apparently similar to the rare EMI TG12413 compressor which dates from a similar period. The desk featured onboard limiters that I remember turning on in just about every channel of my mix, my feeling of elation growing by the second, as I recognised the magic qualities of the albums it had been famous for: from *Revolver* right up to *Dark Side Of The Moon* and beyond. A huge warmth enveloped every signal as the limiter levers were lifted into place and the military-grade knobs were cranked up.

Military-grade was not my initial impression of the Chandler unit; the top panel was already slightly bowed when it reached me and top and bottom panels seem vulnerable to bending. And they rattled. I felt somewhat 'on my own' with this thing; no manual was provided, and I found precious little information on the information superhighway.

However, it seems that Chandler is a Neve replica expert, and I discovered that it also makes a companion TG mic preamp unit. A US-based company, it goes to great lengths to source components from Europe where necessary. The simple rear panel features unlabelled XLR sockets for inputs and outputs – I had to guess which was left and right on my early example. The only other connection is an IEC mains socket.

The front panel is strangely attached with a series of tiny nuts and bolts, but in itself seems pretty sturdy. The gunmetal grey finish is very reminiscent of the old EMI consoles. The lovely period meters are illuminated on power-on, and simply show gain reduction at all times. The knobs on the desk I used were grey, but this unit's black chunky knobs all operate positively, and the toggle switches act precisely.

The first of these powers the unit up, lighting the legending on the meters from behind. The compressor itself features all discrete Class A circuitry with transformer balanced inputs and outputs. Compression threshold is fixed, with Input level knobs (labelled Hold on the review model) driving the circuits. The Compress/Limit switches cause pops on the outputs, but that's all part of the fun. This unit definitely has that magic 'pioneering' feel about it, unlike many

modern units that claim Fairchild inspiration but turn out (sadly) to be far more polished performers.

For me, expectation is heightened when I see five or six-way selectors for compressor settings on Fairman, Tube Tech, Manley or EAR compressors, which often copy the attack and release times but fail to sound exactly like vintage units. That is not to denigrate those manufacturers in any way, they are all great, but none has the magic crunch of an original Fairchild. This box is far closer to capturing that magic and even goes beyond the graininess of a 670.

In Limit mode, its character is superb on drums, sounding squashy and yet airy at the same time, with apparently no loss of high-end frequency response. Indeed, there is a lot in common with the Fairchild 670 in this design. There are six settings for Recovery times, ranging from very fast at setting 1 to a ridiculously slow release at setting 6; attack times are also affected by these settings. Compress mode is less dramatic and far less audible than Limit mode, and I felt it was a little disappointing. On male vocals I soon switched to an 1176 which was far more appealing.

However, on drums this thing is amazing. In Limit mode it pumps in the most luscious manner. It is difficult to restrain yourself, but achieving subtler limiting is a matter of setting the Hold/Input knobs very low, so that the meters are just tickling away. And I found I wasn't restricted to only using the fastest settings with drums – they are very appealing on setting 3 or even 4. The smoothest limiting is achieved with 5 or 6 but you tend to lose some of the enjoyable

characteristics of the slowest settings.

The TG1 makes an excellent programme limiter, with none of the closed-in sounding, dull pumping of more modern designs. Somehow, this compressor 'breathes' far more naturally. Even the most ridiculous and unusable settings will at least make you smile. A Stereo Link switch allows this unit to be used as two completely separate mono compressors or as a linked stereo unit, where the compressor sidechains are summed. The Bypass switches appear to be hard-wired. The Output knobs are usefully stepped in dBs with a range of -10 to +10, although I sometimes wanted more output level when going directly to tape from the outputs, as the gain reduction kicks in at a fairly low input or 'Hold' level.

As reported in a previous issue of *Resolution*, the TG1 has already found favour in lofty circles, and it's easy to see why. Despite being noisier than many modern units (it emitted a slight hum intermittently, and inevitably brought up source hiss when limiting heavily), it has a fantastic characterful sound that I believe is a long way from being achievable with software plug-ins – or almost any hardware unit for that matter. It's definitely on my Birthday list! ■

Contact

CHANDLER, US:

Website: www.chandlerlimited.com

Tel: UK, Unity Audio: +44 1440 785843

PROS

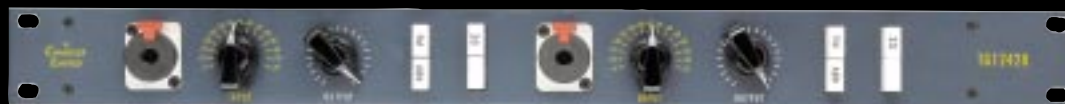
Wonderful, magical sound on certain signals; fantastic drum limiting.

CONS

Not an all-rounder; flimsy case panels; very little operational information forthcoming; can sound noisy; expensive.

EXTRAS

The TG2 preamp features the same discrete transformer balanced sound and amplifier stages as the TG1 limiter.



Controls include: 5-75dB gain adjustment (this unit will accept balanced line inputs on its mic input and give unity gain with a small tweak of the output fader); DI-unbalanced line in set to 100kOhm impedance; 48V switching; and an output fader.