

Amek Pure Path DMCL



It's associated with one of the greatest names in the business and predictably it presents an individual interpretation of a package that combines stereo preamplification with dynamics and filters. That'll be a new Rupert Neve designed Pure Path module then.

GEORGE SHILLING

THIS IS THE LATEST in a series of processors designed by Mr Rupert Neve that has so far offered a slightly eccentric take on signal management. The Channel-In-A-Box provided an odd combination of features, with dual signal paths, one a mic channel and one a line channel, with assignable sections of signal processing. This new unit is a slightly more conventional dual mic/line/ instrument preamp with compression and filters on each channel, and an optional digital output board.

The DMCL, as it is known, is housed in a deep and heavy 1U box, which was a tight fit in my rack due to screws protruding on the sides of the case. The internal construction features one main circuit board with many surface-mount chips in evidence, and countless neatly arranged tiny components. A pair of Carnhill output transformers are also mounted on the main board.

The precisely engineered front panel features a bewildering array of 29 LED-illuminating pushbuttons and plenty of nicely damped knobs to twiddle. There is no power switch.

The two channels are arranged side-by-side, with the only shared button on the front appearing in between the two. This selects the source for metering and overload indication, choosing between input and output signals for each channel's meter. The only other shared feature is a row of LEDs showing statuses for the optional digital board and the switches for this appear on the rear panel. The rear also features separate XLRs for mic inputs, line inputs, and transformer balanced outputs. There are jack sockets for insert send and return on each channel, half-normalled to the compressor return. And compressor link sockets enable linked surround bus compression with multiple units.

From the left then, there is an instrument input jack with associated button, although the line input (with associated Trim knob) overrides this despite both buttons possibly being illuminated. The instrument input sounds 'dry' but worked well in combination with bass guitar and the onboard compressor.

A rotary switch steps the gain up in 6dB steps from zero to 66dB on the mic and instrument inputs. A 48V

button supplies phantom. Above the buttons a 16 segment meter indicates input or output level. There is also a tiny overload LED which you'll struggle to illuminate, such is the headroom of this unit. The output meter will be well off the scale before this lights.

The mic amplifier is able to handle more than +26dBu without a pad, making it suitable for use as an additional line input. With other sections bypassed, the expected characteristic sound of modern Neve designs is present. This, to my ears, is a very clean and indeed pure sound, although it is perhaps a slightly cold sound compared to some other units. There seems to be a slight exaggeration of the very high frequencies that suits certain recording situations but not all. It is really a matter of taste.

The next section features the Filters, with separate In buttons for HPF and LPF, and a rotary frequency control for each. The HPF ranges from 20Hz to 300Hz while the LPF covers 2.5kHz to 28kHz. There are also switches to change the slopes for each filter: 18 or 24dB/octave for the HPF and 12 or 18dB/octave for the LPF. These are very powerful filters, even on their gentler settings. I felt more contrast between the settings would have been nicer – perhaps a 6dB/octave slope as a gentler alternative could have been useful for some situations. A S/C button switches the filters into the sidechain path.

The compressor section features a wide-ranging Threshold knob, and a Ratio control ranging from 1:1 to 40:1. The compressor, like the filters, is very powerful, and I usually found myself setting the ratio somewhere between 1:1 and 2:1, which still lit plenty of LEDs on the gain reduction meter. The Attack and Release controls are similarly wide-ranging, while the &MM ('And Much More') button provides softer-knee compression: gentler, but still more dbx 160X-sounding than vintage Neve.

The Gain knob provides a huge +24dB of gain and the Key button enables the compressor insert. The Pre-Filter button unsurprisingly allows the compressor to operate before the filter, instead of the normal arrangement where it follows. The Link button on Channel A links Channel B's Threshold knob and level



detection, although other controls continue to act separately, so careful setting is required for true stereo set-up. Channel B's Link button selects the Channel B Link socket; Channel A's external Link socket is always active.

The Digital output is comprehensively specified, with 44.1, 48, 88.2 and 96kHz rates selectable internally, or external sync, with Word Clock and Super Word Clock input and output provided. These settings are selected with tiny pushbuttons on the rear panel, adjacent to the AES-EBU XLR, SPDIF phono and TOSLINK optical connectors, which all operate simultaneously.

The DCML would not be my first choice of device for vocal recording. The overall character is very dry and silky, extremely clean, but for me lacking a bit of warmth and character. For fans of the very clean who require powerful filtering and compression, this box does the job extremely well, feels well-built and exudes quality. ■

PROS

Ultra-clean sound – very low distortion, extended HF response; very powerful processing; superb build quality; well-featured digital board

CONS

Ultra-clean sound – lack of warmth and character; overly powerful processing for some tastes; Ratio, Attack and Release knobs not linked in Link mode; no power switch

EXTRAS

The DMCL is the third Pure Path product from Amek. Pure Path technology employs a combination of discrete transistors with integrated circuits.

The Channel-in-a-Box is an input channel, featuring a precision switched gain microphone preamp, line input amplifier and adjustable high and low pass filters. It has a 4-band equaliser with sweepable frequencies and a compressor with adjustable threshold, ratio, attack, release and gain.

Designed for applications in which analogue audio signals need to be sent over long cable runs (up to 1km), the Driver In A Box combines eight separate



line in/line out transformer-coupled line amplifiers in a single 1U rackmount. Variable gain controls are provided and permit output levels to be trimmed to different levels from the same source when used as a distribution amplifier, or enable different input levels to be trimmed to provide equal output levels from each of the eight channels. A 'Silk' switch introduces a circuit that is said to emulate the sound of classic Rupert Neve designs.

Contact

AMEK UK:
Tel: +44 161 868 2400
Website: www.amek.com