



TAPE OP

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()MIC PREAMPS (/REVIEWS/CATEGORY/MIC-PREAMPS)



WA12 mic preamp

BY WARM AUDIO (HTTP://WWW.WARMAUDIO.COM/) | REVIEWED BY ALAN TUBBS (/REVIEWS/BY/ALAN-TUBBS)



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Designer/owner Bryce Young describes his Warm Audio WA12 not as a clone of the API 312, but based upon that classic design. It arrived double-boxed, with plenty of packing and peanuts, which is always nice when electronics are shipped. Unpacked, the half-rack Warm preamp is solid, if not especially heavy, considering its depth. Someone with delicate sensibilities might consider the front-panel's orange color scheme garish, but it does stand out against the chorus of grey, silver, and black predominating in most racks. It also makes the black lettering legible, down to the dots used for gain. All six buttons have associated status LEDs, an often overlooked touch, while the paint and external metalwork on my unit showed excellent craftsmanship. All buttons had nice travel and gave a solid latching feel, while the gain knob clicked through the stops with enough pressure to know you've changed settings but not enough to slow things down. Mr. Young explained that it is a variable pot, not a rotary switch, but the indents give it that feel. Rounding out the front panel is the hi-Z input. The only thing missing is any kind of metering. Around back is the 24 volt power inlet, a Neutrik Combo mic input, and two simultaneous outputs, one on XLR and the other 1/4.' The rear input is mic-level only, but engaging the front-panel pad button helps match to line-level. Both the

hi-Z and mic inputs go through the entire preamp circuitry, including the "Warm" function. The front-panel Warm button changes the impedance of the input from the standard 600 ohm to 150. This can make the tone brighter, as well as add a few extra dB of overall level, so be careful when comparing sounds (because louder will almost always A/B better). Still, such flexibility is always a welcome addition. The power supply is an external wall wart. This helps with isolation, of course, but is also a common way to save money for international electrical certification. Inside, the unit is cleanly built and well specified, including dual Cinemag transformers. It looks good and feels good - and that provides confidence even at this unit's low price.

So, how does the WA12 sound? I set it up and had some colleagues join me during testing. The simplest way to describe guitar DI'ed through the WA12 is thick and rich. The strums were full and plucking sharp. But I was really impressed with what the WA12 did for the female vocalist. Normally, I use a small-diaphragm condenser on altos, since the Oktava MK-319 I keep at home will cause sibilance problems with such voices by the time the track is mastered. But I already had the Oktava set up for guitar so I used that for the scratch vocal. The WA12 hinted at less sibilance while sounding "big" - bigger than the Rupert Neve Designs Portico II Channel [Tape Op #82] I usually use. When I brought her back to do overdubs, my suspicions that the Oktava/Warm combo was a perfect fit for her was confirmed. It wasn't that the WA12 rolled off any highs, it was the extended bottom that helped keep the sibilance in check. After recording, I slathered on the digital processing - including Softube FET and SONAR ProChannel PC2A electro-optical on her channel, ProChannel PC4K SSL-style [#88] on the vocal and output buses - and slammed all the comps. Yes, her sss's got aggressive and the T's and other plosives got rock hard and chipped, but once I backed off the settings to something approaching

normal, the vocals slid perfectly into the mix - nice and round. The full sound recorded also took EQ extremely well. At a studio with API 3124 preamps, we tried spoken word as well as guitar and bass. It was hard to tell any difference between the two, but after some close listening, it was decided that the Warm Audio had a little more bottom, if only by a red hair.

At home, I can usually get a good drum sound using overheads and a Crown PZM-12SP mic on the floor, all equidistant. Again, the WA12 was a perfect match for the assigned floor job. The PZM provides pristine capture, with the WA12 accentuating the kick and floor tom, yet remaining punchy. Like an API, the output of the Warm Audio is high, and I seldom had to go above the halfway mark (46 dB out of 71 dB of gain). I did go higher, but then found I had to bring down the input of my interface. No matter how loud the gain, at no point did the WA12 crap out or distort; it just slid into nice transformer saturation. The waveform would get bigger on the computer screen but flat line, as if going through a compressor. The WA12 responds like professional gear, yet does so at an affordable price. And like most professional gear, it gets the job done but excels at certain tasks - like sibilant singers. If you are looking to augment existing API preamps, only your hairdresser will know you are using the Warm Audio unit instead. A project or home studio looking to add a good preamp will find the WA12 capable of providing professional quality without breaking the bank.

(\$449.99 street; www.warmaudio.com) -Alan Tubbs <www.bnoir-film.com>



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VMP-1000e Mic Preamp ([/Reviews/Gear/48/Vmp-1000e-Mic-Preamp/](#))

BY HENRY ROBINETT ([/REVIEWS/BY/HENRY-ROBINETT](#))

The Sebatron VMP-1000e is a really-cool tube mic preamp. It's kind of its own thing (thank goodness), and it doesn't seem to be a clone of anything. It has a very warm tone-great for guitars-and...

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Audio Buddy, DMP2 (/Reviews/Gear/19/Audio-Buddy/)

BY RICH HARDESTY (/REVIEWS/BY/RICH-HARDESTY)

One thread that runs quite regularly through the PC-based recording newsgroups I monitor involves mic preamps. Not, so much pertaining to "which ones sound the best?" but more often- "uh, what do they...

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BLUETUBE DP Preamp (/Reviews/Gear/50/Bluetube-Dp- Preamp/)

BY KYLE BITTINGER (/REVIEWS/BY/KYLE-BITTINGER), BRYAN
CORD (/REVIEWS/BY/BRYAN-CORD), NICK MCCARTHY
(/REVIEWS/BY/NICK-MCCARTHY), RAMSEY TANTAWI
(/REVIEWS/BY/RAMSEY-TANTAWI)

The two-channel BLUETUBE DP is the successor to the original BLUETUBE mic preamp. Each channel is fully independent and features 48 V phantom power, a 20 dB pad, an 80 Hz high-pass filter, polarity...

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ADA8000 A/D/A Converter/Preamp (/Reviews/Gear/39/Ada8000-Ada- Converterpreamp/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

Also known as the "Ultragain Pro-8 Digital," this unit is an eight-channel analog-to-digital, digital-to-analog converter with ADAT Lightpipe digital I/O and BNC word clock. Plus, it's also eight mic...

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Eureka Preamp/Compressor/EQ (/Reviews/Gear/39/Eureka- Preampcompressoreq/)

BY JOHN BACCIGALUPPI [{/REVIEWS/BY/JOHN-BACCIGALUPPI}](#),
LARRY CRANE [{/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE}](#)

I've been curious about PreSonus products for a while, as PreSonus make a nice selection of lower-cost yet well- designed audio gear that is built in the U.S. The Eureka is a single-rackspace channel...

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Digi 002, Pro Tools LE 5.3.2 (/Reviews/Gear/33/Digi-002/)

BY JOHN BACCIGALUPPI [{/REVIEWS/BY/JOHN-BACCIGALUPPI}](#)

See Issue #30 for my review of the Mbox as most of my comments there on small to mid-sized studios needing Pro Tools compatibility also apply here. You've probably seen the ads and know that the Digi...

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TG Channel (/Reviews/Gear/43/Tg- Channel/)

BY MIKE CAFFREY [{/REVIEWS/BY/MIKE-CAFFREY}](#)

The TG Channel is yet another great piece in the Chandler TG series. It is a single channel, one rack space unit with the same mic pre found in the Chandler TG-2 pre, combined with a three-band EQ....

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9762 Dual-Combo Mic Preamp (/Reviews/Gear/41/9762-Dual-Combo-Mic-Preamp/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

One of the joys of doing this mag is checking out recording gear from small companies that are just starting out... and doing so before anyone else! Bob Starr is connected with our friends at Zero...

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SE-30 (/Reviews/Gear/13/Se-30/)

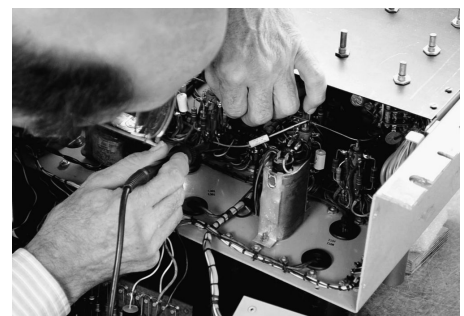
BY STEVE SILVERSTEIN (/REVIEWS/BY/STEVE-SILVERSTEIN)

Someone once advised me that no cheap microphone is a bad microphone. With the same principle in mind, I bought this device (which, despite its name, serves mostly as a preamp and something of a...

BEHIND THE GEAR

BEHIND THE GEAR (/COLLECTIONS/BEHIND-THE-GEAR/)

Restoring The "Holy Grail Of Compressors": Behind The Scenes At The Vintage King Tech Shop (/Tutorials/Bonus/Vintage-King-Restoration-Series-Part-1-Outboard/)



BY

Vintage King co-founder Michael Nehra shares some of his love, knowledge, and practical advice for diving into the world of vintage audio gear, and then takes us behind the scenes for a walk through...

BEHIND THE GEAR (/COLLECTIONS/BEHIND-THE-GEAR/)

Jim Williams: Behind The Gear With Audio Upgrades **(/Interviews/Btg/90/Jim-Williams/)**

BY MIKE JASPER (/ARTICLES/BY/MIKE-JASPER)

Jim Williams has spent much of his 56 years working with some of the biggest names in the music business, including Frank Zappa, John McLaughlin and Stevie Wonder. He's the owner of Audio Upgrades,...

BEHIND THE GEAR (/COLLECTIONS/BEHIND-THE-GEAR/)

From WWII Planes To Stax Consoles: Behind The Gear With Bill Cheney & The History Of Spectra Sonics **(/Interviews/Btg/102/Bill-Cheney/)**

BY JOHN BACCIGALUPPI (/ARTICLES/BY/JOHN-BACCIGALUPPI),
LARRY CRANE (/ARTICLES/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

Bill Cheney and Jim Romney are the men responsible for keeping the amazing legacy of Spectra Sonics, a legendary, if criminally unheralded, pro-audio company alive.



BEHIND THE GEAR (/COLLECTIONS/BEHIND-THE-GEAR/)

Rich Williams: Behind The Gear With Burl Audio **(/Interviews/Btg/105/Rich-Williams/)**


BY LARRY CRANE (/ARTICLES/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

Burl Audio, under the direction of owner/designer Rich Williams, has developed some of the best new recording equipment over the last eight years. Their mic preamps, summing amps, and control room...



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