

# The Tape Op Reviews

## "REALLY NICE COMPRESSOR" RNC 1773

It seems like more people are mentioning these cool little compressors lately. They're 1/3 rack space sized jobs that do a better job than a lot of compressors that cost way more. They have the usual front knobs, threshold, attack, release, ratio and output. There's a relay-activating bypass and another button that puts the compressor into "really nice" mode, where the compression is very subtle. It will work on a stereo signal but since there's only one set of controls you can't separate the sides. Basically this guy rocks. It's very fast and nearly undetectable when pulling down transients, but also able to offer smooth program compression. I bought three and I use them on overheads, room mics, guitars and vocals all the time. And they're less than \$200! (FMR Audio, 1-800-343-9976) -Lary Crane

## DANELECTRO "Dan-Echo" stomp box

When it comes time to mix, how about recycling those guitar pedals you have lying around - some of them work really well for a specific effect - just stick one on an aux send! Take the Danelectro "Dan-Echo" pedal for example. For around \$110.00 you've got a great delay pedal for tracking and/or mixing. The DE-1 features four knobs (Mix; Speed; Repeats & Hi-Cut) plus one Lo-Hi switch for delay times. By using the Hi-Cut knob, each repeat swallows more hi frequencies, thus reproducing the warm tone of a vintage tape echo, without the ground hum. I would recommend using it with a direct box if you have a bantam/TT patchbay in your studio. With the "Dan-Echo", you get a groovy Danelectro battery ("vintage power source") and a neat-o Danelectro sticker. And did I mention that the pedal is gay-friendly (lavendar)? -Hillary Johnson

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## CORRINA REPP

### *The Other Side Is Mud* CDEP

Repp recorded all but one track on this EP at Hush Records' head Chad Crouch's PowerMac home studio. One of the hallmarks of Hush is Crouch's ability to capture warm, acoustic, singer-songwriter sounds in the supposedly "cold" digital realm, and ...*Mud* is no exception. Each slight twang in Repp's assured voice is clearly recorded (on Chad's new AKG C1000S), as is her economical, inventive strumming. The real star here though, is Repp's continually evolving songwriting. All Crouch really had to do was sit her in front of the mic and let her go, and except for playing organ on one track, that's what he did. Intimate and beautiful. (*Hush Records, PO Box 12713, Portland, OR 97212, hushrecords.com*) -Matt Mair Lowery

## SHURE SE-30 GATED COMPRESSOR/MIXER

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 mixer) for roughly \$30. I learned from a technician at Shure Brothers that the SE-30 was originally intended for broadcast; past that he just advised me to have fun with it. The unit has 3 XLR inputs, each with a separate input level, and only one output level and XLR connector. The limiter has an on/off switch and a setting for release rate, but none for amount of compression. It's a fully functional limiter, but can only fill specific applications. The preamps introduce a tiny bit of noise, which can be especially noticeable with a quiet signal or a heavily compressed one. The internal limiter boosts the noise floor less than outboard compressors that I've used this preamp with, maybe just because it introduces less dramatic compression. The preamp does introduce some interesting coloration, providing an early solid-state type sound. It's definitely not perfect for all purposes, but it can be really interesting when placed alongside more conventional sounds in a mix. Even with its limitations, the Shure SE-30's ability to provide distinctive and interesting sounds supports the claim that much like microphones, no cheap piece of outboard gear is a bad one. -Steve Silverstein

## LEXO AND THE LEAPERS

### Ask Them EP

Guided By Voices' prolific Robert Pollard recorded this amazing, pseudonymous EP in a day at Cro-Magnon in Dayton, Ohio. Backed by Dayton's Tasties, Pollard tears through these six cuts old-school GBV style: intermittent acoustic breaks broken by raucous, fuzzed-out guitars; bits of found sounds, great lyrics, and sweet sing-along pop melodies. The fidelity is a couple notches above 4-track oldies like *Bee One Thousand*, so you can crank it up without sacrificing clarity. The only real problem here is that it's all over too quickly. (*Fading Captain Series, PO Box 752091, Dayton OH 45475, gbv.com/fadingcaptain1.html*) - Matt Mair Lowery

## FLYING CALF 20 bit A/D converter

I was in a local audio shop with my pal Craig when he mentioned this inexpensive little analog to digital converter. For under \$170 you can get an outboard converter to put in between your mixer and DAT machine! This seemed too cheap, and I was worried about the unbalanced inputs and S/PDIF only outputs, but I bought it anyway. When we compared it against the built-in converters on a Panasonic 3800 DAT we could hear a difference; the Calf made mixes seem a bit less "collapsed" and vocals were "smoother", more like analog mixdown decks. It also has a peak removing function that won't allow you to overload your DAT, although if you hit it too much you get nasty cracking sounds. I've been using it on all my mixes ever since and everything sounds better! Next, I plan to upgrade to the Flying Cow, with balanced inputs and a D/A converter to monitor through. (Midiman)-Lary Crane

## PROLAPSE

### *Ghosts of Dead Aeroplanes*

It has always seemed to me that UK "bands" are a lot less afraid to use effects and such in their recordings compared to their US counterparts. Prolapse are a case in point. These mixes are a study in how effects laden vocals and instruments can work and many of the tracks are mixed in a dub-style, instruments dropping out to give more room to the tracks. It's great stuff, very creative and all the more impressive in that it was recorded by band member Donald Ross Skinner. (*Jetset, 67 Vestry St., Suite 5C, New York, NY 10013*) -Lary Crane