

NOT-SO-QUICK PICKS

MILLENNIA MEDIA HV-3D HIGH VOLTAGE MIC PREAMP

(\$3775, 8 channels; \$2785, 4 channels) mil-media.com

The HV-3D comes with either 4 or 8 channels of fully matched HV-3 series pre amps with an option for 130-volt phantom power inputs for DPA (B&K) mics or DC coupled inputs for ribbons and dynamic mics. It has huge amounts of input headroom — +23dBu before clipping and powerful output headroom: +32dBu, and tons of gain. Clean, clean, pure gain. (36 steps at 1.5 dB per.) I made the bleeding headphones feedback on a poor singer. Oops. This is the most accurate, transparent, dynamic, and straight-forward microphone preamp that I've ever had the pleasure to be around.

The box that I was lent had 8 channels of the little beauties. Honestly, I may never be able to afford a box like this. This is what really sucks about this job — the teasing — the endless teasing. Seriously though, if you break down the cost — 8 channels of Millennium HV-3 series mic pres for \$3,775 (an online shop was selling this unit for this much) that's \$472 per channel! Of course you get the power supply, the box, and all the tight circuit

(the SOUND) of my mics. I learned much. I wish I could impart this knowledge unto you. Your ears would have to hear it to know. It has been a long time since I actually switched out mics to achieve a desired sound rather than just fixing it with filters.

The best session that I had to be able to test the unit was a recording of cues for a PBS documentary score. The instrumentation was perfectly matched to what I knew were the HV-3D's strengths. The main basis of the pieces revolved around a wide assortment of symphonic-pitched percussion instruments played by the amazing Mr. William Winant: timpani, bass marimba, glockenspiel, vibraphone, celeste, and various bells. I had such good luck during the microphone test issue period last month with the SE Electronics SE3 stereo pair of small diaphragm condensers that they became my go-to stereo miking choice for most of these instruments. I wanted to get the purest, cleanest, and most realistic recording possible, and this combination of mics and pre amps was right on.

composer Marc Capelle at the piano.

I tried a Microtech/Gefell UM 92.1S tube condenser on the cello. The combination of the detailed, smooth mic and the HV-3 preamp made for a strong match. The deep, long notes were captured beautifully. I used a channel of the Summit to control the dynamics. For the bassoon I used the AEA R92 ribbon mic placed three feet away from the middle of the instrument (you get lots of fingering clicks but the sound is more balanced than trying to mic the top of the horn) through the HV 3D with the +18dB gain button engaged. I also used a channel of the Summit to smooth things out and get a little bit of another gain stage for the ribbon mic.

On the piano I used a Microtech/Gefell UMT 70 set on omni sort of stuck inside the lid in the middle, and a pair of AKG 452s pointing at the meat of each register. The room was pretty small, so everyone was leaking into everyone else's mics. This made a room-mic unnecessary. I was very pleased with the session. After doing some harmony overdubs, the pieces were complete. All of the articles I've read about the Millennium talk about how the transparency of the preamps are perfect for classical-esque recording. Well, they are right. I don't usually do this kind of recording. It felt very *Masterpiece Theatre*. Very snooty and PBS-y. But I must say that it sounded very cool.

I have been using John Hardy, Brent Averil, and Trident solid-state pre amps for a while now. I love them all. I need them all. But I now know what a transformerless, truly uncolored pre can do for any instrument that needs to shine in its purity. It's time to start saving up.

Strengths: Lots of pure, clean gain. Accurate, detailed, neutral, uncolored sound. The convenience of 8 channels in one box and quality workmanship throughout all aspects of the unit.

Limitations: No phase reverse (I know that we should be able to figure that out for ourselves), but I like to have the option. Pricey. You have to wait for your supper.
—Monte Vallier

design, matched critical components, laser trimmed FET-based output, etceteras that make it a class A+ unit so there is no way they would ever be able to sell the pres that cheap . . . but still, it is something to consider.

I'd been using the box for a couple months while we were doing the "Mic Issue" (*EQ*, September 2005). I used it with every mic that I had for review — and all the other ones in my pathetic mic drawer. This is the first time that I truly heard the sound

The mobile setup that I brought to Willy's studio at Mills College in Oakland was simple: Digidesign 002 rack, a G4 PowerBook running PT 6.7 at 96k, a Summit DCL 200 2 channel compressor, and the Millennium HV 3D. Perfectly simple and efficient.

The eight channels of preamps in the Millennium box came in handy. I easily filled up most of them with Mr. Winant's vibes, the superb cello of Marika Hughes, the amazing bassoon of Jarratt Rossini, and

