



Rupert Neve Designs PORTICO 5033

The Neve sound is the stuff of legend – and its popularity shows no sign of waning. George Shilling processes the 5033.

KEY FEATURES

- Shielded 1U rackmount or desktop EQ unit
- Isolated DC power supply
- Neutrik connectors
- +/-12dB input level adjustment
- Five filter bypasses
- 30Hz–300Hz LF shelving filter
- 2.5kHz–25kHz HF shelving filter
- 3-band parametric EQ
- Variable LFM (50Hz–400Hz)

MEASURING UP

The 5033 is undoubtedly excellent, but if you like the modular approach, check out the API 550B (£1,050). If you prefer standalone units, the more expensive Empirical Labs Lil FrEQ (£1,643) is a terrific 1U EQ providing eight stages of processing. The new stereo AMS-Neve 8803 (£1,469; reviewed on page 78) or the quirky Chandler Germanium Tone Control (£1,322) are also worth a look.

PORTICO 5033

Manufacturer **Rupert Neve Designs**

Price **£1,385**

Contact **Sonic Distribution 01582 470260**

Web **www.rupertneve.com**

The pro-audio industry is littered with the milestones of Mr Rupert Neve's distinguished – if disjointed – career. His console designs of the 1960s and 70s are legendary, and while the original Neve company subsequently passed through several owners, even now (as AMS-Neve) reissues of Rupert's designs are a mainstay of the catalogue.

In 1985 Rupert founded Focusrite, and again, his original designs for the company are still being marketed. He latterly designed circuits for Amek, but is now back in the saddle using his own name again, living in Texas and trickling out the diminutive Portico units. It will soon be possible to integrate any of these into a tracking and mixing system, and like others in the range, the 5033 can be mounted in a rack.

Power to the Portico

The Portico 5033 is supplied with a 'lump-in-the-line' power supply, which undoubtedly helps to isolate the unit from any potential mains interference. It is a switched-mode PSU that sends DC current to the unit, but the manual claims that the Portico is relatively unfussy about its DC supply (it can cope with anything from 9–18V). Usefully, a Y-lead can be purchased as an optional extra that enables you to power two units from a single supply.

The 5033's front panel and casing is reassuringly thick, so although it's small, it's surprisingly weighty. The large Gain knobs are slightly damped and have useful centre detents for easily finding the zero position. The smaller knobs have a stiffer, oily feel – this damping helps when making small adjustments, but cramming five bands of EQ into such a limited space inevitably results in small, tightly spaced knobs. Around the rear are single male and female XLR connectors; these are high-quality Neutrik components, so no corners have been cut there. There is also a pair of (presently redundant) buss jack connections that will no doubt have their uses when RND's new 5088 console is launched soon.

Cut and boost

The high and low bands are shelving-type EQ; these share an In button for activation. Each covers more than three octaves in the range of frequencies available. The shape of these curves approximate to 6dB per octave, with a range of +/-12dB boost or cut, so they could be used as pseudo high- or low-pass filters. The low band ranges from a subsonic 30Hz right up to the low-mids at around 300Hz. This is useful for filtering unwanted low frequencies, adding warmth and boosting the punch of a bass, for example.

The high shelf is continuously variable from 2.5kHz up to 25kHz. Neve (the man, that is) is a great believer in extended high-frequency response, so it is no surprise that the high end is tweakable up to a range beyond that which humans can

actually hear. The top-end boost is sweet and musical-sounding, and great for adding 'air' or rolling off excessive brightness.

The three mid bands are all full parametrics and each has its own individual bypass, which is great for checking the effect of each band in isolation. And with the LMF extending down to 50Hz and the HMF up to 16kHz, you can use these for top and/or bottom attenuation, freeing up the shelving bands for use as pseudo-filters. These bands are wonderfully sweet-sounding and forgiving.

Strong signals

The 5033 has a terrific character and a certain amount of precision, but it doesn't sound as clinical as, say, the GML 8200. However, it shares the GML's forgiving character – full boosts never sound nasty. It's creamy and smooth, and every signal we put through it was improved after various amounts of tweaking. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Smooth EQ based on classic Neve designs
- Warm and sweet-sounding
- Technically outperforms many vintage units
- Compact and practical
- Horizontal or vertical mounting
- Good balance between precision and character
- Future expansion and integration with other Portico units and 5088 console using bussing system

WALK ON BY

- Expensive for a mono EQ
- No high- or low-pass filters
- Trim active in EQ Bypass mode
- Compact size makes small adjustments fiddly
- Legending hard to read
- Vertical rackmounting requires proprietary rack

VERDICT

A high-quality EQ offering a wide range of attenuation possibilities and the classic Neve sound. Integration with future RND products is also catered for.



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