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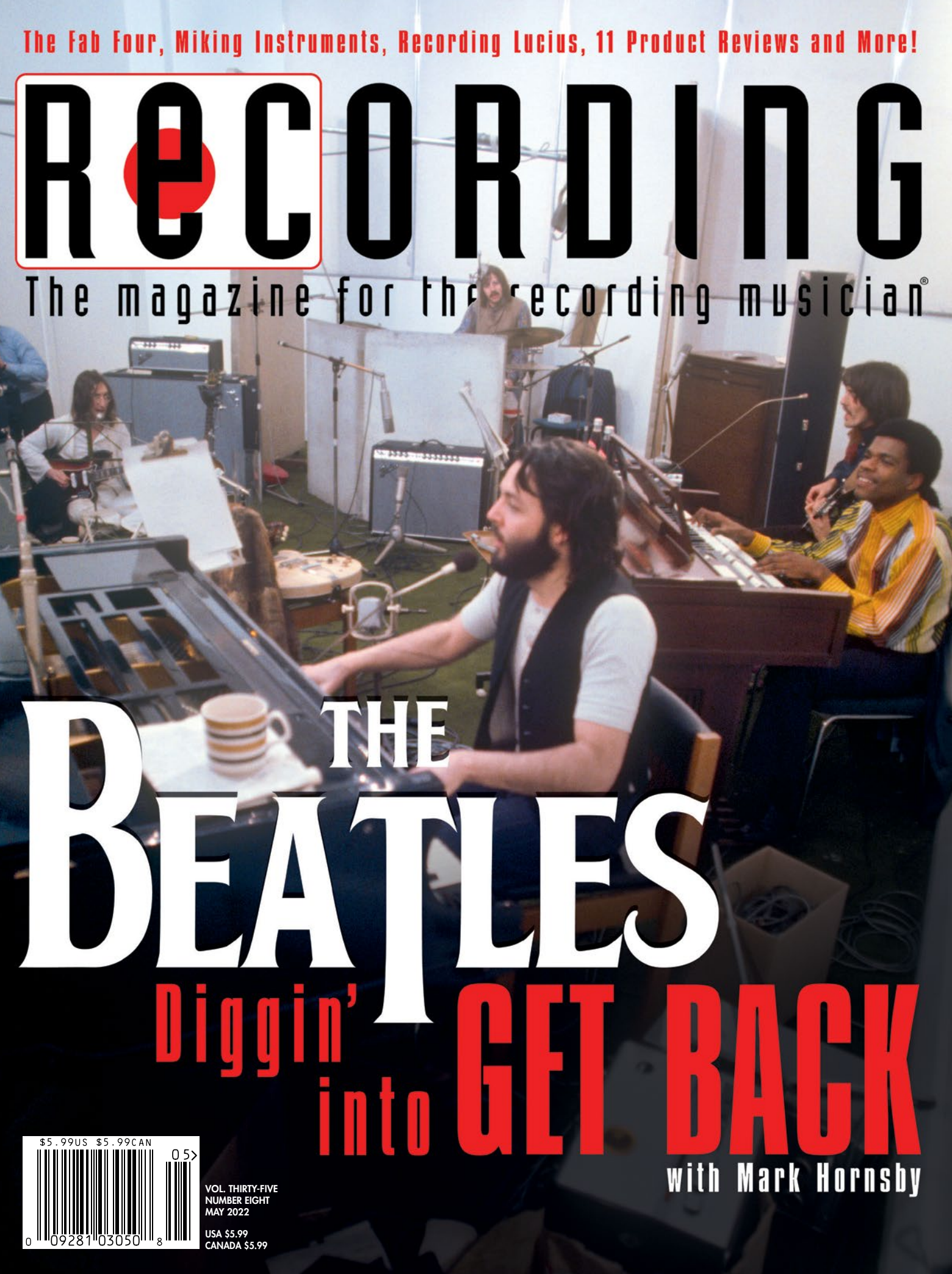

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Ingram Engineering EQ52 500— Mastering Quality Filter Module

This see-saw EQ does more than meets the eye.

REVIEW BY PAUL VNUK JR.

Eric Ingram and Ingram Engineering build high-quality, boutique audio devices in Atlanta, GA. The latest offering is the 500 series EQ52, an update of the EQ50 reviewed in December 2017, with some well-implemented new features.

The EQ52 is not your typical parametric or graphic style 500 Series equalizer. Instead, the EQ52 boasts a specialized set of filter options that offer some far-reaching tone-shaping settings despite minimal controls.

Similar in form and function to its predecessor, the EQ52 comprises a pair of low and high cut filters and a see-saw EQ, also often described as a pivot or tilt-style EQ (more on this in a moment). Both inside and out, the EQ52 is quite austere. The circuit board is cleanly laid out with well-chosen high-end components.

Lows and highs f rom the top down

The EQ50 was a three-knob, two-button affair, while the EQ52 offers four of each. The black front panel is sparse but well-annotated with white and red nomenclature. Starting at the top is an LED-equipped, hard bypass button. Below this is a -6dB per octave passive Low Cut Filter designed to impart minimal phase shift. The EQ52 offers two selectable frequency ranges (50 to 600 Hz or 700 Hz to 5 kHz) compared to the previous model's single sweepable range (20 Hz - 1 kHz). A new In/Out button can remove the Low Cut Filter from the signal chain.

Teeter totter tones

Next up (or down) is the See-Saw EQ. The original EQ50 offered a choice of two pivot points (400 Hz or 1 kHz). The EQ52 provides a pair of fully-sweepable pivot ranges (120 Hz - 1.7 kHz or 1.9 - 26 kHz) that, like the original, can be boosted or cut a minimum of 5dB.

Trimming the highs

Similar to its predecessor, the single knob Hi-Cut now extends from 3 - 200 kHz, whereas the EQ50 offered only 5 - 200 kHz of cut.

Carving and cleaning

As mentioned, the EQ52 is a specialized filter device. Both of its cut/pass filters offer a much broader reach than those found on most standard EQs and channel strips. The Low Cut is perfect for gently removing low rumble, thumps and mud, or it can take a massive bite out of your sound when needed. It can even offer an old radio or classic telephone sound as an effect. While I rarely found the need to make deep cuts on a standard instrument and vocal fare, I found it did a great job on synths and sound design projects to force tones into thin, ghostly, recessed realms.

On the high side, you may be asking, why would I need a filter that extends beyond the range of human hearing? The answer is because it's a great tool to ensure that your tracks are free from often imperceptible hiss, digital artifacts and more. You might not be able to hear it, but your compressors, converters and effects can.

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Pivot points

A see-saw or pivot EQ is akin to a broad shelving EQ. However, rather than boosting or cutting a single, selected frequency range, it does both simultaneously in an equally reactive way. The big thing to note, the chosen frequency is the pivot point. It is not the frequency being boosted or cut. When you increase the treble side, the bass side gets lowered and vice versa - like a see-saw. Unlike an actual teeter-totter, its reaction is not flat or linear. The EQ52 features a broadly rounded bell that grows bolder as it is pushed.

Gentle sweeps and cuts

The unique part of the EQ52 is not that you can select from two frequency ranges. It's that you can sweep through them to find the best use. This is one of those devices where big dial turns will yield massive sonic changes fast. In most cases, .5 to 2.5dB may be all that is needed to produce the best results.

In practice

On a full mix, a pivot point of 700 Hz with 1dB of low boost added heft and warmed up the highs in a very subtle polished way. Set to 8.1 kHz with a 2dB low boost added fullness while shaving a pinch of harshness off the top end. The mix was richer and less brittle.

A broad high cut cleaned out high-end grunge on a DI bass take, while a 50 Hz low cut cleared out mud. Sweeping the pivot point on the see-saw EQ offered the choice of better string definition on the high side or a pillow-like vintage Motown weight on the low.

The EQ52 makes an excellent drum bus shaper, especially with a high-mid pivot point that adds presence and tames cymbal bite, or it can add sizzle and air while lessening the low-end bloom.

One area that you can dig deep with this EQ is electric guitar. Here I preferred to sweep the frequency until I found the best point to pull back the lows and low mids and push the mid presence forward, dialing in the high-cut to tame any ear-splitting aggression.

On vocals, it's a great tool to add a gentle air, presence and fullness or a touch of gently rounded polish.

Considerations

Again, this is a finesse piece, and the smooth, resistant knobs aid nicely in the task. Having said that, they are on the petite side and can be hard to read and set to precise settings. Matching a stereo pair can be tricky. However, Eric suggests getting the settings close and then flipping the phase of one channel and gently adjusting the controls until phase cancelation occurs, reflip the phase, and you will be good to go for stereo bus and mastering tasks. It helps that the EQ52 is incredibly phase-accurate.

Conclusions

The Ingram Engineering EQ52 is a magnificent tone-shaping device that offers great-sounding, fast results with a gentle turn of a knob or two. It's also highly affordable, and you can get a pair for less than the cost of most single 500 Series EQs or preamps, and trust me, you will want more than one.

Price: $375
More from: ingramengineering.net

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