

Antares AVP-1 Voice Processor and Pitch Corrector

“Antares’s greatest hits” migrate to a cost-effective rack signal processor

We’ve seen Auto-Tune, we’ve seen mic modeling...but now they’re in a 1U rack package, along with compression, EQ, tube emulation, doubling, and de-essing, for under \$600. Sound interesting? I thought so too, so when given a chance to review the AVP-1, I couldn’t resist.

INS AND OUTS

The AVP-1 has an unbalanced TRS 1/4-inch line in, two similar line outs (one for the main signal, one for an artificially doubled version), MIDI in and out, footswitch, and a jack for the wall-wart power adapter.

Surprisingly, there’s no XLR mic in. Hey — isn’t this a vocal processor? Well, Antares recommends using the AVP-1 as a channel insert effect, preferably on an already-recorded vocal so you can experiment freely with the various tweaks. This is fine with traditional analog consoles, but if you’re running a mostly digital studio, you’ll need to send some signal to an analog out, process it, then bring it back in and convert back to digital (which will add several milliseconds of delay in addition to the unit’s inherent latency). Digital fans may instead want to investigate Antares’s excellent Auto-Tune and mic modeling plug-ins, then use them in conjunction with other plug-ins for compression, EQ, etc.

However, the no-mic-in approach has a major plus: you’re not locked into a particular mic pre-amp. Use your favorite and enjoy the cost savings that accrue from not have a mic pre built into the box.

INTERFACING

The front panel has 31 buttons, a data wheel, and a 2-line x 20-character LCD. To program, you push a button and choose the value with the data wheel.

For

example, the compressor has dedicated buttons for Attack, Decay, Knee, Compressor, and Gate. The latter two pages have multiple parameters, selected by arrow buttons.

▶ ANTARES AVP-1

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SUMMARY: The AVP-1 has the usual tools for processing vocals, but the standout features are mic modeling and Auto-Tune pitch correction.

STRENGTHS: Quite easy to use. Well-thought-out combination of functions. Mic modeling works surprisingly well. Auto-Tune is a very useful adjunct. Excellent documentation. Cost-effective.

LIMITATIONS: No mic in. Can’t switch EQ pre-compressor. Gate decay can be abrupt. Double track effect is unconvincing except for live use.

PRICE: \$599

Speaking of the compressor, it also has a gain reduction meter on the front panel, and a more detailed one on the LCD that is accessed by hitting the Comp or Gate button twice. The gate is nothing fancy, just threshold and reduction ratio parameters. Although it shares the decay time parameter with the compressor, the gate decay seems more like a “hold time” before the signal goes away rather than of a smooth, linear fade.

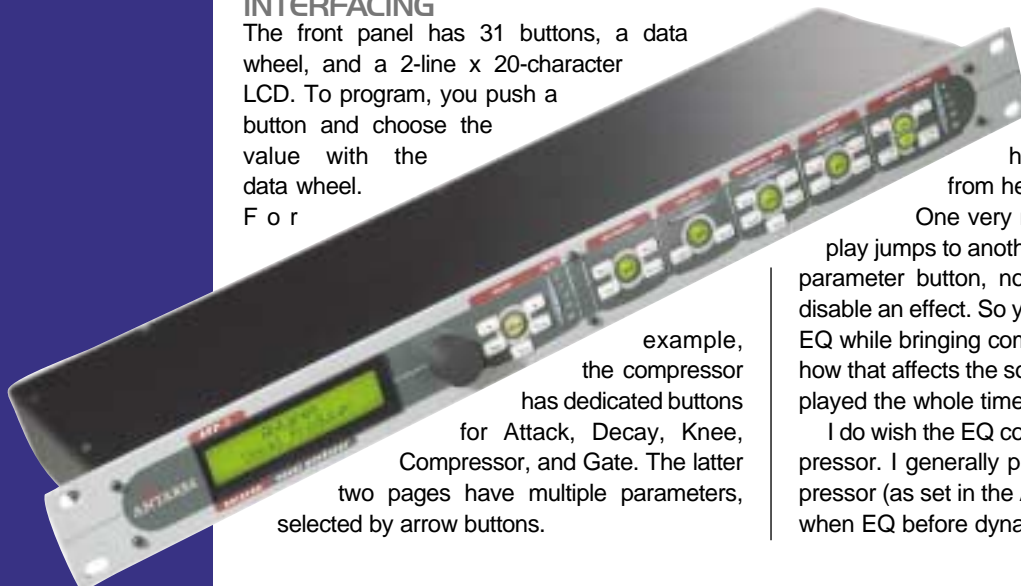
EQ

The two parametric EQ sections are bypassed as a pair (although you can disable either section independently). Each can choose among several responses: low shelf, high shelf, peaking, notch, bandpass, lowpass 6 dB, lowpass 12 dB, highpass 6 dB, and highpass 12 dB. Available parameters depend on the filter type; there are 51 fixed filter frequencies.

Interestingly, 50 and 60 Hz aren’t among them (52 and 63 are), so if you need to notch out hum, you can’t get there from here.

One very nice feature is that the display jumps to another page only if you select a parameter button, not if you merely enable or disable an effect. So you can, for example, adjust EQ while bringing compression in and out to see how that affects the sound, with the EQ page displayed the whole time.

I do wish the EQ could patch pre- or post-compressor. I generally prefer having EQ post-compressor (as set in the AVP-1), but there are times when EQ before dynamics is the way to go.



DE-ESSER

The de-esser is very effective. Parameters are highpass frequency, attack, release, threshold, and ratio, along with panel/LCD metering.

MIC MODELER

This is a major plus. You select your source mic from 14 specific models or five generic types, then select the mic type you want from 11 options (hand-held dynamic, studio dynamic, two different small-diaphragm condensers, three different large-diaphragm condensers, drum mic kick, drum mic snare, drum mic cymbal, and telephone). You can also tweak low-cut filter settings and the amount of proximity effect, as well as add some modeled tube distortion.

AUTO-TUNE

By now just about everyone is familiar with the Auto-Tune process, which compensates electronically for out-of-tune vocals. Yes, the AVP-1 has Auto-Tune, and it works pretty much like its hardware and plug-in predecessors: you set up the

audio type, sensitivity, and speed, dial in a scale, and let the machine do the rest (which it does remarkably transparently, given the complexity of the process).

DOUBLE TRACK

The double track feature didn't knock me out. It uses the guts of the Auto-Tune section, but, in general, I found that putting the two tracks in mono ended up sounding too phasey — it would definitely benefit from a bit more initial delay on the doubled track. My advice for using this feature is the same as for all automatic double-tracking effects I've tried: turn it off and sing the part again. For live stereo setups, though, the effect does indeed widen and expand the voice.

THE AVP-1 IN REAL LIFE

Despite Antares's recommendation regarding inserts, I tried recording through the AVP-1, and it works fine as long as you don't want to add Auto-Tune. In fact, I liked the way my voice sounded so much (using mic modeling, compression, and a tiny bit of EQ) I think it led to

a better vocal — something that would not have happened if I'd used it as an after-the-fact insert effect.

With Auto-Tune, though, you do want offline tweaking. What works for me is tracking with the AVP-1 to provide the basic vocal sound, and again as an insert effect while mixing. The tube distortion is also something that wants to be set during a mix. A little goes a long way — the effect was too obvious for me once it got past five on a scale of 0–12 — and it's too risky to use it while tracking, just in case the voice level increases enough to enter into the distortion's Ugly Zone.

Antares has put together a potent package of processors with the AVP-1. If you work mostly in the digital domain, you're better off with the plug-in versions, but for live use and analog consoles, the AVP-1 provides the secret sauce of mic modeling and pitch correction.

If you have a mic pre or recorded vocal and want to spruce up, re-mic, and/or pitch-correct your sound without busting your budget, this box delivers the goods. ■