

## Focusrite ISA 430 MKII

The ISA 430 MKII boasts impressive connectivity for a single-channel pre-amp."

"Both clean and processed versions of the input signal can be recorded easily to DAW, if required, and I think this is an excellent facility."

"Fortunately, things are mostly logical and intuitive, and the panel is clearly marked and well laid out."

"The mid-band parametrics are as comprehensive as ever, with +/-18dB boost or cut ranges, fully variable Q (bandwidth), and usefully wide and overlapping frequency ranges."

"The shelving section boasts two new frequency positions to make the ISA 430 MKII a little more flexible, but without compromising the fundamental ISA 110 circuit design... these are well chosen and flexible options."

"The compressor section has been updated with two alternative gain control elements... these provide very different sonic characteristics, adding to the colour and character of the unit."

"The Focusrite de-esser is unusual in that it works as a subtractive process – the sibilant signal is detected in a sidechain, and then the unwanted element is subtracted from the main signal so that the latter is affected only at the moment of sibilant reduction, resulting in a more transparent process."

"The last stage of signal processing is the soft limiter... this provides very effective overload protection for the A/D card, as well as clamping the analogue output to +22dBu."

"As with other Focusrite models, the pedigree of this unit is immediately evident in the clear, transparent, open yet full-sounding signal path – the hallmark of a very high quality pre-amp and processor. The addition of switchable input impedances will be appreciated by many, as a useful means to tailor the sound of a microphone without resorting to the equaliser. This facility impressed very much in the ISA 428, and its translation over to the ISA 430 is most welcome. Likewise the mic 'Air' facility, which I found extremely useful on almost everything!... I found it particularly useful when close miking instruments, to restore some of the lost brilliance and 'air' – I can't think of a better word! – which is inherent in such an approach."

" The provision of the three separate sections – filters, parametrics and shelves – and the ability to split them and allocate them to the dynamics and sidechains, makes this an extremely flexible unit."

"The compressor was always a key element in the 'sound' of the original device... it just became a whole lot better with the addition of the Vintage mode, providing a rich alternative to the VCA sound... To have the option of both here is pure luxury – and this heavenly state of affairs has been made even better with the inclusion of the Blend facility. I've always been a big fan of the parallel compression technique, and the arrangement offered here is a joy to use. Although I only had the ISA 430 MKII for a week or so, I found I used this facility a great deal."

"The gate is one of the nicest available, as well as being one of the easiest to use – it really just does the job asked of it without fuss, and operates in a reliable manner, especially with

the Hysteresis mode engaged to reduce the possibility of false triggering on slowly decaying sounds. The ability to quickly flip the filters or parametric equaliser into the sidechain to tidy up the control signal is very useful. I am always amazed at how hard the de-esser can be made to work with minimal side effects, and the provision of the sidechain listen facility makes finding the offensive frequencies very straightforward."

"The soft limiter did the same sterling job here as it did on the ISA 428... this optical limiter does a fantastic job of neatly controlling transient peaks without sounding heavy-handed about it. For the red light junkies out there, this is your saviour – and best of all, most people will never know the concept of headroom is completely lost on you!"

"There was never any doubt in my mind (or I suppose anyone else's) that the ISA 430 MKII was going to be something special. Taking the features of the original unit and adding all the new tweaks and technologies that the Focusrite back-room boys have developed, subsequently has resulted in just about the best possible recipe for a producer channel. This is the kind of device that mere mortals will gladly die for, but only after they have enjoyed using it for a few decades, naturally! Although we are still talking serious professional gear prices, this is a very attractively priced unit in the UK, offering even better value for money than the original, with a stunningly high-quality, comprehensive and extraordinarily flexible package."

"The ISA 430 MKII has been designed to provide the most complete and superb-sounding channel path available, and it does that in spades... I should think a similar volume will be sold to home and project studios that need just one really good front-end unit – and with the optional A/D card, the ISA 430 MKII has to be one of the best and most versatile units on the market today. I can't think of anything negative to say about the ISA 430 MKII – it really is that impressive. Committed recording engineers now have a new British standard-bearer when it comes to high-end analogue recording channels."

**Hugh Robjohns, Sound On Sound, Jan 2004**

"Holding true to the original Focusrite vision, the Class A Focusrite ISA 430 MKII offers an unequalled, uncompromising recording channel that includes a mic/line preamp, equaliser, compressor, expander/gate, de-esser and limiter."

"Several new features significantly improve the performance of the \$2,995 MKII over the now discontinued ISA 430."

"I found that the ISA 430 MKII works extremely well with drums and percussion. I had nice results using the box along with an AKG D112 on kick drum with a Shure SM-57 and a BLUE Ball on snare. I also had good results using the box along with a BLUE Bluebird to record percussion."

"I had fantastic results using the ISA 430 MKII to record vocals. I used the unit with the Sony C-800G, the BLUE Cactus and Bluebird and the Brauner VM-1KHE, and every instance had pleasing results. I found that the vintage compressor mode worked extremely well with vocals, especially when using a tube microphone. Plus, the de-esser worked substantially better than my old faithful dbx 902."

"I found that the Blend feature worked extremely well on bass guitar and vocals. This allowed me to create a more compressed track that actually had the feeling of being less compressed."

"I had good results recording bass guitar through the instrument input. The instrument had a nice bottom end but still maintained its presence and definition. I also had good results using a Royer R-122 to record electric guitar and an AKG C28 to record acoustic guitar."

"The ISA 430 MKII's A/D converter sounds fantastic. At 96kHz, they are every bit as good as anything I've encountered. I used the box during a mix to simultaneously EQ a vocal whilst compressing a bass guitar. Though it can be a bit confusing, the complex signal flexibility is one of the box's strengths."

"In the Focusrite tradition, the ISA 430 MKII sounds wonderful. The box has tremendous clarity and detail and is extremely clean and quiet. The EQ is both musical and powerful and the compressor and de-esser are quick and easy to use, and they sound extraordinary."

**Russ Long, Pro Audio Review, March 2004**

"It never ceases to amaze me how designers always seem to improve on the original. The Focusrite 430 is an amazing unit that's been praised all over, and is in use constantly, so how could the designers even begin to improve on something that good? From the moment I was informed of the existence of the ISA 430 MKII, I waited with baited breath for the review model to arrive, and the opportunity to find out for myself."

"The connections on the rear panel have been well thought out to be multi-purpose depending on the use...The clever idea here is that when not employed as inserts, Send 1 is the EQ output in split mode while the return is the input to the EQ section, and likewise Send 2 is the dynamics output in dyn split mode while the return is the input to the dynamics section."

"This is not just a case of adding a few extras, the internal layout has been seriously redesigned. The input stage has been expanded to include the same variable impedance as the ISA 428 Pre Pack, but also now includes an Air feature which activates a parallel inductor circuit into the secondary of the transformer... thereby creating a brighter and more spacious sound without the need for EQ."

"The ADC has the same specifications as that used in the ISA 428 and copes with sample rates up to 192kHz, and finally the ISA 430 MKII remembers its settings in the event of an improper power shutdown. How cool is that!"

"The true magic of the unit is its flexibility, as it's not intended to be just a fixed channel on its own."

"I've deliberately not included an 'In Use' section as there's basically no need. It sounds fabulous on everything, although I must add that I particularly love the vintage compression on Drums and Vocals."

"I'm openly biased towards Focusrite products as I absolutely love the thought that goes behind the design, as well as the feel of the controls and the fact that before I unpack it from the box, I know that it's going to be quality and will always deliver over and above what I'm going to ask from it. Owners of the ISA 430 and 220 will know what I'm talking about, and I'm sure that the ISA 430 MKII will find homes around the world with both new and established facilities and private studios."

"I'm planning a new facility abroad, as part of a current project based around a totally digital studio, and have already suggested a hefty rack of these units for the recording stage. I can't

wait to put a complete drum kit through my own equivalent of the Focusrite console."  
**Len Davies, Audio Media, February 2004**

"The compressor section has now been enhanced with an alternative to the Class A VCA design in the form of two optical 'Vintage' modes; Compressor and Limiter. I really like the sound of these new settings. They can be really lovely and warm and fuzzy, and the release times are surprisingly fast."

"It all sounds fabulous as expected. The button pushes click nicely, often produce a satisfying relay click, and all statuses are clearly displayed with LEDs."

"The new Producer Pack is the ultimate blue-range Focusrite, with nothing missing. The new compressor modes sound great and the blend control is a very useful feature. The mic pre-amp enhancements present subtle but useful choices... if you like the Focusrite sound and really want all the possibilities presented here, this box has everything, and now even cheaper than the original."

**George Shilling, Resolution, April 04**