



API 1608

Few manufacturers enjoy the sort of unconditional respect that the API brand attracts and the company's latest desk offering offers users at a different end of the market a piece of that legacy in a smaller footprint. **GEORGE SHILLING** appreciates the effort.

The 1608 is a small-format recording console based on the 1604 that API produced in the 1970s and early 1980s. Although I have never encountered one in the UK, examples in the USA are still cherished and lovingly

restored. Designed by Jeffrey Bork, the 1608 (UK £38,000 + VAT) adds modern features including a few concessions to 5.1, but essentially this is a well-appointed 16:8:2 console with the enormous attractions of 16 of API's legendary mic preamps

built in, and a 500-series slot per channel loaded with a classic EQ module. Additionally there are eight Echo Returns with full routing, each with their own corresponding (and patchable) 500-Series slot and you can even load eight 512Cs for a full 24 mic preamps. All console buttons illuminate and the master section is comprehensively featured. The rear panel is covered with clearly labelled connections but a substantial patchbay would be needed for all these. Topping it off is a beautiful VU-equipped meterbridge. Optional 16 channel expanders can be connected to provide up to 64 channels.

The fader board comprises two 8-fader units housing Alps 100mm faders that have a light touch and a conventional fader top — no doubt cheaper and probably easier to use than the retro API type. There is blank space below the Sends>Returns sections (submaster trims are on little pots rather than faders) with a stereo master fader far right with unity at the top.

The 548B Input module sensibly employs large momentary illuminating Solo and Mute buttons above the fader. PFL, AFL (both with level trim) and SIP modes are available from the master section. Solo Safe is available per channel and there is also a handy Mute Group operated from the master section. All switching seems to take place elegantly and crisply and great care has been taken to ensure signal integrity, with no VCAs or FET switches anywhere.

Unusually (but sensibly) located near the bottom of the strip is the input section. The mic preamps are similar to the 212L type fitted to the Legacy Console with separate (XLR) Line and Mic inputs along with a jack Instrument input on the rear. However, jack insertion defeats the channel's Mic input, so you will either need to permanently assign necessary channels for instrument or line use, or crawl around the rear of the console to plug as necessary. Gain



for mic or instrument is up to 55dB but switching to Line defeats the gain knob. The fixed line gain can be reduced by only 6dB using the Pad button but on a mic signal the pad is -20dB. Individual Polarity and Phantom switches are also available here as befits a professional console.

Working upwards you next encounter Aux/Echo Sends. There are eight sends with prefader switching in pairs — 1-4 are arranged as two dual monos, with dual-concentric gain pots and individual On buttons, while 5-8 are arranged with similar knobs arranged as stereo level and pan and a single On button per pair. So far, so sensible, but additionally Sends 7/8 are equipped with a To Subs button that allows you to additionally send some of the main signal to the first four of the eight routing buses via the channel routing buttons, pre or post fader. Signal is sent independently of the Send On/Off button, which is still in circuit with regard to the Send 7/8 outputs. Clever stuff, which still allows sending the main fader directly to buses 5-8 for supreme flexibility and 5.1 scenarios, for example.

Above the Sends is the routing section, dominated by the Pan pot. This has a neat, tight, centre detente and is always in circuit to the main mix, which you select by pressing the PGM (Programme) button. The Pan button is only relevant when routing between odd and even bus assignment buttons at the top of the strip. A patchable Insert is also switchable here, it is post-EQ, but there is an additional pre-EQ non-switched insert point available on the rear of the console. All connections for inserts are on balanced jacks. There is also the added bonus of a High-Pass Filter, located on the channel output, -3dB at 50Hz and 6dB/octave — very useful. As well as routing to PGM and the eight buses, the signal is also always present at a Direct Output, postfader. I would have liked the option of prefader outs to enable recording and monitor mixing simultaneously, but that can be bodged if really necessary using the Insert point (although it would preclude use of the filter).

500 series slots are filled as standard with 12 reissue 550A 3-band plus filter EQ modules. The remaining four channels are each equipped with the 560 10-band graphic. Both of these models employ the Proportional-Q characteristic, which narrows the filter at extreme settings, always seeming musical and rich, and preventing you from doing anything nasty.

The Echo returns and master Sends modules are awash with buttons, (usefully illuminating but unfortunately all in yellow) with myriad options. The Returns feature full level, panning and routing options, with large Solo and Mute buttons, and Solo Safe. As well as the main line level inputs (on a D-Sub) there are jack inputs that you can switch to by selecting Aux In. Additionally, the Sends can even blend another external input to their signals by connecting a jack source and pressing Ext In.

Simple Submaster controls for the eight buses allow

for trimming (unity is at full-tilt on the knobs but these can be tweaked with a Cal pot), On/Off, latching Solo and separate left and right programme assign. Again all buttons are yellow.

Separate Mutes and Cal pots are provided for each monitor of a 5.1 arrangement, and comprehensive switching is here for two additional stereo monitoring setups. All three external inputs also provide for 5.1 and stereo Echo Send monitoring enables checking of headphone mixes.

The main control room level is a stepped knob but it has an accompanying continuous Dim control allowing for pretend fadeouts. Talkback is comprehensive with an inbuilt mic, and an Oscillator and a Headphone output add useful functionality. Meters can helpfully be set to show Preamp, Direct Out or Submaster out levels while there are separate Send meters. And there is even a switchable Programme Insert on the main

stereo bus.

This console is exactly what a modern API should be. It is comprehensively featured, looks and feels great, and with regard to audio quality I trust no other manufacturer more than API. ■

PROS Legendary API quality; comprehensive features for many scenarios including 5.1.

CONS More colour-coding of button LEDs would be useful; pan pot a long reach from fader.

Contact

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