

**For Grammy-Winning Engineer Sean Quackenbush, Harrison 500 Series Modules Are Like a Warm Analog Console in a Box**

*Drawn to the classic Harrison sound by way of Michael Jackson's* Off The Wall*, Quackenbush Puts 32Cpre+, MR3eq and Comp 500 Series to work, mixing new We Three album and as FOH at Portland Blues Festival*

**Nashville, Tennessee, October 3, 2024 — A lover of vinyl records since he was a child, Sean Quackenbush believes that hearing Michael Jackson's 1979 *Off The Wall* record was an important catalyst that launched his career as an audio engineer. 2024 has seen Quackenbush taking his career to even greater heights - beginning with receiving a Grammy Award in February for recording and engineering *Joni Mitchell at Newport (Live).* and more recently, mixing a new live album by *America's Got Talent* sensation ‘We Three’ using Harrison 500 series processing.**

"I've been familiar with Harrison for a long time in the live realm, having worked on consoles like the HM5 and SM5," he says. "But the biggest thing for me, and one of the main reasons I do what I do, was hearing the *Off The Wall* record, which Bruce Swedien used a Harrison 4032C recording console on. That recording left a sonic imprint on me, and to this day, nothing sounds like that record. It's something that every other record is judged against." The very same 40-channel analog console was also used to record classics like Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, Frank Zappa's *Joe's Garage* and others.

**A new generation of Harrison in a smaller form factor**

This summer, Quackenbush was introduced to McMinnville, OR-based pop trio We Three, and was subsequently asked if he'd like to be involved in a live recording of the band for an upcoming release. "I said 'sure'. They had been on "America's Got Talent" and did really well," says Quackenbush. "They have a really good pop career and a devoted fanbase, and something felt really good about it." The trio consists of siblings Manny Humlie (guitar, vocals), Bethany Blanchard (bass, vocals) and Joshua Humlie (keys, drums, vocals), and their heart wrenching performance of an original work "Heaven's Not Too Far Away" led to the band becoming a finalist during season 13 of the popular television program.

Once the tour was completed, Quackenbush was tapped on the shoulder by Joshua Humile and asked to mix the record. "This was around the same time that I learned about the Harrison 500 series modules," Quackenbush recalls. "I was super intrigued by them because Harrison had been used on my favorite recordings of all time. I'd always been on the lookout for a Harrison console to work on, and this was the next best thing."

**Making vocals and instruments sparkle with Harrison**

Quackenbush set up a chain of (2) 32Cpre+'s, (2) MR3eq's and (2) Comp's, creating two full Harrison channel strips and routing them as an insert in Pro Tools. "When I first started mixing the material, which consisted of shows recorded in all different rooms all over the world, there was a lot of variation - particularly on the vocal tracks. So, I had to get into a lot of editing, EQ and level adjustments to make it all work," he says. "This is where the Harrison 500 series units came into play. I plugged in the Harrison compressor and started spinning knobs - and it was exactly what was missing. The Comp's attack and release was so fast and transparent that it was really useful to grab that transient vocal stuff. It sounded very natural when applying gain reduction."

After dialling in the release and ratio to create the transparent levelling effect Comp is known for, he used the MR3eq frequency adjustments, placing it just before the compressor, "The MR3eq was great to impart the familiar, classic EQ from the pop records that I loved growing up. I was really able to hone the vocal tracks and get them to sit where they needed, and carving that midrange really helped me capture a cohesive sound with a sweet top-end." says Quackenbush.

He says that the EQ was instrumental in helping capture the tonal resonance that only a sibling-based vocal ensemble can deliver. "The MR3eq really helped Manny and Bethany's vocals really stand true, because they have a brother and sister harmony that is simply stunning." Capturing this magic at the mixing stage was both challenging and rewarding: "You're dealing with a live situation through live monitors. There is so much blowback into the microphones since it is not a controlled studio environment," he says. "If you go too far with your adjustments, you lose the tonality, and it can fall apart. But having these Harrison processors in front of me to track helped get a great sounding vocal that was both classic and vibey." Finally, he ran all his electric guitars through the MR3eq. "8 out of 10 times it was really cool and vibey, so I kept it," he says.

The transformer-balanced 32Cpre+ adds that classic front-end punch and also proved to be incredibly useful during the mix stage: "The high pass filter is amazing - it really helped clean up a lot of the room noise, but at the same time I was able to go into low-end filter on the EQ and boost things where I needed. It was really useful in cleaning up the rumble and stage bleed out of what was happening in the microphones and helped clean up the mix." He also used the high pass on the 32Cpre+ to add a bit of color on bass guitar: "I just ran the bass through it once and printed it, just to have an alternate to what the raw track came in like. Bethany is an amazing bass player, with a great pocket and feel."

**Classic Harrison console sound, 500 Series form factor**

Working with the trio of Harrison 500 series modules, Quackenbush says that it was the closest thing to having a classic Harrison console at his fingertips: "The way I was able to use these inline with mic pre, EQ and compressor felt like a real mixer. That EQ is a stunning piece of gear and I really enjoyed it. At the same time, the quick transient response of the compressor really helped keep things under control, smoothing things out all the way through. It just has this great, musical vibe."

After mixing the new We Three record, Quackenbush took his Harrison 500 Series rack to the Waterfront Blues Festival, held in Portland OR between July 4th and July 7th. "I mixed FOH on one of the main stages there, and the morning I was leaving for the gig I grabbed my Harrison rack and put it on final mix bus. It was so great to reach over and dial in the Harrison 500 series when I needed a little bit of analog sparkle through the PA," he says. "I was mixing an acoustic trio, to a New Orleans Mardi Gras band and It was great."

This October, Quackenbush will be mixing two sold out performances for Joni Mitchell at the Hollywood Bowl.

**About Harrison**

​Harrison has been designing, manufacturing, and marketing audio mixing consoles in Nashville, Tennessee (Music City, USA) since 1975. Our products serve the markets of music recording/mixing, international film and television sound production, audio post production, broadcast sound, and live sound reinforcement. Over 1,500 Harrison consoles have been installed worldwide, constituting a significant share of the overall world market for high-end audio consoles. Harrison's dominance of the high-end market demonstrates that customers who require solutions to complex problems invariably turn to Harrison to provide the answer.

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