What Makes Chameleon Labs Different?

Chameleon Labs is a new type of company, focused on delivering performance and value at a price previously thought impossible. How do they do it? By reinventing how global manufacturing is approached. Chameleon Labs engineers are not inexperienced kids in a garage, buying products that are designed and built in China. Chameleon Labs is comprised of audio professionals with many decades of experience in high end pro audio gear. From its inception seven years ago, they pioneered the idea of "blended technology", using only the best parts from the US, UK and Europe combined with low cost metal work and assembly from China. This combination enables a superior performance level at a price point never seen before.

Every Chameleon Labs product is first created and engineered here in the U.S. The goal is to achieve a specific sound through tedious testing in major U.S. recording studios and listening to numerous tracks and/or mixes with a very specific sonic target in mind. A new design must impress the best and brightest of our evaluation group before it ever reaches the factory floor. This is why Chameleon Labs products always outperforms, and not by a little, but a lot.

Chameleon Labs 7602 Mic Pre + EQ input channel was the first product that started it all in 2005. The 7602 Mk2 is designed to deliver the sound you expect from the English console inputs of the 1970's along with a *three band EQ*. There are also several important functions like *switchable input impedance* to optimize the unit for ribbons/dynamics vs condensers, *a four LED input meter*, a nice four frequency *HP filter at 50, 80, 160 and 300 Hz* to get rid of the low end junk clogging up your digital recordings and an adjustable high frequency section. It also utilizes a *high end 20 position solid gold gain switch* manufactured and imported from Switzerland. This switch was designed for long term use and is typically found in very high end US or Euro units costing a lot more money. For the DI input, which sometimes gets a lot of abuse from the plugging and un-plugging of a ¼" jack, a US made *Switchcraft DI input jack* was used to greatly improve reliability. Expensive old school *US made tantalum capacitors* are now incorporated on the main output board because they sound significantly better in this design than our previously used electrolytic capacitors. This is consistent with how the original English consoles input were made and there is certainly an audible difference. Chameleon Labs uses only *outboard power supplies* for lowest noise. Their now infamous *"X Mod" option offers British input and output transformers from Carnhill/Saint Ives Company*, the source of vintage transformers used in the original English consoles. The "X Mod" is the best way to go, but even without them the 7602 is still a remarkable bargain. The 7602's sound is best described as

having a warm and full bottom end with a smooth yet gentle top-which is perfect for tracking or a pair of units being ideal for mixing.

Chameleon Labs 7802 optical tube compressor/limiter, was their second product. It started with a sonic target of the classic optical limiter that's sometimes described as being a bit dark and very well known from the mid to late 1960s. They didn't copy or replicate it. Instead the 7802 is their own take on the classic. It closely represents the sonic family but with circuitry that's a bit more modern. One key difference between this and the classic units are the way it handles the optical circuit: The 7802 uses LED's as emitters instead of the filament (light bulb) approach. Some high end manufacturers are pitching this LED emitter technology as their key innovation! But Chameleon delivers it for under US$1,000.

The 7802 uses several unique US parts that they buy and ship to the factory. It starts with the *Perkin Elmer Vactrol Optoisolator from Massachusetts*, which is employee selected and more expensive. Next are the *National Semiconductor high slew rate Op Amps* from California which are followed by a special ultra low distortion, high slew rate audio op amp. Again, Chameleon uses an outboard power supply for the lowest noise possible. The 7802 is comprised of nothing less than high end parts to make it a wonderful bargain for someone seeking high end quality with the sound of an old school compressor.

Chameleon Labs 7720 Stereo Buss Compressor is the latest addition to the family of electronics and perhaps their best achievement. High quality buss compression is huge issue for mixers everywhere and up until now previous solutions were very expensive. Chameleon started with a sonic target everyone is familiar with: the English console VCA compression system developed in the 1980s. The heart of that console compression system was the dbx® VCA , designed by Les Tyler and now built by Les's company, THAT® Corporation. The 7720's controls are set up as stereo device so that each control adjusts both channels. They also included some newer features, such as five switchable filters in the detector side chain: 60, 90, 130, 200 and 440Hz. This enables the user to custom tune the compressor behavior to prevent unwanted bass frequencies from triggering the compressor. In practice, this prevents the low end from dominating the compressor's activity and can make a tremendous difference in not only the sonic results but also the flexibility of the unit. There's also a side chain input so that any input source can be the trigger for the compressor instead of the traditional audio inputs of the unit. Both input and output levels are monitored via a VU meter, allowing a fast and easy way to match the processed output gain of the unit to the original input levels. From compression ratios as gentle as 1.5: 1, to a more intense 10:1, the 7720 delivers the goods across any stereo buss.

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