

RTZ 9762

By [Phil O'Keefe](#) | February 2005

Taking a classic preamp one step beyond

When is a clone not a clone? Why, when it's different of course. And while the RTZ 9762 is based on classic Neve preamp designs, it's not an exact clone, and has some interesting differences in features and sound.

Housed in a single rackspace, the 9762 comes across as a high quality product. The case is solid, the graphics are tastefully done and easy to read, and the knobs and switches have a solid feel. On the front panel, each of the two channels has a stepped input gain sensitivity switch (-20 to -75, in 5dB steps) and a variable output level control. There are switches for 48V phantom power, polarity reverse, mic/DI selection, and two switches that deserve special mention: The first, "Lo-Z" switches the Lundahl input transformer's tap from 200 to 50 ohms; useful for tailoring the preamp to different microphone types. The second, "Term," switches the output transformer termination resistor in and out. The preamp is a bit flatter with termination enabled, and has a slight amount of added high-frequency "air" when disabled. I found the effect of the Term switch subtle, while the Lo-Z switch seemed to have more effect on the sonics, depending on what mic I was using. There's a level jump of about 6dB when you engage the Lo-Z switch, which is to be expected when switching taps on a transformer.

Rounding out the front panel is a 1/4" unbalanced hi-Z DI input and a +24V power indicator for each channel. On the rear panel you get standard balanced XLR I/O as well as unbalanced 1/4" outputs. True balanced 1/4" output capability would be a nice addition.

The ability to switch impedance is nice, though I would have preferred more options, such as 50, 200, 600, and 1,200 ohms. This would allow more flexibility, but it's a trade-off as it would also add to the price.

The metering on the review unit was somewhat of a mixed bag. The inclusion of signal present and input overload LEDs and 2-color, 5-segment LED VU meters is cool, but the VU "ballistics" on the review 9762 were a little goofy. The response was too fast and made setting levels difficult. RTZ tells me this has been addressed on new units. Speaking of levels, this preamp has great headroom and high output, and can easily overload other elements of the signal chain if you're not careful. Internal jumpers can be set to knock 6dB off the output level.

The 9762 bears strong sonic resemblance to the classic Neve modules such as the 1073 and 1272, but has more sparkle and detail. It retains the classic girth, but adds clarity to the upper mids and highs. Sometimes I missed the slight rounding off of highs that you get with Neves, but I appreciated the added high-frequency reach and extra definition of the 9762 because it just sounds so juicy.

This is a seriously good sounding preamp, folks. Noise was never an issue. Multiple tracks recorded with the 9762 "stack" well, without the low-mid buildup that you get when stacking lots of tracks through a vintage Neve. The 9762 sounded great with a wide range of mics and sound sources, but it excelled on guitar amps, drums, and vocals. The DI sounded tight and punchy with my Ibanez bass, and worked well for recording keyboards direct.

Available direct from RTZ for \$1,429, the 9762 is a good value, and should be high on the audition list for anyone who is looking for a slightly different take on the classic Neve sound.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Strengths:

- Classic tone with extended highs and definition/detail
- Plenty of gain and headroom
- Impedance switching
- Excellent value

Limitations:

- Unbalanced 1/4" outputs

TECNICAL INFO

Type: Discrete solid-state microphone preamplifier

Price: \$1,429

Contact: RTZ, www.rtzaudio.com

Channels: 2

Inputs: XLR (mic), 1/4" (DI)

Outputs: XLR and unbalanced 1/4"

Recommended input impedance: 200-ohm balanced

Recommended output load: 600 ohms

Nominal line level output: +4dBm into 600 ohm

Maximum input level: 0dBu

Maximum output level (1% THD): +27dBu bridging or +27dBm into 600 ohms

Maximum gain: 75dB

Frequency response: 20Hz–50kHz, ±1.5dB

Distortion (1 kHz): Less than 0.2% at +4 output at 20Hz

Input sensitivity: –75 dBu to –20 dBu for +4 dBu output

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