User Report: Wheatstone MP-532 Opens Eyes at Leighton

By [Tony Abfalter](#) ·

Published: April 20, 2021

Compared to the flagship X5, a few less features and a lot less dollars

The author is director of engineering, Leighton Broadcasting.

I'll be the first in line for new audio processing if I think it can give us an edge, but only if it's truly a step up and not just the same old tech in new packaging.

We serve a predominantly young population here in the college town of St. Cloud, Minn. With 70 other stations competing for those ears, our six stations will take every advantage we can get.

I'd heard about the Wheatstone MP-532 AM/FM/HD multipurpose processor before it was officially released. The inside scoop was that Wheatstone's Jeff Keith had designed into it a new five-band "windowed" AGC, which he called Windy.

As different program material comes in, it adapts to make sure that the multiband section and the five-band limiter later on are always fed consistent audio. This, I was told, was one of the reasons why the MP-532 could deliver those "airy" highs and deeper lows we're all hoping for in the business.

It was worth a listen.

I got one of the first MP-532s and put it on our classic rock station, KZPK, K277BS/ZRock (HD2) 103.3 MHz. The

installation experience was typical Wheatstone. Super intuitive, with presets that immediately gave us a much-improved sound right out of the box.

Friendly install

I'll get to the sound in a minute, but first I'd like to pause for a moment and give you a busy engineer's perspective on audio processing.

Yes, most of us like to tweak processing. But we also have a huge appreciation for a smooth installation experience. I need to get it on the air, make minor adjustments and move on in life. That's one very strong suit of this processor, its ease of installation.

To be fair, I know my way around Wheatstone processors, having owned X1s, AM-55s, FM-55s, X3s and X5s.

As easy as the setup was, this alone is not a good enough reason to invest in an audio processor. It has to sound good; that's the core mission for processing, and for radio.

[*"Engineer Tony Abfalter Is an MVP"*]

So how did the MP-532 do? Impressive. Very impressive.

They weren't kidding when they said the highs would be airy and detailed and the lows would be deep. The MP-532 has

the most articulation and clarity of any audio processor I've ever heard. It effectively kicked its predecessor, the FM-55, into the prehistoric dinosaur age and can hold its own next to Wheatstone's flagship processor, the X5 FM/HD processor, but with a few less features and a lot less dollars.

One nice bonus is that it is a multipurpose processor (that's what the MP is for), which means it would make an excellent backup for both my AM as well as FM stations. But, it's really too good to be a backup processor, so I have it running continuous programming on ZRock.

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For information contact Jay Tyler at Wheatstone in North Carolina at 1-252-638-7000 or visit www.wheatstone.com.

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