

Review by Steve La Cerra and Robert Granger for the April 1998 issue of EQ Magazine.



To DI for

A DI is a DI, right? Well, we initially thought so, but then the boxes started coming in. Every day our UPS guy would grumble a little louder at us as the boxes came in - he actually started to openly swear at us after the 10th box. As we opened each of the boxes we received, we couldn't believe the diversity in designs - we got small DIs, large DIs, solid-state DIs, tube DIs, passive DIs, active DIs, DIs with AC power supplies built in, and even a Class-A DI. As everything piled up on our desks, people would walk by and ask, "What are you guys up to?" and we'd tell 'em, "We're planning on making a whole lot of noise with some electric guitars, a bass, and no amplifiers."

Probably the biggest thing we learned from our night in the studio is that all DI boxes are not created equal - they do not sound the same by any stretch of the imagination. The guitars that were plugged in include a G&L SB1 P-style bass from the personal collection of Mike Speranza, a '82 Carvin V-Tail, and a Jackson Stealth with a Seymour Duncan JB pickup in the bridge position. All these instruments have passive electronics - which we felt would more accurately reveal guitar-to-DI interaction. In addition to running the instruments straight into the Dis, we tried adding an Ibanez Tube Screamer (distortion pedal) and Snarling Dogs Addicted to Wah (wah pedal) to the chain. The DIs that could handle higher output levels were also connected to the preamp out of an ADA MP1 (tube) guitar preamplifier.

BELLARI ADB3

Bellari's ADB3 is a table top DI that uses a single 7025 valve for both channels (one stage per channel). By using the front-panel pad and gain switches, this box easily handled the output level from the ADA preamp as well as the guitar or pedals (it can also handle speaker output). We liked it on bass, where it had a gentle lift in the lower mids, giving the bass a nice presence. In addition to the front-panel instrument input, there is also a rear-panel parallel jack for either input or through purposes. We found the ADB3 to be a quiet DI and felt it did a great job at its price point.

ROLLS RED SQUARE DI/EXCITER

This little demon has got a killer retro look to it and a simple, screened layout. The unit offers a 1/4" input, an XLR output, a push-button switch to kick it into active mode, and center-detent knobs that control Input, Bottom (which controls the low-frequency cut/boost), and Definition (which controls the amount of sonic clarity and sound spread), as well as a power-indicating LED. The Red Square handled the Jackson's single-coil pickups quite nicely. We cranked up the bottom and tweaked with the definition and got a nice round sound. We also got some really interesting tones with the bass. The Definition control added an interesting crystalline sound to the upper harmonics of the individual bass notes. The box was a little noisy,

but it would probably sit in a mix pretty quietly.

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