

LR BAGGS

Stadium Electric Bass DI

Keve Sanders leaves his amp at home, re-arranges his pedal board (again) and tries out the new Stadium Bass DI from LR Baggs

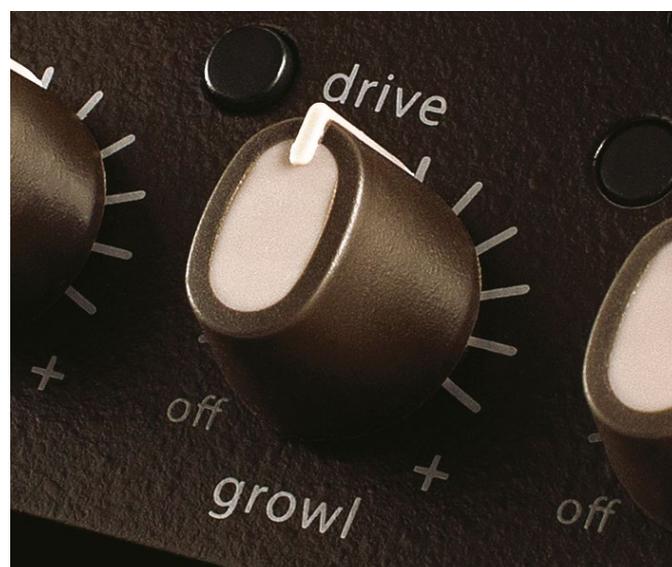
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For most of us, a DI box is 'someone else's problem'. It falls into that category of things, along with monitors and lighting, that we need not concern ourselves with. However, especially for bigger gigs and stage shows, the popularity of in-ear monitoring and the desire to keep volume levels on stage as low as possible means that backline amps and stacks often stay in the van. This in turn means that our bass has to go through a DI box - which is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, we have less gear to shift and our bass's sound arrives at the mixing desk pure and unadulterated. On the other, we lose the option of processing your bass tone through our amp's front panel - often a vital part of our sound.

This is LR Baggs' first product for bass guitar, but it's stuffed full of the best studio-grade components and is beautifully made, almost like a piece of hi-tech military hardware. Another plus is its apparent simplicity; the Stadium DI looks simple to use, because it is. With just a few controls and switches, there's a huge range of tonal adjustment available here.

The upper controls allow you to set gain and volume, with a tiny VU meter next to the gain so that you can keep a visual check on your input level. There's also a small three-way slider switch next to the Volume labelled 'Fat', which beefs up the sound by increasing the 150Hz range by +3 or +6 dB.

The three lower controls are for compression, attack and growl. No EQ? Well, the 'Growl' control acts on a narrow range of low frequencies, adding a soft clipping and harmonic richness to the tone without altering the sound by overdriving the whole signal. In use, turning up the growl control adds a deep, warm element to your sound which responds to your playing in a really natural way; play harder and this edge becomes more distinct. If that's all a bit too subtle for you, a switch above can push the Growl into full-fat overdrive mode.



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The 'Attack' control works almost like an active tone control on your bass. Turned fully off, the sound is warm and smooth, while turning it up adds brightness and focus. Using these two controls together gives you a wide scope of tone and timbre without changing the nature of your bass's natural sound - perfect. The last control is 'Comp EQ', a three-band compressor that evens out the sound without killing your natural dynamics. It works as expected and like everything else here, it's super high quality, silent and very musical.

After using this unit for a few nights I found that I was leaving the distortion and compression pretty much set, and adjusting my sound using just the attack control. The whole thing is beautifully designed - elegant, efficient and about as far away from that tatty little passive DI box which the sound guy leaves on the floor by your amp as it's possible to get. ■