



L.R. Baggs Stadium Electric Bass DI

BY JONATHAN HERRERA

ANY BASS PLAYER WHO'S TRACKED IN a studio or played a club gig knows the vital role a DI plays in getting good tone to "tape" or an audience. In order to make an instrument compatible with a mixing console, whether it's in the studio or onstage, the output level and impedance must be altered and the signal balanced to prevent noise. Some DIs, like the L.R. Baggs Stadium reviewed here, convert the signal to line level (the much lower mic-level output is more traditional). In that way, and in many others as you'll soon discover, the Stadium is more like a full-on preamp than a mere DI.

Based near California's beautiful Central Coast, L.R. Baggs has long been one of the premier manufacturers of top-shelf high-fidelity pickup and preamp systems for acoustic instruments. It turns out, though, that many folks in the company's engineering department are bass players. Long lobbying upper brass to leverage their considerable skill in building a bass-specific product, the recently introduced Stadium DI marks L.R. Baggs' first purpose-built electric-instrument product.

The Stadium is a handsome piece of kit. I was impressed off the bat that it comes with a rugged zippered carrying case. The DI is in a stompbox format, because it is really an effect box and tone-shaper as much as it is a straightforward DI. The metal case felt substantial and rugged, and the nicely textured rubber knobs turned what felt like high-quality pots. The burly metal footswitch inspired confidence, as did the solidly installed side-mounted $\frac{1}{4}$ " jacks.

The Stadium is usable as a basic active DI box,

powered either with its internal 9-volt battery, an optional AC adapter of up to 18 volts output, or via 48-volt phantom power. Yet, the suite of intriguing tone-sculpting and overdrive circuits onboard is what separates the Stadium from its more staid competition. There's both GAIN and VOLUME controls, to govern gain staging and introduce harmonic color at higher settings, or to drive the input of a console or preamp into distortion, if desired. To effectively set the input gain, there's also a 3-segment multicolored LED VU meter on hand. Even more grit is available thanks to the GROWL knob and DRIVE switch, going from mild harmonic texture to full-on buzzsaw grind. The ATTACK knob is sort of like an overall tone balance, shifting from dark and subdued when it's turned counter-clockwise to bright and edgy when dialed up. The midway position is flat. Finally, there's an intriguing one-knob "COMP EQ" feature to tame peaky dynamics.

I did some tracking with the Stadium DI in my studio and used it on a couple gigs in lieu of my go-to Neve box. In both settings, I was wowed by the box's transparent and noise-free output with the effects disengaged. I investigated the effects in my studio and was no less impressed by their depth, naturalness, and flexibility. It was easy to dial in a big-bottomed, slightly furry sound that emulated well a classic B-15 pushed just into clipping. The COMP EQ was subtle and effective, never calling undue attention to itself or giving that weird, disconnected feeling I occasionally get with compressors. I especially dug the FAT switch, which added a mild bit of bass boost to give my sound a little extra beef. My

only gripe in the studio is that with the distortion circuits in their higher setting, I detected a small amount of audible, periodic clicking noise in the output. It was only notable when I wasn't playing, and my tester was a prototype, so I expect L.R. Baggs to resolve this minor problem before production.

Even though the Stadium is L.R. Baggs' first electric bass product, it conveys the attention-to-detail and smart design that befits its venerable reputation in the industry. If it's any indication of what's to come, here's hoping L.R. Baggs has more up its sleeve. **BP**

SPECIFICATIONS

Stadium Electric Bass DI

Street \$250

Pros Excellent-sounding active DI with thoughtfully designed bonus features

Cons Noise at high distortion-level settings

Bottom line L.R. Baggs nailed it with the Stadium, the company's first product designed for an electric instrument.

Outputs Unbalanced $\frac{1}{4}$ ", balanced XLR at -10dBV or +4dBu (switchable)

Power supply 9-volt battery, external adapter, or 48-volt phantom power

Weight 1.1 lbs

Made in Designed and assembled in U.S.

Contact lrbaggs.com

L.R. BAGGS

SPECS