

L.R. BAGGS Stadium

By Steve Cook

If you are reading this and happen to be a full-time bassist, then the L.R. Baggs name might not be totally familiar to you. That's because L.R. Baggs has primarily been making well-regarded products for the acoustic guitar community for decades, not us low enders. Their engineering staff, however, is chock-full of bassists, and they wanted to develop a bass DI that would fill the gaps where a "regular" DI leaves players flat. It's no secret that bassists often have few options when it comes to a DI, and generally plug into a passive, unsexy box with zero tonal consideration. The new L.R. Baggs Stadium electric bass DI says it doesn't have to be that way.

Got to Bag It Up

Out of the box, the Stadium DI made an impact before I even put eyes on it. That's because it comes packed in a zippered hard-shell bag for easy transport, which made me wonder why *all* DIs don't come with a travel bag. Once unpacked, the Stadium's layout impressed me from the slim profile to the top-loaded XLR jack.

The Stadium's five oval knobs are neatly arranged with a subtle, sliding "fat" switch to the right of the volume control, a VU meter to the left of the gain control, and a pair of push buttons tucked in between the rows of knobs. The button on the right is a battery tester (the results display in the VU meter window) and the left-side drive button is for adding OD dirt to the signal. More on that in a moment.

Four Seasons in a DI

I plugged a stock '78 P into the Stadium DI and powered up a Warwick Quad IV amp head (set flat) into a matching 4x10 cabinet. Even with the pedal disengaged (but still on, as indicated with a small amber light), the VU meter danced as the gain control managed the signal. Note: Just because the pedal is "off" doesn't mean it's *off*, per se, but rather that the other features aren't engaged.

Starting with the dials at neutral (or off) and using just the 3-way fat control, I could add +3 dB or +6 dB at 150 Hz for a nice bass boost. I liked the +3 dB setting, so to build on that, I added some attack. (The attack control is essentially a high-mid boost/cut that's off in the noon position.) When pushed all the way on the boost side, it really made my P come alive like a good, smooth scotch—vintage and warm. And to tighten up



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and even things out a bit, I dialed up the comp EQ to about the halfway point, which didn't overcompress my tone at all.

The growl feature is a harmonic distortion that adds some grit to the mix, and when joined by my attack and comp EQ settings, I got to a thick sound that was a little dirty yet maintained all the great qualities of a warm bass tone. It was here that I turned the pedal off to A/B. While I love the sound of my P running direct, I loved it a whole lot more with this DI. It's one of those situations where you don't realize what you're missing until you turn it off.

The Stadium has a second OD voicing that's activated with the drive button located between the two rows of knobs. When I kicked in the drive button and dimmed the attack, growl, and comp EQ, the Stadium DI suddenly provided sweet-sounding harmonic overdrive. It's dirty and wonderful, but for most it *probably* won't be a full-time bass tone. And that got me thinking that if I could change one

feature on the Stadium, it would be the addition of a secondary footswitch and/or second channel. The OD tone is too good not to use, but it's somewhat impractical to have to bend down and turn on/off.

The Verdict

While the controls are simple and effective, it's the different combinations of features that really reveal the basic reason behind the Stadium's engineering: to give bassists lots of great tonal options and "fixes" in a DI. Rather than traditional EQ control, I like the approach of using sweeps and presets. And even though this DI doesn't have a *lot* of controls, the tones that flow out run the gamut from smooth to dirty to lots of nice places in between. Again, I do wish the Stadium allowed me to turn the drive on and off by foot—rather than hand—but modern bassists will certainly appreciate all the options on tap. For bassists needing a solid, well-constructed DI with great tone and smart EQ, this

DI might be your next stadium-rocker or gig-bag essential. **PG**

▶ WATCH A REVIEW DEMO of this pedal.

RATINGS

L.R. Baggs Stadium

\$249 street
lrbaggs.com

Tones	♥♥♥♥○
Ease of Use	♥♥♥♥○
Build/Design	♥♥♥♥○
Value	♥♥♥♥○

PROS Excellent overall sweetening. Nice OD tones. Handy battery tester.

CONS Lack of "traditional" EQ or compressor may turn some players away. OD would benefit from a footswitch.



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