

Active Direct Boxes: Bring on the Basics

By George Petersen

There are few more basic — or more useful — accessories than a direct box. These can range from simple transformer-in-a-case units to elaborate rack mount multichannel designs. Let's sidestep the active-versus-transformer debate for now. Both have their place; in fact, I have a half-dozen of each in my shop. So let's examine some straightforward active direct boxes. All of those spotlighted here are single-channel, compact units that are powered via a phantom power and/or a standard 9-volt battery. Sorry, no tube models or units with preamps or onboard guitar/bass EQ, and nothing requiring AC powering.

ART XDirect



Inputs: XLR, 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: High-pass filter, phase insert
Pad: -20 dB
Polarity Reverse: Yes
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Stereo Version: Dual XDirect
Street Price: \$40

artproaudio.com

BBE Magnum D.I.



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pad: -20 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$68

bbesound.com

Rolls ADB2 Phantom



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -20/-40 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$39

rolls.com

Rupert Neve Designs RND1



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: Inst./speaker inputs
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$269

rupertneve.com

Samson MDA1



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -15 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$35

samsontech.com

BSS AR133



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -20/-40 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$139

bssaudio.com

Countryman Type 10



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -15/-30 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Stereo Version: Type 10S
Street Price: \$199

countryman.com

dbx dB12



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: 6k Hz high cut
Pads: -20/-40 dB
Polarity Reverse: Yes
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$99

dbxpro.com

Switchcraft SC800A



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -15 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$110

switchcraft.com

Telefunken TDA-1



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -15 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: TDA-2
Street Price: \$249

telefunken-elektroakustik.com

Whirlwind HotBox



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -20 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$138

whirlwindusa.com

Klark Teknik DN100



Inputs: XLR, 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -30 dB
Polarity Reverse: No
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: DN200
Street Price: \$99

music-group.com

Pro Co DBA-1



Inputs: XLR, 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: No
Pads: -20/-40
Polarity Reverse: Yes
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: No
Street Price: \$239

procosound.com

Radial J48



Inputs: 1/4"
Outputs: XLR, 1/4" Thru
Filters: High Pass
Pads: -15 dB
Polarity Reverse: Yes
Ground Lift: Yes
Powering: Phantom only
Stereo Version: J48 Stereo
Street Price: \$199

radialeng.com

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