

Active Direct Boxes
By GeorgePetersen

Active direct boxes take many forms, from solid state circuits to tube-based designs and single channel to stereo and multi-channel versions. Active units are often the preferred choice for connecting to passive pickups, vintage basses and piezo rigs on guitars and stringed instruments, although most are versatile enough to handle nearly anything on stage. And while many instrument amplifiers are equipped with XLR direct outs, having a separate direct box available is good insurance against those instances where the musician-supplied signal may be fraught with a buzz or a ground loop. In surveying the market, we found a wide variety of models at just about anyone's budget, with some AC powered, others offering a combination of either 48 VDC phantom powering an/or the familiar 9-volt battery. Here are just a few:

A-Designs Reddi



Channels: One
Powering: 100 to 230 VAC
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: Rotary Output level control
Extras: Tube design, Cinemag transformer.
Street Price: \$745

adesignsaudio.com

ART DualXDirect



Channels: Two
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -30 dB
Extras: Mono XDirect version also offered.
Street Price: \$55

artproaudio.com

dbx db12



Channels: One
Powering: Phantom power only
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 or -40 dB
Extras: Switchable high-pass filter; phase (polarity) reverse switch.
Street Price: \$99

dbxpro.com

Hosa DIB-307A



Channels: One
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -34 dB
Extras: Direct "amp-in" feature; can also be powered by optional DC supply.
Street Price: \$89

hosatech.com

Klark Teknik DN100



Channels: One
Powering: Phantom power only
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -30 dB
Extras: Two-channel DN200 version also available.
Street Price: \$79

klarkteknik.com

Peavey ADI-Q



Channels: One
Powering: Phantom or 15 VDC adapter
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: No
Extras: Three-band EQ with sweepable mid band
Street Price: \$79

peavey.com

Avalon U5



Channels: One
Powering: 115 to 230 VAC
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: None, but up to +30 dB variable gain
Extras: High pass filter; speaker input; six selectable tone settings.
Street Price: \$585

avalondesign.com

BBE Magnum DI



Channels: One
Powering: Phantom power only
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 dB
Extras: BBE DI-100x has similar circuit but adds Sonic Maximizer enhancer.
Street Price: \$99

bbesound.com

Behringer Ultra-G GI100



Channels: One
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 or -40 dB
Extras: Onboard 4x12 guitar cab simulator; instrument/speaker level input.
Street Price: \$39

behringer.com

Pro Co DBA-1



Channels: One
Powering: Phantom power only
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 or -40 dB
Extras: Input clip indicator
Street Price: \$239

procosound.com

Radial JDX



Channels: One
Powering: 15 VDC external supply
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: No
Extras: Connects between amp and speaker with "reactive load" speaker out that emulates guitar into miked 4x12 or bass into 8x10 cabinet.
Street Price: \$199

radialeng.com

Rolls ADB2



Channels: One
Powering: Phantom only
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 or -40 dB
Extras: Compact 2 x 3.5 x 1.25" design.
Street Price: \$39

rolls.com

Samson S-Direct Plus



Channels: Two
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: Instrument/Speaker level switch
Extras: Stereo version of Samson D-Direct
Street Price: \$39

samsontech.com

Boss DI-1



Channels: One
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 or -40 dB
Extras: Phase (polarity) reverse switch on balanced out
Street Price: \$159

bossus.com

BSS AR-133



Channels: One
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 or -40 dB
Extras: If phantom power is interrupted, unit automatically switches to the internal 9V battery.
Street Price: \$169

bssaudio.com

Countryman Type 10S



Channels: Two
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -15 or -30 dB
Extras: Has dual RCA, 1/4" and TRS 1/8" inputs; single-channel Type 10 also available.
Street Price: \$365

countryman.com

SM Pro Audio DI-1



Channels: One
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 or -40 dB
Extras: XLR and 1/4" inputs and outputs
Street Price: \$44

smproaudio.com

Summit Audio TD-100 Tube Direct



Channels: One
Powering: 115 VAC
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: No
Extras: 12AX7 tube design; input impedance match control; polarity reverse switch.
Street Price: \$449

summitaudio.com

Whirlwind Hotbox



Channels: One
Powering: 9 VDC or phantom
Ground Lift: Yes
Pad: -20 dB
Extras: "Off" position on input select switch extends battery life while leaving gear connected.
Street Price: \$69

whirlwindusa.com

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System Controllers



Compact digital powerhouses for speaker rig optimization