

## Active Direct Boxes: Bring on the Basics

By George Petersen

There are few more useful accessories than a direct box. These can range from simple transformer-in-a-case units to elaborate rack mount multichannel designs. We'll sidestep the active vs. transformer debate for now. Both have their place; I have a half-dozen of each in my shop. So let's examine some straightforward active direct boxes — all compact, single-channel units powered via phantom power and/or 9 VDC cells. Sorry, no tube models or units with pre-amps or onboard guitar/bass EQ and nothing requiring AC powering.

### 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](http://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:** \$114

[dbxpro.com](http://dbxpro.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:** \$79

[music-group.com](http://music-group.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](http://radialeng.com)

### Rupert Neve Designs RNDI



**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:** RNDI-2  
**Street Price:** \$269

[rupertneve.com](http://rupertneve.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:** \$129

[switchcraft.com](http://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](http://telefunken-elektroakustik.com)

### Warm Audio WA-DI-A Active Direct Box



**Input:** 1/4" inst. or amp  
**Outputs:** XLR, 1/4" Thru  
**Filters:** (switchable to passive)  
**Pads:** -3 to -30 dB variable  
**Polarity Reverse:** Yes  
**Ground Lift:** Yes  
**Powering:** 9 VDC or phantom  
**Stereo Version:** No  
**Street Price:** \$199

[warmaudio.com](http://warmaudio.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](http://whirlwindusa.com)