

# Sadowsky Outboard Bass Preamp/DI

A small box with a mighty sound.

By Ed Ivey

The Sadowsky Outboard Bass Preamp/DI (\$239) is a floor-pedal version of the famed onboard preamp that comes stock in all of Sadowsky's basses. I've used plenty of small bass guitar preamps over the years, and this rugged and extremely useful unit comes as close as any to meeting all my needs as a working bassist.



**In its compact Bass Preamp/DI floor pedal, Sadowsky combines the same great-sounding preamp found in its basses with a host of other useful features.**

## MANY HATS OFF

The Outboard Bass Preamp/DI measures a mere 5 by 5 by 3 inches, allowing it to fit easily into a gig bag pocket. There are controls for volume, bass, and treble, but the tone controls are boost only, a circumstance that may be unfamiliar to players used to having add/cut pots on their instruments or preamps. The unit has a "true bypass" on/off switch, so it won't attenuate or otherwise interfere with your sound when it's not engaged. The mute switch mutes all outputs except the tuner, a handy feature that allows for silent onstage tuning or switching basses without jarring pops in the sound system.

With the volume control at its highest setting and the tone controls set to 0, the preamp is at unity gain. The volume control

can then be used to compensate for hot pickups or amplifiers with insufficient headroom (to prevent clipping and distortion). You can also use the volume control when you are switching between active and passive modes (high and low impedance), and for reducing the overall volume after it has been raised by boosting the bass or treble.

In addition to the standard 1/4-inch in and out jacks and balanced XLR direct output, the unit provides a tuner output, which is a nice touch for gigging players. The swing-out battery box makes changes a breeze, but there's also a socket for the optional AC adapter (\$20). A ground-lift switch and a low-battery LED complete the picture.

## WORKING THE TOWN

I put the Sadowsky preamp to work on a variety of gigs and achieved superb results in every case. The preamp gave my normally wheezy '68 Fender Jazz bass a resounding low end, which was a pretty striking change. On a jazz date, my Czech string bass with a basic Fishman pickup really benefited from increased headroom and better detail in the high mids. In addition to making my basses sound great, the unit worked well with other electrified instruments.

For example, my Martin six-string with a passive piezo pickup sounded killer through this box.

House engineers remarked on the high quality sound of the XLR direct output I would prefer to have a direct signal that can be switched from pre- to post-EQ for more flexibility, because I might want to send the dry signal to a house engineer while using the pre-amp's EQ to tailor my amplifier's sound. But that's a small quibble, and most players won't gripe.

Overall, it would be hard to find a more rugged and useful bass preamp for the price. When you factor in the added benefits of its high-quality direct sound and its useful mute function, the Sadowsky Outboard Bass Preamp/DI is clearly a standout value.

## ■ Rating (out of 5): 4

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