

CRAFT YOUR TONE WITH THIS FULL-FEATURED, MULTI-PURPOSE BOX

Multi-function box with a preamp, DI, and blend for acoustic musicians going electric

By Greg Olwell



Probably best known for its wraparound pickup known as The Band, the British audio engineering company Headway Audio also makes gear for acoustic-electric players a little further down the signal chain. More than a direct-input (DI) box or preamp, the **Headway Audio EDB-2** is a full-featured, multi-purpose box that's fine-tunable for the whole family of acoustic stringed instruments: violins, violas, cellos, and basses.

The new EDB-2, which debuted at the Summer NAMM show in Nashville, builds on the strengths of the EDB-1, fleshing out possibilities and adding versatility to the previous model. Primarily, the improvements make existing features available to both inputs, the pickup (Channel 1) and a vocal or instrument mic (Channel 2). Since feedback can be such a major issue for acoustic-electric string players, the EDB-2 has several

options to mitigate the rumble and roar, including channel-selectable phase switch and notch filter, in addition to a hearty five-band EQ. (The extensive manual thoroughly explains how to best use these features.) The iPod input is also new, allowing users to add backing tracks for accompaniment or learning or for DJ'ing music between sets.

Additionally, the EDB-2 offers adjustability for instruments ranging from violins down to double basses, and phantom power. Though it'll probably spend most of its life on the floor, the Headway has a mount so you can attach it to a mic stand—handy for keeping it in reach during a performance or recording session. The mute switch also is handy for use during instrument changes and set breaks.

If there is anything that acoustic players might miss on the EDB-2, it's a semi-parametric midrange EQ, a character-defining

part of any musician's sound—many acoustic-electric players have learned to rely on this midrange adjustability to hone their tone.

While the Headway's steel enclosure is built to take much of the abuse that a live gigger will (unintentionally) throw at it, the control knobs and input/output jacks are connected directly to the circuit board, something that could lead to reliability issues if the knobs take a direct hit.

A CLEAN, HIGH-FIDELITY SOUND

There can be a little learning curve with a box as full-featured as the Headway, so don't expect iPhone-like intuition on your first time using it. The effort to harness its power pays off though—the Headway delivered a satisfying sound on a diverse array of instruments and amplifiers throughout testing. I tried it using an acoustic-electric violin through a Fishman Loudbox combo amp and also on a David Gage LifeLine-equipped upright bass through a high-quality PA on a gig with a loud jazz band. The Headway offered a clean, high-fidelity sound, but more than that it was easily adjustable for crafting my tone and fighting feedback. There's so much here you can be confident that no matter what your situation, you'll be able to get "your sound" and have it feedback-free.

The Headway Audio EDB-2 Sheer Acoustic Equalizer Direct Blend is a powerful tool for onstage use. It's packed with features for acoustic-electric musicians. If you use more than one pickup, or sing and play, there's hardly a more ideally suited preamp/DI box for string players.

THE HEADWAY EDB-2 FEATURES:

- Twin inputs and balance control for stringed instruments
- 5-band active EQ and feedback fighting notch-filter control
- \$350 (MSRP); \$320 (street)

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