

once over

reviews
in brief



Radial JD7 Injector

BY MATT ZLATEN

Multiple amps, reamping, signal distribution—a bag of tricks for electric guitar

The Radial JD7 Injector is a guitar signal distribution and routing system. The idea behind it is that you can send a direct guitar signal to as many as 7 different locations with no loss of tone or level. The JD7 also provides reamping capabilities (see sidebar). How does it do all this?

The box

Radial has quite a reputation for building rock-solid direct boxes, and the chassis of the JD7 continues the theme. The single-rack-space box is made from the same thick steel as the direct boxes and has the same industrial paint job. It also weighs a ton, just like the direct boxes. This thing is built to last forever and put big dents in anything it's dropped on.

Front

The front panel layout begins on the left with the two $\frac{1}{4}$ " inputs, with a select button that toggles between them, a clip light that indicates input overload, and an 8 dB pad for input 2. When input 2 has been selected, the XLR input on the back panel is also active—more about that in a minute. A "drag" control provides variable loading of the guitar pickups. This can be used to alter the tone of the guitar by changing the impedance that the pickups "see."

The remainder of the front panel consists of the six primary $\frac{1}{4}$ " outputs. The first one differs from the other five in that it is a simple direct out with a single "on" pushbutton (with its green activity LED). Output modules 2-6 are all transformer-

isolated to ensure signal integrity and to electrically isolate the signal to prevent ground loops. They each feature three pushbuttons, one for "on" (each with its green activity LED), one for ground lift, and one for polarity flipping. Outputs 5 and 6 each have an additional pushbutton to activate an effects loop that may be patched in via $\frac{1}{4}$ " jacks on the rear panel.

Back

The rear panel contains the following: AC/DC adapter connection; two pairs of $\frac{1}{4}$ " jacks for Send/Return of the aforementioned effects loops for outputs 5 and 6; a balanced line input (XLR) for reamping, with ground lift pushbutton and level pot; a balanced line output (XLR) for sending dry signals to a studio

recorder, with pushbuttons for polarity flip and ground lift; and, finally, a seventh output on $\frac{1}{4}$ " labeled AUX—a transformerless direct out, just like output 1 on the front, but without an activity light or "on" pushbutton.

The Send/Return modules and the AUX module have a blank white marker strip, as do all six front panel output modules—they can be used for labeling. Erasable markers only!

In Use

The JD7 provides an unbelievably versatile combination of sounds and destinations for your guitar signal, and it sounds good with all of them. The transformer-isolated outputs have a subtly different tone than the direct outs, and the drag control gives a bit of tone shaping, depending on the source guitar's pickup type. Using simultaneous outputs does not deteriorate the sound, which is quite an accomplishment in the world of guitar splitting.

The reamping process (as described in the sidebar) produced a wide variety of tonal possibilities, as you'd expect from being able to take a clean signal on tape and run it through any combination of amps and effects. At first, we used the front-panel $\frac{1}{4}$ " input to send our clean guitar from Pro Tools back through the JD7; this gave us a slightly distorted sound, and seemed to be hotter than the XLR input, to the point of overdriving the input stage of the guitar amp in an unpleasant way.

Using the rear-panel XLR input (that's why we keep a balanced $\frac{1}{4}$ "-to-XLR adapter cable around) produced a much clearer and more transparent tone. You'll want to use the XLR ins to get the most from the JD7 as a reamp box.

So...

We found the JD7 to be a robust and useful device. The construction is of the highest quality and the sound is great too. We are a bit unhappy with a device of this price point using a wall wart, but that is hardly a reason to pass it up. Overall the JD7 does a great job and is a powerful tool.

Price: \$850

More from: Radial Engineering, a division of JP CableTek Electronics Ltd., 1638 Kebet Way, Bldg. 100, Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 5W9 Canada. 604/942-1001, fax 604/942-1010, www.radialeng.com.

Reamping

The idea of reamping is that you first record a clean signal, probably through a DI box or an amp that is set to a "neutral" tone. Then you play back that clean recorded signal and send it into an amp, or two, or five, and experiment with the tones that you get from miking those amps. You've already played the part, so now you have both hands and ears free to concentrate on tweaking.

What if your buddy has a great moldyoldy Fender Bassman that you just love for its sound, but he can't let you borrow it until Friday and your guitar player can only show up to record on Thursday? Reamping to the rescue.

You hook up your Redeye, JD7, or similar device, and record the guitar player's performance (also sending the signal to a different amp or effects box so that the player has a good tone to perform to). Then when you can get your hands on that oldymoldy, play the recorded track out of the recorder or a mixer through the reamping box (which helps adjust levels and impedance to make the guitar amp happy), set the amp's gain and tone controls to taste, mike up the amp and record the new sound.—MZ