

by Mitch Gallagher

Radial Engineering X-Amp

Price: \$199**Contact:** Radial Engineering,
www.radialeng.com**Strengths:**

- Two amp outputs, one transformer-isolated
- Output level control with overload LED
- Input and output ground lifts
- Indestructible
- Can be used with a preamp as a "line driver" for long cable runs

Limitations:

- None to speak of



The quest to capture the ultimate guitar tone can be a long and arduous one. It's especially difficult if you're trying to dial in the tone in the "heat of the moment" — as the guitar player is laying down the track. If you want the most control over the tone you're recording, then the best solution is to re-amplify: record the direct guitar to a track, then play the track back through guitar amp(s) so you can dial in the sound and mic selection/placement to perfection. The problem is interfacing your recorder/DAW to the guitar amp. The solution is Radial Engineering's X-Amp.

X-Amp is descended from the JD7 (reviewed July '02); it employs the same Class A

design and active balanced input. There's an output level control and an overload LED. The unit has two guitar-level outs for feeding two amps at once. The polarity of the second, which is transformer-isolated, can be flipped.

Putting X-Amp to work is easy: hook up the wallwart power supply, run a balanced (XLR) line from your recorder to the input. Hook the 1/4" outs to your amp or stomp boxes. I connected X-Amp to my Pro Tools rig and to my Mesa-Boogie amp. Initially it appeared I would have noise problems — there was fairly high amount of hash in the amp. A flick of the input ground lift solved the problem. The amp was dead silent, even at high gain. I connected my

Marshall to Output 2 for a layered tone. Again, a blissful lack of background hum or hiss.

The best thing you can say about X-Amp is that it sounds like you're plugged straight into your amp. The second best thing is that it's so simple to use, but has cool features, such as multiple ground lifts and an output level control. The third is that it's clearly built to last a lifetime.

"Re-amping" is a way of life for me — as a back-up, I track all guitars direct so if necessary I can go back and re-record with a different tone. With the X-Amp, Radial has provided an outstanding tool for re-amping — and the price is right. Chalk up another winning creative tool for the Radial crew. 