

RMI by Lehle Basswitch IQ DI

Allround Soundtool

As a bassplayer you constantly have to consider: live gig or studio recording, with amp or directly through DI into the mixer (or both), should I bring the second bass and what about my effect pedals? Until today, bassplayers have unfortunately had to struggle with problems of this kind, which come from technical demands. But that's over now, because with the Basswitch IQ DI you are well prepared for any kind of situation.

Some ideas are obvious - you just have to think of it. Like Erich Kästner said: "Actions speak louder than words." Jacques Ruppert, dedicated bassist, did think of it and put his words into action. For a long time he

dreamed of a compact device that would combine all the sound features and technical refinements that he as a sophisticated bassplayer wished for. But what would it look like and what kind of features would this "swiss army

knife" possess exactly? He took his concept and went to German effect-guru Burkhard Lehle, whose famous little helpers are well known all over the world. A prototype of this fertile collaboration was presented at the Frankfurter Musikmesse last year and we now have a beta version in front of us.

TECHNICAL DATA

• Type	Preamp/Booster/ Parametric EQ/Active DI/FX-Looper	• Switches	Mix, Boost. DI: Ground, Pad, Pre/ Post, Impedance (input A), Phase (mix loop)
• In/Outputs	Instr. A, Instr. B, Line out, Tuner out, Serial Loop send & return, Mix Loop send & return, DI XLR out, Power supply in.	• Power Supply	AC or DC, 9-20 Volt, min 130 mA
• Pots	Volume A, Bass, Low, Low Mid Level, Low Mid Freq., High Mid Level, High Mid Freq., Treble,	• Dimensions	42*220*126 mm
		• Weight	1.375g
		• Extras	double semiparametric mids, switchable impedance for input A

So let's connect the pedal and take a closer look of this multi-tool and its practical use.

The indestructible metal enclosure has two inputs, A and B. If you use them both, you are able to switch between the two connected instruments without unplugging. The LED on the A/B footswitch has two colours, blue for input A and white when input B is active. If you want to connect an instrument with a piezo-pickup you will like the switch that allows you to change the impedance of input A from 1 MOhm to 10 MOhm so that you'll have the perfect connection even for a pure passive piezo-sy-

stem. If you already have an "afterburner" on-board, you'll probably won't need this feature, but for the A/B change between electric- and upright-bass, acoustic guitar or even an accordion, it might come in handy. Thanks to the wide frequency-range and the excellent dynamic properties of the Bassswitch IQ DI, the amplification of acoustic instruments, which is so often a problem, becomes really a fun part.

Sounds good already? Well, what about selectable sound-presets and the inclusion of external effects? Of course you can also use one input only. Changing instruments is still possible by using the mute-footswitch and not a sound is to be heard. But that doesn't mean the A/B footswitch is useless, no... we are now in "channel-mode" instead. When the A/B-LED is blue, the equalizer and volume functions on the top of the pedal are active. When the LED turns white, the signal is altered in impedance only (preventing losses on the further cable route), but is passed through the pedal without any equalization whatsoever. In this way you can still use your bass amp normally and when the time comes, you'll be able to call up a pre-configured sound-preset on the other channel. Conveniently, the two effect-loops, meaning the serial loop and the switchable parallel loop

are uncoupled from the channels. This means that they can be added to the "pure" sound of channel B and the equalized sound of channel A. All the effects that you want to have active all the time – for example volume-pedals or compressors/limiters – you'll want to connect to the serial effect-loop. For all other pedals, such as modulation-effects or reverbs and delays, use the second, parallel, effect-loop, which is connected to the "Mix" and the

serted effects must be of high quality or you will have to deal with a higher noise level when the loop is activated. Unfortunately I could hear "the sound of the sea", even though I have never experienced any trouble with my pedals. But maybe that is because of the wide frequency-range of the Bassswitch and the rich harmonics I had intentionally chosen. In any case, you should be aware that your sound is only as good as the weakest link and that your favorite

» With this you should be able to deliver to the sound engineer the optimal signal in all situations.«

"Boost" knob. If 'Mix' is turned fully counter-clockwise you will hear the dry signal without effect. If you turn it clockwise it will blend in the parallel effect-loop and mix the dry and the wet signals until it acts like another serial loop when turned fully clockwise, only providing an on/off footswitch. Because some effect-pedals invert the signal-phase, the Mix loop also has a switch to adjust the phase. You can adjust the perfect level between wet and dry signal without losing the pressure of the lows. Well done! Of course, you could also use the return input of the serial effect-loop to connect the piezo output of your bass (if the bass has separate outputs for the 'normal' and piezo signals). Or you could connect another instrument, a drum computer or a sample/loop station to use the setup as a line mixer. The sky is the limit. In addition, you can boost the signal of this mixture with the

Boost knob if you have to feed your pedals with a proper signal. Your in-

pedals could produce noises you might have never noticed before. But this problem seems to have been recognized by the developers and they have provided the boost controller with a cut/boost function to solve the problem.

Alternatively you can use the preamp of the Mix-loop without effects as a pure clean solo-boost, a welcome feature when you occasionally need more power. The manual says that you have to turn the mix level all the way down in order to use the boost function. I had to set it around three o'clock to hear a signal boost. Also you should be aware of the phase of the mix-loop signal. If it is getting softer instead of louder when you add the boosted signal, use the phase-switch to solve the problem. But if everything is set up right you will definitely be heard in your solo spot.

So watch out and do not blow up your bass-amp. If the IQ DI pedal is connected directly to a power-amp it could easily become an acid test of your speakers. To use not only the boost-controller, but also all other controls of the four band equalizer with its two semi-parametric mid-bands you need the appropriate touch. And that is not because it is complicated to use; in fact the EQ section works very musically and intuitively. The only uncomfortable thing is the grip on the controllers: they are rather slippery, especially when you are in a live situation with sweaty fingers. But the good news is that you can't alter the settings them by accident when you carry the Bassswitch in your gigbag. And Lehle wouldn't be Lehle if there wasn't already a solution for the production version. So, are we done with the features yet? No, not quite....

One important thing is still missing, you can tell by its name. Of course, a professional active DI-box. The symmetric XLR output fits



Sound and routing of the signals is achieved with the help of compact pots embedded in the housing for protection.

True Sound: true in this context means high fidelity. Lehle uses this term for his active high impedance input buffering bypass technology. As compared to a mechanical, so called "true" bypass, that guarantees in theory a neutral treatment of the sound signal but discards in reality the surrounding elements that affect the signal chain negatively, he achieves with his technique a vital sound, that gets very close to the ideal signal chain (instrument-short cable-amplifier) and this independently from all other components in the signal chain.



Highly flexible connections:
the Bassswitch IQ DI

exactly into the side of the Bassswitch, as do the switches for ground/lift, pre/post and pad. The first one lifts the ground and solves hum problems. The second one selects whether you hear the pure sound of your instrument or the signal including the effect-loops. The third switch makes it possible to attenuate the signal so that it is well suited for microphone-inputs of a mixer. Whether live or in the studio, the technician could not be happier and will get any bass level that he wants. Well, life could be so easy, if you always had this kind of tool.

solid and typically Lehle-like metal enclosure make it so versatile that it doesn't fall in only one category. Let's summarise: the

Bassswitch has two directly selectable instrument-inputs, switchable input-impedance, a precise eq-section, an adjustable solo-boost, two separate effect-loops, a tuner-out, a symmetrical DI-out and several possibilities for optimizing your signal-routing. In a word, in my opinion this is a high-end bass-preamp in a gigbag-friendly pedal, and I have to admit that bassplayers who think highly of their sound won't find so many practice-oriented features elsewhere – not even in certain bass-preamps by other renowned manufacturers. To this extent the Bassswitch IQ DI truly has no competitors for the time being. I guess that all bassplayers who demand a high-quality sound, will be starting to feel their mouth watering. By the way: more information about the Bassswitch, including videos, is available at www.rmi.lu or www.bassswitch.com.

You already know from other high-end DI-boxes that you'll get a very clear and super-transparent sound, which is well prepared for long cable-runs, but the great thing about the Bassswitch is that you have this high quality at every output of the pedal. Lehle's own True Sound Technology now makes it possible for previously sensitive pick up signals to be heard under the most unfavorable circumstances. (For more about that, see the review of the Lehle Sunday Driver in Soundcheck 03/10). All the device requires is a little juice and that can be anything between 9 V and 20 V with at least 130 mA. It doesn't make a difference if it's AC or DC. Apropos, a little lug to secure the power-cable would be nice: At my first rehearsal I accidentally bumped against my pedalboard and the power supply was pulled out of the Bassswitch.

✘ Vilim Stößer

So what exactly is a Bassswitch IQ DI briefly speaking? A good question, that unfortunately cannot be answered in one sentence. The number of functions hidden inside the super-

OVERVIEW

Bassswitch IQ DI

Distribution Burkhard Lehle
www.lehle.com

Price (List) 499 €

- ▲ high quality signal overall
- ▲ very musical EQ-section
- ▲ ultimate flexibility
- ▲ well thought-out control concept
- ▲ matchless number of features
- ▲ solid construction and workmanship
- ☑ slightly stiff controls
- ☑ power connector without strain relief
- ☑ background noise in the mix-loop