

Radial Engineering JDI, JDV, & JD4 Direct Boxes

Pros: Solid construction. Handy features. Superb sound quality.

Cons: None to speak of.

Bottom Line: If you use direct boxes in your studio or onstage, check out the JDI, JDV, and JD4; you'll find few that offer purer sound or more features. Highly recommended.

Radial Engineering, 604-942-1001,
www.radialeng.com

JDI, \$239.99; JDV, \$299.99; JD4, \$849.99

At some point you're going to want to bring a guitar directly into a mixer, send a keyboard down a snake, or route a line-level signal into a mic-level input. The tool for these applications is the direct box, and Radial Engineering produces a number of appropriate products. I looked at their transformer-based JDI, active JDV, and four-channel JD4. The JD4 is essentially four JDIs in a single-space rack.

Each is housed in a heavy metal case; no problem turning these over to the gentle care of even the most out-of-control roadie. Other

similarities include a 1/4" input and thru jack, a 15dB input level pad, and a Merge switch that allows two mono signals connected to the input and thru jacks to be passively mixed. Each also features an XLR output and a ground-lift switch. The boxes have recessed switches, so there should be no problem with inadvertently changing settings.

The JDI features a switchable 50kHz low-pass filter, which Radial says reduces the possibility of damage to sound systems when using some devices. The JD4 incorporates this filter and adds a duplicate set of input and thru jacks on its front panel for easy access. Plus, the JD4 can flip its output polarity from pin-2 to pin-3 hot.

The JDV has a 1/4" balanced line-level output that can be used for driving long lines or to directly feed tape recorders or signal processors, handy in some situations. Being active, the JDV requires a power source. It will run off of a wall wart (included), but for best performance, Radial recommends using the unit's internal rechargeable battery. Trickle charging from either the wall wart or phantom power can be used to extend battery life during long sessions.



With a direct box, sound is paramount, and the JDI/JD4 and the JDV sound — in a word — *pure*. Compared to these, my old standby active direct box has a thinner and harsher tone. No matter what type of signal I put through them, the Radials sounded round and natural. The JDI/JD4 is perhaps a touch warmer and rounder with guitars than the JDV.

Radial Engineering has a done a superb job with these direct boxes — I couldn't come up with any gripes about them! I especially recommend the JDI. Plug it in and it sounds great. If you need a line-level output, or have a sensitive instrument that could be loaded by a transformer design, the JDV is for you. For live use or for multiple channels, the JD4 offers a flexible rackmount solution. They're pricier than some of the competition, but they're worth every penny. MITCH GALLAGHER

KEY INFO #125