

# ARX DI Plus & DI Plus 2

These active DIs soak up some Trevor Cronin-inflicted punishment

ARX is a Melbourne-based pro audio equipment manufacturer who have been supplying the world with their homegrown sound gear for nearly 20 years – they are by far Australia's largest exporter of this type of equipment. The whole design and manufacturing process is done in-house by hand, with a loyal and dedicated workforce (they sign the parts they make) and they produce everything from speaker systems, amplifiers and processors, all the way back up the signal path to an extensive range of direct input boxes (DI boxes).

Those with long memories may recall my review of ARX's DI4 (Audio Technology Issue 6). The DI4 along with the DI6 are mains powered 1RU devices and have added internal mixing facilities and some other handy extras. I have used these units extensively for many years



now and they have proven to be reliable workhorses. More recently,

the company has revamped the smaller units in the

range and introduced the completely new DI Plus and DI Plus 2.

Both units are housed in the same sized sturdy steel casing with an attractive deep blue paint finish. The company logo and various function-indicating markings are screen printed on. Substantial rubber feet are fitted, to help isolate the unit from vibration and liquids. The design shop sure has produced a couple of professional looking items.

On the front panel of the single input DI Plus you'll find a jack input connector with an associated 20dB attenuation pad button. This is where you plug in your preferred instrument with a standard guitar lead. The pad should be used on hot input signals, such as ones from some keyboards and guitars with active pickups.

A 'Loop Out' jack is provided, as is standard practice on most DIs to split the input to a stage amp. A thoughtful addition is a secondary jack input, used for connecting to the speaker level output from an instrument stage amplifier (to get the 'amp sound').

These units use an 'active' electronic design and, as such, require power to function. This can be either phantom power as supplied from a mixing console or from the internally located 9V battery. In fact, ARX has given power considerations considerable thought. There is a push button and associated green LED to check the battery's state of charge. When powered by phantom a red LED glows to indicate that all is well. The internal

battery is accessed by undoing a knurled screw on the rear of the units, which allows the casing to pop open like a clamshell – no tools required! With the lid open you also gain access to the unit's circuitry – this will make any servicing quite a simple task.

Mounted on the rear is a male XLR connector, which has gold-plated pins. This is the unit's main balanced output (where you connect a microphone lead into the mixer). It has an associated earth-lift push-button, used to cure some hum (earthing) problems.

The DI Plus 2 is basically the same unit, but with two inputs and outputs. The speaker level input, as found on the single input unit, is omitted in this case.

The test DI Plus unit has had over a year's constant use and abuse, while the dual input version has been in use most of 2002. They have been flown around on tours, dropped by crew and danced on by many a performer; they've been subjected to heat, humidity, rain, smoke and plenty of spilt refreshments; they have been used in the studio and at a heap of live gigs; and they have both performed faultlessly. Recently I recorded some live shows with one of Australia's top acts, The Whitlams. All of the DIs used were ARX DI Plus units. According to the band's tech crew they have had a similar experience to myself – no worries! Sonically they're very clean with a flat frequency response (just the way a DI should be). They were compared on quite a few occasions with similar units from other manufacturers and always got my preferred vote. They offer much better hum rejection when placed on top of valve bass guitar amplifiers than any other unit tested so far.

The speaker level input facility is a nice feature – it has been used many times in the studio and live to help achieve some killer guitar sounds. The headroom available in the electronics has allowed distortion-free use even from the 'hottest' input. The LED indicating phantom power is a nice touch and has quickly solved any patch confusion on more than one occasion.

These DIs are a major advance on their predecessors and come highly recommended by myself, and many others 'in the know'.

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