





AER Pocket Tools Dual Mix, Colourizer & Dual Para EQ **£359, £279 & £259**

You'd need big pockets to keep them in and deep ones to pay for them, but AER's Pocket Tools could be essential for electro-acoustic players *by Trevor Curwen*

AER is perhaps best known for its impressive range of acoustic amps, but has now channelled its expertise into the Pocket Tools – a new range of easily portable compact processors that each offer different useful elements

of AER's technology for acoustic instruments.

The size of a large stompbox and designed to sit firmly on the floor, each of the units is extremely well put-together, with a solid black anodised aluminium body and

ergonomic rubber-coated knobs. Each comes in a smart zippered carrying case, with an identical case holding the power supply, which is an in-line 24V DC adaptor with a little over four metres of cabling to let you reach across the stage or studio floor.

Dual Mix

The Dual Mix is a two-channel mini mixer with EQ and effects. Two jack/XLR combi sockets are the entry points for any signal. Each channel can be switched for a line or microphone level signal and also has independent switching for phantom power at 24V to cater for microphones that need it. Rotary knobs with associated clip LEDs set the gain. Each channel has knobs,

The Rivals

Fishman and **LR Baggs** are two other respected names in electro-acoustic instrument technology and both have similar products. The **Fishman Aura Spectrum DI Pedal** (£489) offers the company's Aura Acoustic Imaging, recreating the sounds of various mic'd-up acoustic instruments, but also has three-band EQ, a compressor, automatic anti-feedback, phase switch and a tuner onboard. **LR Baggs Venue DI** (£369) is a preamp with DI output, a five-band EQ that's specifically tuned for acoustic instruments, notch filter for feedback control, phase switch, volume boost footswitch and a tuner. Finally, the **Para DI** (£209) is a studio-quality direct box, featuring a five-band EQ and phase inversion.

with centre detent position, for high and low shelving EQ – up to 12dB of cut or boost in the high end at 10kHz and 10dB down below at 100Hz. An effects section offers control of the level and panning for four onboard digital effects – you get short and long hall reverbs, a 320ms delay, or a deep chorus effect.



The rubber-coated knobs are very road-ready

The Dual Mix's effects section offers control of the level and panning for four onboard digital effects



The overall signal after EQ and effects can be sent from an XLR DI output, a standard jack output and a standard stereo headphone jack. If you want to add another source into the mix, there's an auxiliary input on a pair of RCA phono jacks.

Sounds

AER has identified what it sees as three main uses for the Dual Mix – as an add-on to expand the feature set of a current combo amp, as an onstage preamp, or as a headphone preamp so you can rehearse and play wherever you want.

With the two channels available it's possible to have a combination of inputs – if you have two electro-acoustic instruments that you use onstage, they can be both connected at once to save a lot of plugging and unplugging, as you can just use the gain knobs to switch between them. Alternatively, you could mic up your instrument and blend the microphone sound with the pickup sound or just use a pair of mics. Be aware, though, that not all condenser mics will work with 24V phantom power – some need the full 48V.

The high and low EQ knobs offer a very natural EQ that can gently cut or boost the top or bottom end of your sound, enhancing rather than

transforming it, while the well-chosen effects add a classy ambience or a touch of sweetening when the chorus is used subtly.

It's in headphone practice mode that the aux input becomes invaluable, allowing you to use the level knob to mix in some music that you want to either play along with or learn.

Colourizer

The Colourizer is a preamp and DI for a single microphone or a line level instrument connected via the combi socket, again with switchable 24V phantom power. Before the signal is outputted via the XLR DI output and the standard line output jack there are a bunch of tone-shaping tools that can be applied to it.

A parametric EQ with two selectable frequency ranges has three knobs controlling the action by adjusting level, bandwidth and frequency. There's 15dB of cut and boost with bandwidths from one octave to 1/6 octave at frequencies within either the lower range of 90Hz to 1.6kHz or from 680Hz to 11kHz. A



The variety of inputs on offer give you plenty of options

further tone section with balance and intensity knobs is designed to allow bass or treble accentuation or a combination of both. On top of that you can switch in an enhancer with an intensity knob to add harmonics to the signal to

enrich the sound. A separate line output, found here and in the Dual Mix, can be used to send a signal to an onstage monitor while the main DI signal is sent to front of house. The Colourizer, however, goes further than the Dual Mix in having separate level controls for each output.

Sounds

The Colourizer's forté is to bring out the best from your instrument. The Parametric EQ is clean and precise and offers tone shaping that can be used to enhance and get the optimum sound, but also get you out of trouble if there are any feedback-causing frequencies that need taking out – the switch that inverts the output signal in relation to the input signal by 180 degrees could be useful here too. Elsewhere, the tone and enhancer sections combine to generally give you a bigger sound.

Dual Para EQ

The Dual Para EQ is designed to either be used on its own or with the Colourizer or Dual Mix to provide gain control and a two-band parametric EQ. Input is via a single standard jack, as is the output, and the controls are pretty simple. There's a gain knob with clip LED, a phase button and an overall bypass switch alongside a pair of parametric EQs that

The Dual Mix's high and low EQ knobs offer a very natural EQ that can gently cut or boost your sound



The Dual Mix lets you blend two input signals to taste

are identical to those found on the Colourizer.


Sounds

The two parametrics in series offer serious tone-shaping capability that will surgically take out any problem frequencies if needed, or can transform your sound with targeted boosts and cuts. Our only thought is that if the unit had been made with two channels, it might have made a more versatile partner to the

Dual Mix. The idea being that besides the stacked parametrics single-channel option you could use one parametric on each channel.

Verdict

With low noise and plenty of headroom, there's no doubting the quality of these little boxes and the price reflects that – these are professional tools for players who are serious about getting the optimum sound. Anyone gigging regularly with

just an electro-acoustic guitar would do well to carry a Dual Mix or Colourizer with them rather than rely on the vagaries of any particular venue's own DI boxes. With its headphone facility, aux input and effects, the Dual Mix is probably the all-rounder, but if you have no tone controls on your instrument, the Colourizer would perhaps be a more useful live asset and could get you out of tricky situations. Likewise the Dual EQ is a great remedial tool for sorting those situations out – combine one with a Dual Mix and you'll have a great live set-up... if the thought of spending a cool £600 doesn't worry you! 



You'll not be short of a knob to twiddle

The two parametrics in series offer serious tone shaping capability that will take out any problem frequencies

The Bottom Line

AER Pocket Tools Dual Mix

We liked: Solid build quality; quiet operation; useful mix of facilities

We disliked: It only has 24V phantom power, as opposed to the standard 48V, so you'll need to run some high-end condenser mics

Guitarist says: A useful all-rounder for a high quality DI signal, sound sweetening and practice

AER Pocket Tools Colourizer

We liked: Solid build quality; quiet operation; good combination of gentle tone-shaping and precision EQ

We disliked: As with the Dual Mix

Guitarist says: A great tool for shaping the sound of your electro-acoustic

AER Pocket Tools Dual Para EQ

We liked: Solid build quality; quiet operation; precision EQ

We disliked: We'd have liked it to have two channels

Guitarist says: A compact and effective solution for sorting out your onstage tonal problems



AER Pocket Tools Dual Mix

PRICE: £359

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Two-channel preamp

EFFECTS: Short and long hall reverbs, 320ms delay, chorus

CONTROLS: Gain x 2, high x 2, low x 2, line/mic switch x 2, effects level, effects pan, effects select, aux input level, master, phantom power x 2

CONNECTIONS: Standard jack/XLR combi input x 2, RCA phono aux in (L, R), XLR DI output

POWER: Mains power (24V DC external power supply)

DIMENSIONS: 105 (w) x 135 (d) x 65mm (h)

Westside Distribution

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www.aer-amps.com



Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



AER Pocket Tools Colourizer

PRICE: £279

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Preamp and DI

EFFECTS: None

CONTROLS: Gain, line/mic switch, DI level, volume, phase switch, tone balance, tone intensity, enhancer intensity, enhancer on/off switch, EQ level, EQ bandwidth, EQ frequency, EQ range switch, phantom power switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard jack/XLR combi input, XLR DI output, standard jack line input

POWER: Mains power (24V DC external power supply)

DIMENSIONS: 105 (w) x 135 (d) x 65mm (h)

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



AER Pocket Tools Dual Para EQ

PRICE: £259

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Dual-band parametric EQ

EFFECTS: None

CONTROLS: Gain, bypass switch, phase switch, EQ level x 2, EQ bandwidth x 2, EQ frequency x 2, EQ range switch x 2

CONNECTIONS: Standard jack input and output

POWER: Mains power (24V DC external power supply)

DIMENSIONS: 105 (w) x 135 (d) x 65mm (h)

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★