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Review: Avalon V5 Preamplifier/DI/Re-amping Box

Rob Tavaglione. The V5 boasts incredibly wide tonal versatility.

ROB TAVAGLIONE · AUG 26, 2015

If you're talking "touring bass rig," you're often talking about an Ampeg SVT with an Avalon U5 DI preamp to provide the routing, impedance dropping and signal balancing to directly inject bass into FOH, monitors and the bass rig itself. Reasons? Durability, clean punch, musicality and seemingly flat frequency response—unless of course you're using one of the U5's many voicing curves to get the EQ right from the source. (And who doesn't love that?)

To get from the U5 to the V5 (approximately \$1,345 street), add a new gain stage (with +66 dB) for more "low-midrange harmonic content" and a mic preamp (w/ phantom) plus re-amp facilities. With it, my passive bass delivered instantly great results with +44 dB of gain and no filters; it was that distinctive U5 tone, perhaps a little fatter. The overall warm, flattering plumpness and pure musicality would have many a novice thinking "tube" when of course it's due to those proprietary Avalon transformers (as in their flagship 737 channel strip). Here my audio clip as an example: <https://www.soundcloud.com/pro-audio-review-magazine/avalon-v5-passive-bass-di>.

Active bass via V5 was impressive. Compared side by side via Manley Force and Radial Firefly—both fine bass tone suppliers in their own right—the active bass by way of the Avalon delivered the most unrestricted punch, the flattest frequency response and, with its set of 10 passive filters, the widest tonal versatility. The versatility employing the filters opens up worlds of wildly different tones for the multi-axe-toting bassist. Here's my active bass clip, for example: <https://soundcloud.com/pro-audio-review-magazine/avalon-v5-active-bass-di>.

The V5 mic preamp is clean, quiet and warm; its 2 dB gain steps are perfectly incremented. Its re-amp (routing +4 dB balanced tracking output from DAW into Line Input of V5, routing -18 dB unbalanced impedance-corrected Amp output to guitar amp) worked like a charm; it delivered great tone and transformer isolation (the latter a necessity). The power of both the preamp and the re-amp was multiplied with those not-exactly-subtle filters, especially when re-amping where high-passing or 400 Hz notching is often what the doctor ordered.

Of course, there are many more affordable DI solutions to be found, but I am specifically recommending the V5 to young rock and R&B producers (two genres where Avalon tone seems generally appreciated) who don't have a proper "front-end." Get a V5 and I'll say you are a compressor shy of having a killer input channel usable on every track. Best of all, it's an investment for the long term, not matter how your arsenal grows.

Avalon Design | <http://www.avalondesign.com/v5.html>

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