

# BROADCAST PRO AUDIO HARD-ON, TRANSLATOR & PASSIVE LINK

A local designer and manufacturer has released a new range of problem solving doo-hickeys. They're all made in Adelaide by our very own Rob Squire...

Text: Calum Orr



Besides being great at almost any esoteric racking job you can throw at it, Broadcast Pro Audio is also the maker of very fine boxes that perform quite specific tasks. Located in Adelaide, Broadcast Pro Audio is the brainchild of our very own 'On the Bench' writer, Rob Squire. In some respects, these products have been borne out of the repeated requests from customers for very similar custom-made 'one-offs'. For Rob, making one-offs over and over wasn't going to make things cost effective for his clients, or give him back his weekends. So making these products in quantity has, in some respects, been a matter of survival.

I was recently sent three of Broadcast Pro Audio's boxes for review: a handy A/B guitar switcher box called the 'Hard on', an in-line mic signal enhancer called the 'Translator' and the piece de resistance, the 'Passive Link'. All three devices are built with longevity squarely in mind, constructed as they are from die-cast metal and painted with a hard, chip-resistant gloss enamel. All functions and lettering are professionally screen-printed, except for the 'Translator', which just has a sticker.

### THE HARD-ON

The 'Hard-On' may not give you its namesake upon first inspection but it will certainly give rise (as it were) to a host of solutions for guitar-amp-tuner routing problems. The stomp box-styled foot pedal is armed with In A&B, Out A&B plus Thru connectivity, and offers some great signal routing options. You can use the Hard-On, for instance, to switch between guitars, tune an electric guitar while muting its amp, switch a second amp on during a chorus or louder sections or simply use it as a hard bypass for an effects unit. The Hard-On also has a non-slip rubber 'bottom' so you can 'do-it' on even the most slippery of pub floors.

### THE TRANSLATOR

Next up is the 'Translator' – a barrel shaped, in-line device that's plugged in between a mic and a pre-amp. With a male XLR at one end and a female XLR at the other, it really couldn't be simpler. Speak German (or any other language) at one end and the Translator will spit out any number of 17 different languages at the other... Seriously though, the Translator is designed to add that 'certain something' to your sterile sound path. Using the Translator in-line before a cheap console is just the ticket. According to Broadcast Pro Audio, it adds "low frequency harmonics and warmth while shaving off the harshness." When placed before a Neve preamp I found the Translator's effects to be pretty subtle but in front of a Behringer or Mackie, the results were great. The Translator achieves this sonic 'shaving' by running the audio signal through a pair of transformers configured to pass audio at unity gain and phantom power from the input to output. The results are what you might expect from passing audio through transformers: increased harmonic distortion and a slightly restricted dynamic range. If that's what's your incoming audio signal needs, the Translator does this well, without requiring you to do anything beyond plug it into the audio path. What could be simpler?

The Translator would make a great addition to any live engineer's gig bag, given the type of desks that frequent the pubs of Australia. With this little device in tow, you can now potentially forego having to drag around your expensive rack-mounted mic pres. Oh the joy!

### A PASSIVE LINK

Last but not least in this procession of 'fix a problem' gadgets is the destined-to-become-classic, Passive Link. The job description of this box is to 'translate a high level

balanced signal to an unbalanced instrument level signal, suitable for connection to a guitar amplifier or guitar effects pedal'. This it does very well indeed, but the Passive Link is particularly noteworthy for the special features it offers above and beyond what you might expect from a similar Re-Amping-style product.

Firstly the Passive Link has a tone control so you can fine-tune the sound from the control room after setting up the approximate amp tone in the live room. Of course, you could simply alter the tone of the signal being sent from your DAW with a plug-in but it's nice keeping the EQ changes in the analogue domain. The Passive Link also makes it possible to make changes 'on-the-fly' for things like subtle tone adjustments in a chorus or special effect tonal sweeps.

The Passive Link also has an earth lift function to help eliminate ground loops and hums from the signal path. There's also the ability to spit the signal out to two amps at once straight from the unit (a function unavailable on other re-amp boxes). I used this on several occasions to construct blends of separate amp tones in one pass. For instance, on one mixing session, I had my 30-watt Eston amp creating sheen on a snare sound while my Fender Blues Deluxe was providing a distorted crunch. I guess you could achieve the same 'two-signal' approach with other re-amp boxes by splitting the signal after the box, but that's what I like about Broadcast Pro Audio products; they think of all the little things you may need and implement them. Another example of this attention to detail is the Passive Link's dual inputs. One is a female XLR, the other a male XLR, so you don't have to rat around in the gig bag for the right connections. Fantastic. And as this section is also wired in parallel, one of these XLR connectors can be used as a link or split. The Passive Link is a great Aussie built box that no establishment calling itself a studio should be without. Top shelf stuff. ■



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### NEED TO KNOW

**Price**  
Passive Link: \$229.90  
Translator: \$132  
Hard On: \$137.50

**Contact**  
Broadcast Pro Audio  
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**Pros**  
Functionality above and beyond the call.  
Built like tanks.  
Great problem solvers.

**Cons**  
No control over the Hard On.

**Summary**  
If you need to perform specific tasks like re-amping without the destruction of your tone, adding transformers to a signal path without fanfare or switching confidently between amps, tuners and effects units, the Broadcast Pro Audio Range of products work a treat. Better still, they're beautifully constructed right here in Australia.



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