

EBS MicroBass II

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It is somewhat difficult to describe EBS' most recent product. The wide range of application is almost infinite. Preamp, practice amp, an A/B switch box for playing different basses, equalizer, mixer, line box, distortion effect are some examples. Most of these features can be used simultaneously.

In effect, MicroBass II is a complete preamplifier with a divided equalizer section with separate inputs that also can be used together. The front panel looks very much like EBS' amplifier heads. With the addition of a mix function for the effects loop, this small package is in fact a little bit more versatile than the large amp heads.

The controls on channel A are; Boost, Bass and Treble. Boost is simply an input boost or gain control. An Enhance button cuts the mids if you boost the treble and vice versa. With the Enhance-function enabled, the treble becomes a tad sweeter, and a more polished character is achieved. The Bright function switch boosts the top end, but surprisingly almost no hiss is added.

The B channel offers Drive, Edge, and a sweepable mid-control. The Drive function is a distortion effect with a fairly coarse, growly sound. Everything, from almost inaudible distortion to manic proportions is available. The Edge control shape the upper mids and treble, which really affects the distortion characteristics. With more Edge added, the sound becomes dirtier while decreasing it, results in a more muffled character.

FOOTSWITCH

The left footswitch is called Mute and mutes all



output signals, except for the Link function where a tuner can be connected. An indicator shows that all outputs are now muted. On the right hand, there is an A/B-switch for changing between the two channels and indicators light up to show the active channel. Via the small A+B button, the two channels can be used together. Depending on what is connected to the inputs, the function of the button differs. If you connect only one bass to the channel A input, the footswitch will switch between the channels. With the A+B function activated, both channels are active in the B mode. With two basses connected, you can switch between the two. In this operating mode, the A+B switch mixes the two signals together. It would have been nice with footswitches for the Drive and Loop-functions as well, but then the pedal would have had to be physically larger.

MicroBass II is an excellent mixer/preamp for instruments with different kinds of pickups; acoustic bass is one example, where a piezo pickup is often combined with another kind of microphone. The A channel is perfectly suited for piezo pickups and no additional preamp is needed.

The effects loop features a mix control where the amount of effect can be fine-tuned, from nil to where the full signal passes through the effect. My old Tube Screamer lacks some low end but sounded great with a fifty-fifty mix. It is easy to use and add spice to your sound with the function without losing the basic sound. The loop return can also be used as an input for a personal stereo system. Just play your favourite CD and you can play and practice along to it. Excellent! The headphone output comes in handy here. Unfortunately, the headphone mini connector input is placed on the top of the pedal, a little too close to the volume control. It looks vulnerable in my opinion; I would have preferred it to be placed on one side of the pedal.

A tube simulation effect is activated via the "tube sim-button". There is no dramatic sound change with it but a small amount of "tubelike" compression is added on attack transients.

As I said earlier, the MicroBass II have many useful applications. My personal favourite would be for switching between two basses. My own passive J Bass needs a little bit of the A channels bright function and a small amount of low end. The B channel would probably fit my active Music Man bass better, since its basic sound is a little hollow. It could use a little nudge in the low mid register

for a more focused sound.

The balanced XLR-output have two buttons, Ground Lift and Speaker Simulation i.e. for simulating a "miked speaker", which is a helpful shortcut when you are recording.

The unit can be powered in four different ways. In addition to a battery and a 9 V power supply, it can also be phantom powered, either from an EBS amp or a mixing console (48 V) with the XLR-connection.

The owner's manual is detailed and can be downloaded via EBS' homepage.

CONCLUSION

The EBS Microbass II is extremely versatile. It is a complete preamp and if you add a power amp, it is a complete amp package. However, in my opinion its best put to use as an A/B-box or mixer. It is brilliant when used for switching between instruments that requires different tone control settings. The distortion and effects loop are also handy functions. It can also be used for recording. The price is rather high for an effects pedal, but if it is viewed as a preamp, it is remarkably cheap.

Facts

EBS MicroBass II

Type:	Two-channel preamp, practice amp, line box and more.
Connections:	Input A&B, link, out, loop send/return, XLR out, DC 9V, headphones
Powering modes:	9V battery, power supply, 48 V phantom power and EBS' own phantom system.
Dimensions:	153 x 110 x 58 mm (6"x 4,3" x 2,3")
Weight:	875g (1.95 lbs.)
Manufactured by:	EBS Sweden AB