

Inside Nashville's Ivy Hall Studios With Engineer Eric Loomis

# RECORDING

The magazine for the recording musician®

## STEP UP YOUR STUDIO!

- Handy Hardware
- Cool Controllers
- Stellar Soundware

### Interview:

**Vance Powell** On Mixing  
*The Raconteurs' Help Us Stranger*

## 34 New Reviews

Amphion • Artiphon • BigRock Innovations • DPA  
Expressive • Focal • FXpansion • Joué • KRK Systems  
Lynx Studio Technology • Puremagnetik • Rob Papen  
Royer Labs • Sensel • Softube • Soundbrenner  
Stedman • Steinberg • Teknosign • Tracktion

VOL. THIRTY-TWO NUMBER NINE

\$5.99US \$5.99CAN



JUNE 2019  
USA \$5.99  
CANADA \$5.99







Below, a list of great gizmos and terrific tools to help you nail your low-end, lock your boom, let your spoken word be heard, boost your mic levels, keep your connections clean, and split your mic signals.—PV

# HANDY HARDWARE

Reviews by Paul Vnuk Jr. and Mike Metlay

## Royer Labs dBooster

The dBooster is the latest product from Royer Labs, creators of the Technical Grammy-winning R-121 ribbon microphone. It's a phantom-powered inline box that boosts the level of passive dynamic and ribbon microphones, in essence it turning them into active mics.

The dBooster is housed in a 3 5/8" long x 2" tall x 1 5/8" wide all-metal enclosure with a thick rubber skid pad. It has a female XLR input on its front side, along with a small white button offering a choice of +12 or +20dB of gain. On its opposite side is a male XLR output. Internally the dBooster uses a low-noise/low-distortion electronically isolated Class A circuit design with four pairs of low-noise bipolar transistors for the gain, each followed by an op amp. Royer explains, "The op amps isolate the transistors and give a low impedance output that can drive low impedance loads easily when needed."

It has a high input impedance of 3.6kΩ, a low output impedance (at 20dB setting) of 300Ω, and offers minimal mic loading. Note that impedance loading on microphone preamps typically changes a passive microphone's sound, so your mic's tone will be more constant from preamp to preamp when used with the dBooster.

dBooster is ultra clean and will kick up the level of your low-output dynamic and ribbon microphones with ease. This means you don't need to push your preamp as hard, so you don't unnecessarily raise the noise floor of the preamp or the mic. dBooster will let you use said mics for quiet sources like delicate acoustic guitar work, whispery vocals, and spoken-word dialog; I can tell you firsthand that the dBooster excels in all of these situations.

This is not the first active mic booster to hit the market, and Royer let us know that the dBooster is not designed to be a me-too box; it's a new design, and it does have a sound of its own.

I compared the dBooster to a Cloud Microphones Cloudlifter CL-Z (on its default 300Ω setting) and to my

ultra-clean Millennia Media HV-3D preamp, using a Royer R-121 and a Shure SM7B as test mics. Each device was quite capable of offering clean usable levels on both mics. Noise floor differences were minimal, with the edge going to the active boxes simply because the HV-3D, quiet as it is, did not need to work as hard.

Sonically the Cloudlifter exhibited the clear, full, dimensional clarity it is known for. The dBooster offered similar clean, clear gain characteristics, but it also had an added harmonically excited character, almost like that of a preamp, and hard to describe until you hear it for yourself. Although it's a transformerless device, it reminds me, in a very subtle way, of what classic transformer gear does to a microphone.

I am glad Royer chose to impart a touch of minimal character to the dBooster and use a new circuit design. This gives engineers an added choice of sonic flavoring to add to their studio recipes. It's a great addition to the world of active inline boosters, and one I will be using often—especially with my R-121 on acoustic guitars.—PV

Price: \$179

More from: [royerlabs.com](http://royerlabs.com)

