

## Radial Engineering Tonebone Bassbone V2 Preamp & DI Box

By Deryl Gallant

Radial's Bassbone will not make you sound like the greatest bass player in the world, unless you are the greatest bass player in the world; in that case, it will make you sound exactly like the greatest bass player in the world.

At its core, this bass control centre is not a tone-altering pedal, although as you will see, there are options for that. This unit will be used by most bassists to control and equalize the tone and output of two different basses with its two foot-switchable channels or give you the option of making one bass sound like two different basses. Whether you're the greatest bass player in the world or a local playing for your bar tab, you'll want to be heard and felt loud and clear, whether you're playing your '62 P Bass or your active Sadowsky five-string.

### Construction

The first thing I noticed about my Bassbone is the solid construction. It weighs in at about 2.5 lbs. (roughly one small Halifax donair) and there is no hard plastic or cheap switches. This is Rocky Mountain-grade solid 14-gauge steel with maple syrup-smooth knobs and switches. The jacks are as tight as the budget of a musician living in downtown Toronto.

Radial stands by its products and they deliver this unit with a three-year transferable warranty, which is definitely a bonus, and knowing that this unit is popular worldwide and used by many prominent bassists, I love that "Made in Canada" and a maple leaf are stamped loud and clear on the front of the unit.

### In Use

Using the Bassbone as a channel switchable DI, you get out what you put in and your bass sounds like your bass. Think of Channel 1 as your main channel where you would set your levels and EQ via your amp. If you need on-the-fly volume adjustments, you even have a level for Channel 1 as well. Channel 2 has a level knob and three-band EQ, so you can essentially pre-compensate for tonal variances when you need to switch to a secondary and perhaps drastically different sounding bass. Compared to an electric bass, an upright will have different requirements for gain and EQ, so Channel 2 is thoughtfully equipped with a PZB piezo boost specifically

designed for upright bass and two high-pass filter (HPF) settings to remove unwanted lower frequencies from your sound. The HPF worked quite well on my plywood upright and saved me the purchase of a separate HPF and precious space on my pedalboard.

As good as this unit is in reproducing your bass sound, maybe you don't exactly want that. If you want to spice up your Channel 1 sound, there are two switchable EQ profiles that add some mid-scoop to your sound, good for slapping or modernizing a passive bass.

If this wasn't enough, Radial has generously included features to make every bassist grin, and this is where this unit really shines. Let's start with the effects loop that, if I'm being honest, I didn't think I was going to use. When I realized I could send my effects through the loop and use the dedicated loop wet/dry mix setting to dial in as much balance between my effects plus my full, unaltered bass tone, well I may have actually giggled out loud. At my inaugural Bassbone gig, I was walking bass lines and getting ready to solo. I turned on my reverb, octave pedal, and a dash of chorus and when it came my turn, it was one click to engage all the pedals and I have to say it was beautiful having my full fretless tone on the bottom and a crystal clear orchestra of effects on top. (Not that anyone besides me was listening to my bass solo.) The loop can be assigned to both channels or one or the other, which is a great option.

The third footswitchable feature can either be used as a unit mute switch with the tuner-out jack, or channel boost in conjunction with the boost knob. The latter is my preference as it's useful for soloing with extra kick or keeping up when your guitar player gives you that crazy look before rolling all of their knobs to 11.

And let's not forget why so many stages are strewn with little rectangle boxes with "Radial" stamped on them: their great DI. This unit is no different with its quiet, clean, and ground-liftable DI, great for the stage or studio.

I really would have loved to see pre/post switchable EQ for the DI on this unit. Yes I want



to have control over my sound, but a lot of times my soundman just needs a clean and consistent bass tone and doesn't want to hear my reverb.

Traditionally, you'll see these units used with one bassist, two basses; however, with the click of the recessed blend switch on the side, Channel 1 and 2 are activated simultaneously, allowing for any two instrument signals to pass to your amp. Why not one bass and one drum machine? One teacher and one student? There is no shortage of options.

### In Closing

Whether you're a seasoned professional or still trying to nail that solo from "Sir Duke," the Bassbone has something for you. It's been on my pedalboard for two months, and as a doubling bassist, I don't see it ever leaving.

*For over 20 years, Deryl Gallant has been involved in the PEI music scene as a sought-after performing, touring, recording, and instructing bassist. Comfortable in any style, he is best known as a member of The Jive Kings, The Dennis Lee Project, and Sonny Caulfield's bassist. Most recently, he has been working with the Glen Strickey Winterjazz Quartet, Ian Toms Trio, The Collective, Island Jazz, Alan Dowling Trio, Tara MacLean's Atlantic Blue, Brian Dunn, Jill Chandler, Kelley Mooney, Amanda Jackson Band, and more. In 2015, he was named Music PEI's Musician of the Year and the Doug Riley Artist by the PEI Jazz and Blues festival. He is currently the bass instructor at the Holland College School of Performing Arts and IT Manager with Cogsdale.*