

Pro-Ject Pre Box RS Digital - Chameleon



Pro-Ject Pre Box RS Digital's moderate 1.199 euro price tag belies an almost unheard of level of functionality from a single box. This is a headphone amp and pre-amp with ten inputs, whose output stage can go solid state to valve and back again with the flick of a switch; whose DAC sections can flip between dual PCM1792 and single PCM5102 in a twinkling; which adds a fast/slow switchable roll-off filters, and top off all of that, whose headphone output can be set between 5Ω, 50Ω, and 20Ω.

Insane



The biggest problem with the RS Digital is its chameleon options. Solid state or valve output stage? Fast and slow roll offs? Choice of output DACs? In one box? Insanity. On the one hand it is a testament to an engineering philosophy that leaves room for end-user choice; on the other, it is irresolute.

It powers the 600Ω DT880 to painful levels with nary a hint of IMD distortion, and it puts stable signal into most portable headphones. It keeps a strong stereo signal. And, when utilizing either solid state or valve output stages, it has a lovely ring to the upper mids that reminds me in a small way of Phatlab Audio's PHAntasy.

With either valve or solid state output selected, the RS Digital is capable of surpassing the -100dB signal to noise ratios stated in the manual. Its channels are also perfectly balanced. Interesting point: Pro-Ject hedged a bit with regards to THD levels. I measure 0,0006% (solid state) and 0,189% (valve) through its pre-amp. Impressive. Which is one of the reasons I love using it as a pre-amp. The RS boasts all the options you could want, is stable, easy to use, and, with a flip of the switch goes from mild-mannered and light to mildly weightier with greater channel bleed and softer edges typical of hybrid outputs.

End words

The RS Digital is too much DAC, too much amp, too much choice. I'm both smitten and exhausted. Smitten in that, as a DAC with a pre-amp, it has all its bases covered. If you're plugged into the Pro-Ject world you added functionality with their CD players. You won't find many DACs out there as functionally well-equipped as the RS Digital. You will find better headphone amps out there, sometimes in one-box solutions. But you'll likely not find as well-balanced an amalgamation of the two. Nor is there a way in hell you'll find one that offers two amps in one, and two DACs in one.

Original review see: <http://www.headfonia.com/review-pro-ject-pre-box-rs-digital-chameleon/>