



REVIEWS BY PAUL VNUK JR.

API, developer of the now-pervasive 500 Series module standard, has not rested on its laurels. In this pair of reviews, we'll take a look and listen to its newest modules: a simple and flexible DI and a tonally flexible filter bank.

505-DI

The API 505-DI is a 500 Series module dedicated to the direct input of Hi-Z and line-level sources. While that is a simple task that suggests a simple design and layout, the 505-DI adds in just enough extras to make it well suited to said task, while being quite versatile as well.

Its look, layout and design is perfectly in line with the rest of the 500 Series API family, dressed in matte black with standard, proprietary and unique API-style knobs in white and blue. It is originally based on API's 205L 200 Series direct input module, but with a few extra features thrown in—presumably due to the extra real estate available in the 500 Series form factor.

It all starts with a blue input/gain knob marked 0–10. The module offers a total 55 dB of gain; that's quite substantial for a line or instrument input, the sort of boost you'd expect to see in many microphone preamps. In case the incoming signal is too hot, which it was with both my active Fender Jazz bass and an acoustic-electric Takamine guitar, the 505-DI is equipped with a 20 dB pad switch and a 10-stage peak meter (–18 dB to +9 dB) for signal monitoring.

In addition to signal input, the 505-DI offers tone shaping and loading as well. First up, right below the pad switch is a matching load switch with a choice of 100 or 400 kilohms. It's easy to view impedance switching/loading as an "EQ" of sorts, but it does so by altering the load



Next to this is an 8 kHz Bright Boost that adds about 10 dB of high end. It works especially well on acoustic guitars, giving them a much-needed sparkle and string definition when recording direct. I like this definition on DI bass too, for when I want to hear the string plucks. Taken in tandem, the Tone control, impedance switching, and Bright Boost offer a simple but effective way to get your incoming signal sounding full and clear prior to adding EQ and further processing.

When used in the role of a DI, the 505-DI supplements its front-panel 1/4" instrument input with a 1/4" through/output for connecting back to an amp rig. In the "cool little extras" department, the 1/4" input has a blue backlight inside that glows when nothing is plugged into it, even when the unit's switched off via the yellow backlit power button.

Internally the 505-DI is a fully discrete design that makes use of both API's 2520 and 2510 op amps with a large transformer on the output stage. The transformer is in fact so large that it sticks out slightly beyond the module's enclosure, making the 505-DI a very tight fit in both my API lunchbox® and in Radial Engineering's Workhorse enclosure.

In use, the 505-DI was ultra clean with tons of gain, and I do mean tons. On every string-based source, with the exception of my '60s reissue Fender Telecaster, I needed to make use of the pad. This was also true when connecting my Moog Voyager and Dave Smith Prophet-8. My favorite source, and a lovely surprise, was my vintage Fender Rhodes 73; it typically has a very low output, but the 505-DI gave it ample clean gain.

What I like best about the 505-DI is that it sports the full API sound and circuitry through and

API 505-DI and 565 Filter Bank 500 Series Modules

A flexible DI and filters both musical and surgical, from the folks who gave us the 500 Series

placed on the pickup rather than through the use of filters. Unlike a standard filter, the load switch will cause each guitar and pickup to tonally react a bit differently. Overall I found the 400K setting to be a tad more open with a bit of midrange, vs. the 100K setting which was a touch fuller and darker.

The 505-DI also alters tone via a filter circuit labeled Tone, similar to the tone control on a guitar. When fully counterclockwise it is labeled Thin, 12 O'clock is Fat, and all the way to the right is Fatter. This Tone knob is a passive low-frequency shelving filter with a turnover frequency of 1600 Hz and a stop frequency of 600 Hz. When set to Fatter (fully clockwise) the signal is full-range, i.e. flat; moving to thinner settings cuts down the lows and mids by up to 10 dB.

through—op amps, transformer and all. This may not seem like a big deal, but often when instrument/line inputs are added to a microphone preamp, they will often bypass most of the circuitry that makes the preamp special in the first place. Not so with the 505-DI! Its price is right in line with most standalone powered preamp/DIs on the market. With its features, clean sound, and versatility, the 505-DI would be on the top of my short list for these studio tasks.

565 Filter Bank

As its name implies, the 565 Filter Bank contains a set of high- and lowpass filters as well as a 3-stage notching filter. Again the 565 has the API look, this time making use of the company's large pointer-style knobs, all dressed in blue.



The unit starts at the top with a 500 Hz to 20 kHz Low Pass Filter with a switchable slope of 6 or 12 dB/octave. Skipping over the Notch filter for a moment, the High Pass Filter at the bottom of the module has a range of 20 Hz to 600 Hz with a choice of 12 or 18 dB/octave slopes.

Both of these do exactly what they say, allowing you to remove unwanted high and low frequencies such as rumble or hiss from your tracks. Filters like this are also especially useful when tracking for getting rid of thumps, bumps, and both low and high frequency pollution.

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Both filters are extremely smooth. The lowpass filter is one of the few I have used that can gently take out high end hiss and bite without sounding too muffled. Similarly the highpass filter is very transparent and cleans up the bottom end nicely. Much of this smoothness is due to the fact that neither filter is a resonant / peaking filter like those found in many comparable units.

The Notch filter is handy for zeroing in on single problematic frequencies, usually high mids that careen through your mix or low mid squonks. The Notch filter is an active twin T-notch design with a broad frequency range of 20 Hz to 20 kHz. Its knob is labeled as 20 Hz to 200 Hz, but it has a

3-position toggle switch that multiplies that frequency range by 1, 10, or 100. It also features a variable Q range of 0.95 to 15.3. This variable Q controls the width, and more importantly the depth, of the notch from about -16 dB down to -54 dB.

Like the 505-DI, internally the 565 Filter Bank uses the API 2520 and 2510 op amps, and it has the same discrete transistor buffers used in API's 550 Series equalizers. It is transformer-balanced on the output stage.

The 565 Filter Bank is a very handy device to have around. Unlike the fixed highpass filters found in most

EQ modules, usually set at 80 Hz, a variable-frequency highpass filter can be a lifesaver in many mix circumstances. The same is true of having a variable-frequency lowpass filter for carving out only as much high end as is needed. It's hard not to think of the Notch filter as the real star of the show, however; it excels at carving out single problem frequencies with ease. With a very manageable price, a pair of 565 Filter Banks could make a great addition to any 500 Series setup. ➤

Prices: \$595 each

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