

# TECH 21 Q\STRIP

EQ, DI Pedal & More

Review By **Scott Kahn**

STREET PRICE: **\$249**





**T**ech 21's new Q\Strip pedal is a fantastic tone-shaping device that aims to bring classic recording studio console tone to your direct sound, whether you're playing guitar, bass, or vintage keyboards. The red-colored, aluminum knobs are a great design choice given that this is indeed a Swiss army pedal, and we see the Q\Strip as a must-have utility box for many different players.

The design impetus here came from highly coveted mixing boards that were designed for big studio use in the '60s and '70s, and using traditional MOSFET transistor technology. Tech 21 has managed to cram a classic studio console channel strip into a compact pedal (sans compressor). Many classic records were made with guitars and basses plugged directly into the mixing board, and the Q\Strip brings that capability to your home studio, though it's also fantastic when used in a live sound DI capacity. The only challenge is deciding who this pedal is best for—there are so many great uses for this pedal that you're bound to find many ways to utilize it.

With acoustic guitars or electric guitars with Piezo-acoustic output, the Q\Strip makes an ideal direct box. Playing one of our Taylor acoustics (with internal Expression pickup system) through the Q\Strip into a large P.A. system gave us a wide range of useful acoustic tones without feedback. It was easy to pull out the boominess that sometimes happens when amplifying larger dreadnaught acoustics,

and it was also easy to dial in some high-end brilliance without ever getting harsh.

Another treat was running the Piezo acoustic output from our Music Man JP-series electric guitar through the Q\Strip. We were able to make this premium rock guitar's Piezo output sound significantly more acoustic. And for fun guitar effect, using the high- and lo-pass filters in combination with the parametric EQ bands enabled us to get creative with squashed, narrow-band guitar sounds that ranged from a cocked wah pedal tone to retro, lo-fi stuff.

Guitar players love guitar amplifiers—whether tube, solid-state, or modeled. But if you're seeking to capture some of that classic disco vibe, you may want to try the unimaginable and record your guitar direct without an amp. Running a Fender Stratocaster through the Q\Strip, subtle adjustments of the EQ and engaging the high-pass filter delivered classic Motown magic, with that great chicken-picking kind of funky clean.

For bass players who are more accustomed to recording direct in the studio, or gigging bassists who simply wish to leave the amp at home, the Q\Strip makes a great choice for obtaining classic studio tone outside of the studio. We plugged an NS Design WAV4 Radius bass straight in and were able to dial up a wide range of useful bass tones. For jazz and pop music in particular, the Q\Strip makes a fine choice if you want to leave the big rig at home,

though rock players would be better served by the grittier, Ampeg-inspired tone of the classic Tech 21 SansAmp.

Keyboard players will find the Q\Strip useful as a sophisticated DI box, too! The tone-shaping features provided by the parametric EQ can really clean up the sound of vintage keys like a Rhodes or Wurli. Stick a pair of these in your rig for a nice stereo DI solution.

The Q\Strip is gig ready, housed in a sturdy aluminum enclosure with a custom, silent-switching footswitch. It has a standard quarter-inch instrument input as well as a quarter-inch parallel output, so you can pass your completely untouched signal straight to your existing amp setup. Meanwhile, the primary output can be sent to your choice of a quarter-inch output jack or an XLR output. One of our favorite features in the Q\Strip pedal is that when used with the XLR output jack, the pedal can be powered directly from your PA system or mixing board via 48V phantom power.

## VERDICT

Truly, there's something in the Tech 21 Q\Strip for everyone. It's a great live D.I. box for acoustic guitars and basses, and it's a great studio tool for recording either instrument straight into an audio interface or other mixing console. Considering that you can also use it for keyboards, the Q\Strip is one of those items that any gigging or recording musician should have in their gig bag. It's one of those special products that doesn't draw any attention to itself yet helps your other equipment to sound better. ■

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