

PERFORMANCE GEAR



Sony DWZ-B30GB Wireless System

BY GARY PARKS

SONY'S DWZ-B30GB (\$399 STREET) offers some very guitarist- and bassist-friendly features that show the Sony design team definitely considered the tonal, practical, durability, and budgetary needs of gigging musicians. The wireless system consists of a strap or belt-pack transmitter, a compact receiver, a guitar cable, and an AC adapter. Nothing revolutionary there, but the glory is in the details.

ABUSE READY

For example, acknowledging that club guitarists often need to do rapid-fire stage break-downs, and toss gear roughly into gig bags and cases, the transmitter has a sturdy metal shell, rather than the typical ABS plastic. In addition, a three-level attenuation switch optimizes the pack to the output level of your guitar pickups, and a locking ring holds the guitar-to-transmitter cable securely.

SMALL FOOTPRINT

Even cooler, the receiver is about the same size as a stompbox, and can therefore be easily integrated into your pedalboard. The receiver can be powered with the supplied 12V power supply, a 9V pedalboard supply, or a 9V battery. Three outputs are provided: an unbalanced 1/4" for your amp and effects, an unbalanced 1/4" for your tuner (which stays active for silent tuning

when the belt pack's mute switch is initiated), and a balanced XLR for routing a dry signal to a mixing board.

THE "WIRELESS CABLE" FACTOR

For some players, wireless hasn't been an option because they associate the capacitance imposed upon the signal by long guitar cables—and the resulting reduction of high frequencies—to be a benefit. When these same guitarists use a wireless system, the unimpeded high end typically produces a sound they perceive as too bright, too clean, and too harsh. The DWZ-B30GB addresses this issue with a rotary Cable Tone knob that simulates the sound of cables at varying lengths between one and 25 meters. The effect appears to be a series of high-frequency roll-off curves. I preferred the 5m and 8m settings, because the tone was warm and full. At the lower settings, the sound was brittle with an overdriven electric, but quite natural with a fingerpicked acoustic. Higher settings were too mellow, dark, and bassy to my ear.

FREQUENCY SPECTRUM

The DWZ system operates in the 2.4GHz (WiFi) spectrum, and is license-free worldwide. Up to six channels work together, so several band members can use the system without dealing with signal mash-ups. You can also choose between

two RF modes: Wide Band (reduces interference to other wireless gear) and Narrow Band (avoids interference from other wireless systems). I found that audio quality is unchanged by either setting. The DWZ-B30GB fights drop-outs with a dual-antenna diversity system that simultaneously receives transmission over two different signal paths, and constantly selects the stronger of the two signals to ensure uninterrupted audio.

AUDIO QUALITY

The 24-bit, 48kHz digital stream captures the full spectrum of your instrument, and digital's inherently vast dynamic range also means that signal companding—which can lead to a "breathing" or "whooshing" sound around your notes—is unnecessary in the DWZ-B30GB circuitry. (Analog wireless systems typically compress the signal at transmission and expand it at reception—the companding process—to increase dynamic range.) As a result, your attack and performance dynamics are delivered by the system precisely as you played them. In fact, it's easy to forget you're wireless. The guitar tone is uncolored, and the impact of your playing comes through unchanged. ▶

Kudos Gig Tough. Receiver fits on pedalboard. Cable Tone function.

Concerns None.

Contact Sony, sony.com/proaudio