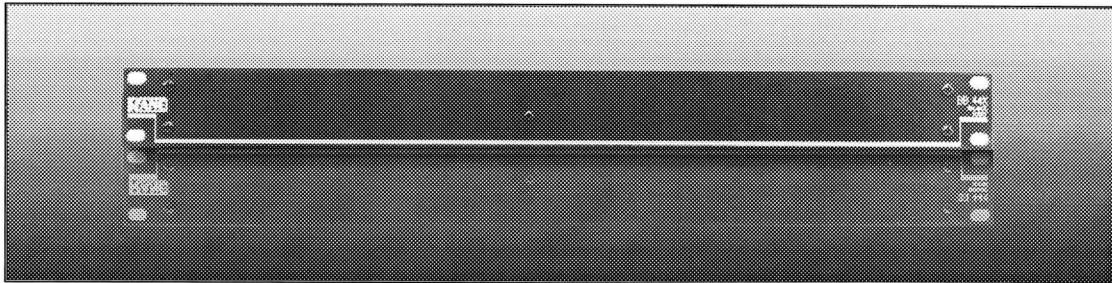


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Rane BB 44X Balance Buddy Signal Converter



BY ROGER WILLIAMS III

A hybrid of the audio contractor, the systems integrator often uses a combination of consumer-grade equipment (tape decks, CD players, TVs) and professional (amplifiers, preamps, mixers). Hence, these “whole house” and boardroom installers need to interconnect components of different levels (consumer at -10 dBV and pro at +4 dBu) and convert from unbalanced to balanced lines. In a similar predicament, the small studio or home recording studio owner also faces these tasks. There is some viable gear out there to be used by pros that does not come with a balanced +4 dBu interface. Enter the Rane BB 44X “Balance Buddy”.

Once past the friendly moniker, you realize that this is a useful tool. The BB 44X is a single rack space, passive transformer-based device that will simultaneously convert two unbalanced RCA input signals from -10 dBV to +4 dBu balanced XLR outputs and vice versa (in other words, two RCA in, two XLR out; two XLR in, two RCA out) for a total of four channels of signal

conversion. High-grade nickel-iron core transformers provide conversion and isolation between sources.

If you have ever been plagued by problems derived from coupling unmatched devices, transformers are the way to go. This unit worked well with various applications in my studio and home. I converted the unbalanced outputs of a consumer CD through the BB 44X into console XLR balanced inputs. I ran a balanced line out from said console to my house and converted to the unbalanced inputs of the home stereo, thus irritating my kids with some “live” commentary. The transformers handled high signal levels without ill effects such as saturation, distortion and ringing. There is also an option that lets you expand the unit to eight channels.

I found the “Balance Buddy” useful and effective and, as the name implies, a way to bring numerous consumer and professional products together in a “friendly” manner.

Roger Williams III is a systems designer for MAS Audio and a contributor to Pro Audio Review.

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