

# OWNERS MANUAL

MANUAL NO. 01

REV. DATE: 2/2008

STAND-ALONE TUBE OUTPUT STAGE



MODEL ZBOX

MORE INFORMATION ON THIS PRODUCT CAN BE FOUND ON [www.decware.com](http://www.decware.com)

 **DECWARE**<sup>tm</sup> *High Fidelity Engineering Co.*

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## OVERVIEW:

The ZBOX is a tube buffer stage utilizing a dual triode (12AU7) that greatly improves the fidelity and listenability of CD players and DACs and also works to improve the sound of many computers and other line level sources such as FM tuners.

The ZBOX works to restore the dimensionality of the signal that was squashed by the solid state output stage of your device. As a result it enhances detail and weight. Bottom line is that it removes the underlying stress in digital playback allowing you to enjoy music without the associated ear fatigue.

The ZBOX is not a filter or masking device. It works by naturally reducing certain distortions while enhancing others through a starved filament technique that runs the tube at about 60% power. As a result tube nor ZBOX itself ever gets hot and is designed to be left on all the time. Tube life is several years with 365 day operation.

## SETUP:



Your ZBOX comes with the tube pre-installed, however as you can see it is easily accessible from the front should you want to experiment with other tubes.

The volume (or output level control) is also located on the front making it easy to adjust the signal level going into the ZBOX from your source. Yes, you can use the ZBOX as a simple preamp.

To begin, make sure the tube is fully inserted and didn't work loose during shipping. Also turn the volume control all the way down (counter clockwise) and then plug the ZBOX into a 120 volt AC outlet and let it warm up for several minutes.

While it is warming up let's hook up our signal cables—see next page.

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## HOOKUP:



The ZOX features a IEC connector with built in fuse holder. When the power cord is removed you can access the fuse holder.

The input jacks are the inside pair and the output jacks are the outside pair. This makes it easy to remember!

The jacks are also marked with color bands to indicate Left and Right. Left is black and Right is red.

Make sure your amplifier or preamp (whatever you plan to install down stream of your ZBOX) is turned off

until all your cable connections have been made. After the ZBOX is completely hooked up and warmed up for at least 1 minute, you can turn on and off the other equipment.

## TESTING:

To test, start your source component and make sure it is playing some music. Slowly raise the volume control on the ZBOX. There is no right or wrong setting on the volume control. If you are feeding another preamp or amplifier that has it's own volume control, you will likely find the best results are to have the ZBOX turned fully up.

## SOURCE VOLTAGE:

The standard voltage of most CD players is 2 volts. Having a source with a higher voltage can distort the ZBOX with certain tubes. Since there ARE sources out there with higher output voltages we put the level control of the ZBOX on it's inputs so that you can effectively reduce the voltage of your high output source to be compatible with the ZBOX.

## OUTPUT VOLTAGE:

The ZBOX when turned fully up will always only put out slightly less than what goes in.

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## TUBES:

There are 3 tubes that can be used with the ZBOX. They are as follows: 12AU7, 12AT7 and 12AX7. Your ZBOX probably shipped with a 12AU7. The differences between them effect the input and output impedance of the ZBOX which in turn will effect the signature and synergy of everything it is hooked up to. There is no right or wrong choice, it is a simple matter of personal taste. If you are new to the concept of "tube rolling" we suggest you accumulate a few of the different choices and discover how empowering it can be to suddenly realize that you have some degree of control over how it sounds.

The only bad choice of tubes comes into play if your source is higher than the 2 volt standard. In this case you'll want to use only the 12AU7.

## LISTENING:

The unit is using large hi-end coupling caps so it will require a week or so to break in. The break-in period can be accelerated by cycling the unit on for 5 hours and off for 5 hours on a repeat basis. 5 times is the recommended number of cycles.

Even during break in you will hear glimpses of the good sound to come and it will never sound bad so it is ok to listen and enjoy during this burn-in process.

To evaluate what a ZBOX does, simply listen to it for 1 hour and then pause your source while you remove the ZBOX from the system. Now press play and listen to the system without the ZBOX and you will clearly hear the music return to it's stressed and flattened state. I wonder how long it will take you to reinstall the ZBOX? Once you have, you will now be able to better focus on and hear what it does so well.

## WARRANTY:

Lifetime parts and labor to the original owner.

## SERVICE:

NO USER SERVICABLE PARTS INSIDE. Always return to DECWARE for service should you ever need it. You can find the Return Authorization Form on [www.decware.com](http://www.decware.com)

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