

Master your amps

Check out any major concert tour where the players on stage are flanked by multiple stacks of gear. Ever wonder just how it's all linked together? In the case of big stages, amplifier "slaving" is a common tool. Many people have favourite amps that lacks the power for the job at hand - it may sound great in the studio or at home, but won't work for a large live gig. Slaving allows a player to use the same amp for every situation. The sound of the first (= "master") amp is amplified by the slave(s) and then sent to additional speakers.

1. Sound Source

The master amp is the one that defines the sound of the whole system. If that model has a "line out" or a "preamp out" jack, then that is what you run to your slave(s).

If your master amp has no "line out" jack but does have an "external speaker" output you can build in your own "line out" jack with a simple circuit that sounds really good. For this, please read the "Adding a speaker out jack to any amp" project in the "Amp" section of this webpage.

2. Power Options

Any good power amplifier works as a slave. Simply run the output from the master amp into the input of the slave. You can use standard guitar or bass amps as long as they have "line in" or "power amp in" jacks. For even more power, simply split the output from the master amp and run it into several amps. You can do this with the "A/B box" described in the "FX" section of this webpage.

3. Special Effects

Often, effects processors will "water down" the natural power of a guitar or bass run straight into an amp. One way to use effects processors without losing that original punch is to set up the master and slave amps in a wet/dry configuration. Set your master amp absolutely dry (with no effects), then send the signal through your effects before it goes into the slave amp(s). This serves two other purposes: the volume on your slave amp(s) becomes your effects level and your dry signal and effected signal are coming from two different places, which provides a very rich tone.