

Audix D4

BY STEVE LA CERRA

The D4 is the latest in Audix's line of D-Series instrument microphones. Audix refers to the D4 as a "sub-impulse" dynamic microphone, because it's designed to capture high-SPL sound sources that contain significant frequency content below 100 Hz. The D4 employs Audix's VLM (Very Low Mass) technology to provide quick transient response. While the D4 might be looked upon as a "kick drum" mic, Audix suggests that the mic can also be used in other applications, including piano, bass, and horns. I took the D4 out on a tour with Blue Oyster Cult for a couple of weeks to give it a test spin.

One thing I immediately liked about the D4 is its small size. Most kick drum mics come in huge capsules that are

MANUFACTURER: Audix Corporation,
P.O. Box 4010, Wilsonville, OR 97070-4010
Tel: 503-682-6933.
Web: www.audixusa.com

APPLICATION: Dynamic microphone for high-SPL instruments with extended low frequency response.

SUMMARY: A welcome addition to any live sound or studio microphone arsenal.

STRENGTHS: Extended low-frequency response, easy to position; solid construction.

WEAKNESSES: None, really.

PRICE: \$329

difficult to place and can be impossible to get inside of a drum with a small hole in the front head. Because the D4 is so compact, it's easy to insert. You can move it around without a problem, and its weight won't make a boom

stand sag.

I used the D4 on Bobby Rondinelli's kick drum for the first few shows. After moving the mic around a bit to find the sweet spot, the sound that the



D4 captured was brutal - exactly the way it should be for Bobby's sound. Bottom end was extended but very tight - without the sloppiness that some LF-type mics can produce. The D4 also had a nice attack, which cut through the mix consistently and (generally) with minimal EQ. Note, however, that the D4 is sensitive to placement. Our "spot" turned out to be way inside the shell, approximately 5 to 6 inches from the beater head and slightly to the left of center.

When we tried the D4 on a 14-inch floor tom, it ruled. The tonal decay of the drum was beautifully reproduced, but it still had enough smack to define the stick hit within a busy mix. Plus, the small size kept it out of Bobby's way (again, the sonic bottom was

round without being sloppy). On snare drum, the D4 was OK, but not meaty enough in the lower-midrange.

Next we used the D4 to mic bassist Danny Miranda's SVT rig. In this case, the mic captured all the growl from Danny's rig, but lacked the fat bottom we desired (we used his DI to round it out). This could have been due to placement, which was about a 1/2-inch from the cabinet grille, slightly off-center from one of the drivers. We could have pulled the mic further away from the cabinet in an effort to let the LF wavelengths develop a bit more, but then extraneous sound from the rest of the stage would have been way too loud. Under studio circumstances - where the mic could be backed off from the cabinet a little more - the D4 might have performed differently. As an experiment, we tried the D4 on Danny's vocals. This worked out really well - plenty of presence, good feedback rejection, and (interestingly) not a lot of proximity effect.

On Buck Dharma's guitar rig, we compared the D4 to a new Shure SM57 and they sounded a lot alike. The D4 produced a touch more air, but you'd have been hard-pressed to identify one from the other in an A / B comparison. This is contrary to our experience on the snare, because, on snare, the D4 sounded much brighter than a '57.

Overall, the D4 is a really smart choice for doing live sound because it can be used in so many applications. I could easily see miking an entire drum kit with D4's and getting a great sound. The D4 never encountered an SPL that it could not handle, and, believe me, Blue Oyster Cult's stage volume is no Debussy Nocturne.

The D4 mic is ruggedly built and even survived a 5-foot drop on the head without a scratch or dent in the grille. It's versatile enough that everyone should have at least one on hand - and it's affordable enough that everyone can do so.