

BLUE The Blueberry. Studio Condenser Mic

The Mix Magazine, February '99

Baltic Latvian Universal Electronics (BLUE) has always been an innovative company that does things differently. For example, its B7 Lollipop is a large-diaphragm capsule that attaches to the mic body of AKG's C 60/61/28/29/30/451/452 mics, offering an instant big sound for a small \$735 price. And BLUE's Bottle Mic provides state-of-the-art tube mic performance in a \$4,500 package based on the shape of Neumann classic CV3. Now BLUE has taken on the challenge of creating an affordable, solid-state mic based around its handbuilt capsules. Priced at \$1,295 — including velvet-lined wood box — The Blueberry is a cardioid design combining a large diaphragm, single-membrane capsule with discrete, Class-A electronics and a transformer output. But under The Blueberry's distinctly cool body shape, it's evident that this is no "budget" mic; the construction and workmanship are impeccable, and the parts used throughout are of the highest quality.

I tried The Blueberry on various instrumental and vocal sessions and must admit that I like this mic. My first session was four-string dulcimer, which I miked from about two feet away. The Blueberry neatly captured this instrument, with all the zing and complex overtones intact. Results on banjo and acoustic guitar were similar, with a nice balance between highs, lows and mids. Next, I recorded snare drum cadences to be used as background effects on a CD-ROM. The result was punchy and crisp and the mic handled high SPLs without problem. The same session revealed just how clean. The Blueberry's output is when I used it to record Foley-style effects — a quill pen scribbling notes on parchment. The mic's price may be low, but its performance is definitely high-end. Of course, the main application for a large-diaphragm mic is vocals. The optional shockmount/pop filter is a clever yet simple design that grips the mic securely in any position and provides excellent shock isolation. The mic's mesh grille offers ample protection from all but the breathiest vocalists, and I rarely needed the pop filter. Also, the mic's proximity effect is fairly minimal, except in VERY close quarters, so there's no worry about all your vocalists sounding like Barry White. If you're looking for a vocal mic with a huge bass bump and a presence boost, this is not the mic for you, but on both male and female vocalists, The Blueberry provided an unhyped sound that was quite natural, with an uncolored off-axis response.

Overall, The Blueberry is an excellent all-around studio mic whose natural reproduction, clean output and versatility make it a good choice either as a first large-diaphragm mic for the novice or as an addition to a well-stocked mic locker. Besides, who says all mics have to look alike?