

BLUE Kiwi Multipattern Mic

by Russ Long, *Pro Audio Review Magazine*, July 2001

BLUE has been in the business of quality microphone construction for more than 10 years. It is one of the few - if not the only - microphone company that manufactures in-house absolutely every part (right down to the screws) of its mics. From The Dragonfly to The Bottle, BLUE mics are sonically and visually pleasing. BLUE's latest release, The Kiwi (\$2,299 retail; \$1,999 street) is the company's top-of-the line, solid-state microphone.

Features

The Kiwi's frequency response is not extremely flat, nor is it supposed to be. The microphone's designers were apparently striving more for a specific quality of sound than an extremely accurately one. The result is a great and unique microphone. The Kiwi's slight low- and high-frequency boost creates a curve that works particularly well on lead instruments and vocals.

The BLUE Kiwi's electronics are Class A discrete and the mic features a transformerless output. The 900 gram microphone measures 60mm x 220mm and offers a frequency response of 20 Hz to 20 kHz. The pressure-gradient microphone has a sensitivity of 19mV/Pa at 1kHz into 1 k-ohm and has a 50 ohm output impedance.

The Kiwi's capsule is a multipattern variation of the BLUE B6 Bottle microphone capsule. This double-backplate capsule provides cardioid, figure eight and omni pickup patterns, as well as selections in between, providing the user with nine different pattern choices. The capsule is mounted to the amplifier by BLUE's mold-injected rubber stem, which helps isolate unwanted noise.

The Kiwi includes The Shock suspension mount and a padded wooden box. The Shock provides additional isolation and is constructed in the classic Neumann suspension-mount tradition. A large thumbscrew allows the angle of the mount to be easily adjusted. Gone are the days of tracking down a dime or a flat-head screwdriver to adjust a suspension mount.

Mic options include the BLUE Kiwi High Definition Quad Microphone Cable (\$54.95) and a mesh screen pop filter called The Pop (\$199.95). These accessories greatly improve the performance of the Kiwi (and look great as well). The Shock and The Pop also fit any vintage U 47/U 48 microphones.

In use

I put the Kiwi to work recording lead vocals on a Sixpence None the Richer track featured on the soon-to-be released Jeff Lynne tribute album. I was not disappointed. The mic required only a hint of EQ during tracking and none in the mix, and the end result was fabulous. I also had satisfying results using the Kiwi to record lead vocals on the new Waterdeep album. In both instances, the use of The Pop was vital to the final sound.

In most cases, the microphone worked better with female vocals than male, but there were some exceptions - softer, more breathy male vocals also shine with the Kiwi.

I also had good results using the microphone on electric and acoustic guitars. The sonic characteristics of the microphone worked exceptionally well capturing the sound of a nylon string acoustic. When recording electric guitars, the mic worked better with cleaner sounds rather than more distorted ones. The microphone also did an exceptional job of capturing tambourine, shaker, backing vocal and violin performances.

I was surprised with the performance of the Kiwi Microphone Cable. Traditionally, I am a bit of a skeptic when it comes to spending a ton of money on some high-tech, NASA Space Shuttle mic cable. In this case the cable did not make a huge difference, but it did make a noticeable one - the more tracks you record, the bigger the difference.

Summary

The BLUE Kiwi is an exceptional microphone from every point of view. It is quiet, sensitive, and it looks great. What better way to get a great vocal performance than by allowing the vocalist to sing into a fantastic looking mic?

The variable pickup patterns increase the microphone's flexibility, and the beautiful wood box will provide decades of protection for the Kiwi when not in use. The Kiwi is a sonic gem.