

The Blue Mouse

It's no lightweight contender

BY FLAWN WILLIAMS

First, discard any associations you have for the word “mouse”. The BLUE Mouse mike is no kin to the “mike mouse” windscreens. And it can't double as a mouse for your computer. Instead, it's a clever way to rig a large condenser mike diaphragm in a swivel yoke.

Swiveling the capsule allows the mike to be used as a side-address or end-address, or anywhere in between. This gives a lot of positioning flexibility. Tiny stubs prevent turning the capsule more than one rotation to protect the wiring from stress. And the front mesh has a higher gloss, so it's easy to know which side to speak into.

Although the capsule can pivot, the yoke is fixed to the cylindrical metal body. So, any rotation in other directions must be done by moving the mike body.

At the opposite end is an XLR output jack, plus a threaded hole for easy attachment to a boom arm or floor stand. This thread is great for quick setups, but for better isolation from structure-borne noise get the optional elastic shockmount. This cage needs to be strong to support the weight of the mike, which includes a hefty output transformer, so generic isolation mounts probably wouldn't be much help. The Mouse is also available in a transformerless model.

We installed the mike in Studio 4B, home of “Performance Today” and other NPR shows. Host Fred Child put the mike through its paces alongside that studio's “old faithful”, a Neumann U87 with aftermarket optimizations for announcer voice by microphone guru Klaus Heyne.

The results were impressive. The BLUE Mouse provided a tailored response similar to the modified U87. The Mouse had somewhat more low bass, and the frequency range of its presence lift was a bit higher than the Heyne.

Its output needed 6dB more gain for equal loudness, but its self noise was still inaudible after raising the gain. And lower output would be an advantage

range of his plosive blasts.

Twice Fred caught me by surprise, turning directly to the mike just as he let out a loud breathy laugh. But otherwise, the mike did fine with only its built-in pop protection. Good advice: get the stylish custom popscreen, or use a generic mesh pop stopper.

Typically we mike spoken voices at 6 to 8 inches, with the mike about thirty

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for many broadcast consoles, where preamp clipping is a greater concern than noise when close-miking. But the most important factor was: Fred sounded clear, warm, and assured.

Having aced that test, the Mouse took to the road with NPR for a taping with the Shanghai String Quartet in Richmond VA. Here the mike would capture Fred's hosting voice in front of a large studio audience.

The Mouse has an optional pop screen. But this wasn't included with the review mike. After our initial checks in Richmond, I opted not to add a generic mesh screen, and instead miked Fred from a bit off to the side, out of the

degrees off the axis of the mouth but with the mouth on the mike's axis. To see how the mike would fare in more typical “jock” use, I listened with the mike much closer.

The proximity effect of the mike behaved well when worked as close as three inches, with bass buildup becoming noticeable, but not overwhelming the tone of the voice. Worked closer than that, the mike sounded a bit tubby on male voice. For such close miking, some bass response tailoring may be needed to compensate for the proximity effect. No roll-off switch is provided on the mike, so use a mike processor or console EQ.

Overall, the BLUE Mouse is an excellent performer. It brings the sonic advantages of a large diaphragm cardioid condenser in a package that's much lower profile than many of its competitors. That's useful in studios where larger mikes block the announcers' line of sight. Its tailored response makes it useful for instrumental miking needs and great-sounding announcers. **BE**



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