

AUDIX

FP7

By George Petersen

To be entirely frank, I've never been a fan of prepackaged drum mics. While convenient, these usually take a one-size-fits-all approach, often with too many compromises over the à la carte style of selecting mics one at a time. That said, I've been a fan of Audix vocal and instrument mics and have been using its D4/D6/i5 drum mics for some time with great results. So when Audix announced the FP7, a mid-priced (\$479), seven-piece drum mic package, I was curious, especially considering it's about half the \$900 street cost of the company's high-end DP7 package.

The FP7 features a new series of Audix dynamic mics: an f6 for kick, an f5 for snare, three f2s for toms, and two small-diaphragm f9 condensers for overheads. It all comes in a foam-lined aluminum carry case, with stand clips for each and foam windscreens for the f9s.

All the mics have sturdy zinc bodies, with the dynamics featuring tough steel grills that withstood drum hits that would have destroyed other mics with plastic parts. The f9 condenser mics have cardioid pickup patterns, while the dynamics are hypercardioid, which helps achieve better isolation with less bleed between sources, while improving gain-before-feedback in live situations.

KICK INTO GEAR

Designed expressly for kick drums, the f6 has a huge scoop in the midrange, so it provides plenty of low end with a rising high end around 5kHz that captures the beater attack on each hit—without the midrange mush. The net effect is an aggressive kick sound that's reminiscent of a Shure Beta 56. Like its sibling Audix D6, there's little need to add EQ with the f6 on kick—it's plug-and-play, giving you exactly what you need in a hurry.

Intended for snare (but also suited for miking horns or guitar cabinets) the f5 has a stated 55Hz-to-15kHz response, but has a steep rolloff below 70Hz to keep LF rumble out. A 3kHz-to-8kHz boost adds plenty of snap. The mic's low-mass diaphragm keeps



The FP7 puts pro-level drum miking into a convenient package.

transients clean for a nice bite, and 137dB handling takes care of close placement for increasing punch without worrying about overload distortion. Speaking of placement, the rear lobe of the f5's hypercardioid pattern can pick up a fair amount of hi-hat, so a bit of experimentation is needed to make sure the mic's connector end doesn't point right at the underside of the hi-hat.

Like Audix D4 series, the three f2 tom mics have short 4-inch bodies that help in tight placements, making them equally at home for percussion miking, such as between a pair of congas. The f2 exhibits a fairly noticeable 3kHz peak, which adds attack to the toms (or conga slap) without adding boominess, for a natural sound whether on rack or floor toms.

KEEP YOUR OVERHEAD LOW

I was more ambivalent about the two f9 cardioid condenser mics in the kit. The f9s have a rolled-off bottom end (below 200Hz), so there's less need to reach for the equalization to remove that frequency range when used as drum overheads. The f9s also have a nice slight boost in the 8kHz range that adds shimmer and improves stick definition, especially when playing ride bell. Like the rest in the series, the f9s provide the sound you need fast, which is great for live. However, in the studio, where I typically have more choices and/or time, I found myself instead using

AKG 414s or Audio-Technica AT4041s for overheads. At the same time, a pair of these mics cost as much or more than the entire FP7 mic package, so the comparison is somewhat unfair. At the same time, I don't usually take my nice studio mics on the road, so in such situations, the f9s are a good, solid choice.

While using the FP7 set, I also had a chance to try Audix' optional Dvice drum mic mounts (\$24.95/each), which combine a clip-on snare/tom rim-mount clamp with a short gooseneck. In the studio or live, the Dvice mounts really simplify placement, letting you easily position the mics wherever you want them. As a bonus, you won't need to carry around additional mic stands to your gig. I like that.

My overall impression about these new Fusion series drums mics is overwhelmingly positive. The f6/f5/f2 dynamics offer 85 to 90 percent of the performance of Audix' high-end D4/D6/i5 drum mics at about half the cost. If you work mostly in the studio and have a nice pair condenser mics for overheads, you might want to consider the \$329 Fusion FP5 package, which is the same as the FP7 set, but without the f9 condensers. But either way, the Fusion mic packages are a great value (averaging less than \$70 per mic) and will go a long way toward improving your drum sound. **EM**

Overall rating (1 through 5): 4

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