

AUDIX

FP5 AND FP7
DRUM MIC PACKS

by Mark Parsons

Sometimes drum microphone packs are simply a group of existing products packaged with a case, which can be a cool way to get several decent mics at a good price. But other times the packs are rebranded inexpensive transducers that are typically decent for the money and will do until you can afford something better. I usually recommend that you find solid individual models that will give you the results you want for the long term and that you buy only as many as you can afford, adding more along the way.

Audix has totally redesigned its Fusion series drum microphones, which are available singly and in packs. These aren't bundles of existing top-line mics (which are also available in packs); they're entirely new models. They were designed by the same wizard who came up with the company's popular D6, i-5, and SCX25A, with component manufacturing handled overseas and assembly and testing done back here.

LOOKS FAMILIAR

Audix's revamped Fusion series consists of four basic models, available in a few different package configurations. The f6 (\$239) is a kick mic, the f2 (\$129) is for toms, and the f5 (\$129) is meant for snare. Each of these mics is roughly the same size and shape as Audix's successful D6, D2, and i-5 models (for kick, toms, and snare, respectively). The Fusion f6, f2, and f5 are dynamic mics with hypercardioid patterns (which provide good isolation). The mic bodies are cast zinc alloy with steel wire mesh for the grill caps. The finish is an attractive black coating, and the construction certainly seems rugged enough.

IN USE

We started our testing of the new Fusion series with the f6 kick mic. As it shares the same clip design as its older sibling, the D6, it was a simple matter to swap in the f6, since I already had a D6 positioned in my bass drum. Before we did that, we recorded a few bars of kick with the D6 as a reference. We then replaced the D6 with the f6 and did some more tracking.

During playback, first I heard the familiar full tone of the D6, and in the few seconds of silence between that and the f6, I thought, *Here comes the moment of truth.* The f6 ended up producing a very cool kick sound. It was still in the "pre-equalized, concert-ready" neighborhood of the D6, but it had a bit more midrange punch, and the fundamental resonance was at a slightly higher frequency. It still had beef on the bottom and plenty of beater attack on top, but it also had a little in-your-face attitude, in a good way. It was universal enough to work in just about any genre, but this mic would be most appropriate in more aggressive idioms such as hard rock, metal, punk, and indie rock. (By the way,



Audix also sent along its \$45 Stand-KD kick mic stand, which is a small but stable boom that proved to be perfect for positioning a heavy mic inside a kick drum without toppling.)

Off to a great start, we fired up the f2s on the toms. Again, we were rewarded with a punchy, full sound, which is nothing like the weird band-pass-limited sound you sometimes get with budget drum pack mics. Similar to the relationship between the f6 and the D6, the f2 was reminiscent of the D2 but was a tad leaner in the mid-bass, with a less noticeable 125 Hz boost, and had a hair more stick attack in the upper mids.

The f5 proved to be a very good all-around dynamic workhorse, similar to the company's pro-model i-5. The f5 did a great job of reproducing a snare drum, occupying sonic territory somewhere between that of the i-5 and the popular Shure SM57. (It was a little leaner than the i-5 and a little bigger and smoother than the SM57.)

The f9 small condenser is physically similar to Audix's SCX1, but it's designed more like the ADX51, being pre-polarized. I didn't have the SCX1 or ADX51 in the studio during the review period, so I compared the model with several other small condensers, including ones from Germany, Japan, and the U.S. The f9 was the least expensive of the bunch, yet it acquitted itself very well. It was more linear than I might have expected, exhibiting a broad, smooth response that was very pleasing, without any harsh dips or bumps in the response. It rolled off a little on the bottom below 100 Hz (as most small condensers do), but by no means would you call it thin. And it was very smooth throughout

the midrange (from 200 Hz up to 5 or 6 kHz), with a small peak above that.

The f9 definitely kept up with its more expensive competition, yielding a clear and faithful sound when used as an overhead and as a spot mic on the hi-hats. I'd characterize its sound as relatively transparent and realistic, without imparting a ton of character on its own. Those might not be exciting adjectives, but for a microphone that will inevitably be called on to reproduce a wide variety of instrumental sources, it's a very good thing indeed.

PACKAGE WRAP-UP

My feeling that these redesigned Fusion models would make killer rock mics, mainly due to the somewhat aggressive flavor of the dynamic versions, was confirmed when I learned that Audix beta-tested these rugged little guys on the stages of the Warped Tour last summer. If nothing else, Audix's revamped Fusion series makes a good case that the experience and creativity of the designer, along with the skill and care of the assembly personnel, are more important than the exact geographic location of where the individual components are manufactured. Without advance knowledge of the very low price of these mics, you'd be hard pressed to differentiate them, quality-wise, from some of the mainstays that have been used for years. So if you're looking to mike up your kit without spending too much cash, give the new Fusion mics an audition. And listen with your ears, not your wallet. You might be pleasantly surprised.

audixusa.com

FUSION PREPACKS

The FP5 package (\$559) consists of an f6, an f5, and three f2s. Add to that a pair of the very latest Fusion model, the f9 (\$189), which is a small-diaphragm pre-polarized cardioid condenser designed for overheads and hi-hats, and you get the FP7 package (\$749). Also available is the FP4 pack—an f6, an f5, and two f2s. The various Fusion mic packs come with an aluminum case that has cutouts for several mics and extra room for clips and cables.

