



Audix D6

BY MARTIN OSTROWSKI

Recently we have seen the major mic manufacturers introducing a number of complete miking systems comprising of a set of mics, each optimized for particular instruments. Audix pioneered the drum/percussion pack with the D series a few years back and the D6 is included in their latest collection, the DP Elite. Typically, the mics included with these systems have been divided according to polar response and the frequency range that they cover, and they have been designed to deliver a ready-to-mix sound.

The advantage of these systems is twofold. First, there's ease of use: rather than endlessly moving mics around and tweaking EQ to get the appropriate sound out of an all-purpose mic, application specific mics require little or no EQ. Second, following the "jack of few trades, master of one" principle, narrowing the applications for the mic lets the manufacturer optimize the mic for just a few instruments. This means in theory that the mic can be made to perform better on its intended instrument

than a general-purpose mic and can also lower the cost of the mic while maintaining performance. This is especially the case for kick and bass mics; diaphragms can be made differently than conventional dynamic mics, there by greatly extending low frequency response and lifespan. Audix uses their proprietary VLM (very low mass) diaphragm along with a high excursion

coil on the D6 to allow for more power handling. The VLM diaphragm is very quick, which allows it to capture snap as well as thump.

Overview

The Audix D6 dynamic mic is targeted at low frequency applications such as kick drum and bass guitar. It has high SPL handling capability and a contoured frequency response to emphasize the main frequencies of those instruments. Since the mic is built to handle loud sources, the maximum SPL is rather huge at 144dB without any need for a pad. This makes the mic suitable for close miking kick drums internally, which is typically one of the highest SPL miking situations. The D6 is reasonably sensitive for this type of mic at 2.2mV / Pascal.

The supplied frequency response plot shows a 6dB boost around 60Hz (bass/sub-bass), sloping down to a 6dB cut centered around 700Hz (hi-mids) and rising again to 6-8dB gain around 3-12kHz (presence/brilliance) before falling sharply after 12kHz (the "air" band). We are not talking about accuracy here; however, bass instruments often require extreme EQ during mixing if a flat response mic is used, which justifies the undulating response curve. In fact, the EQ curve is ideally suited for a kick drum, which often requires a big boost around 60-80Hz for that in-your-chest thump and also almost always needs a cut in the lower mid frequencies (200-500Hz) where excessive signal can lead to a

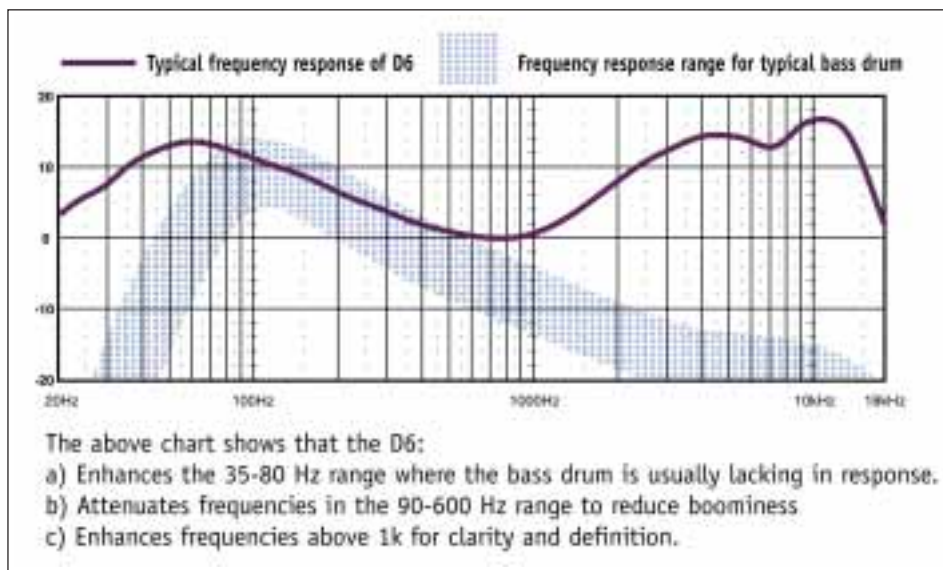
muddy sounding low end. The high frequency rise also emphasizes the beater click of a kick drum and string/pick noise from a bass guitar.

In Use

The frequency response of the D6 makes it perfect for kick drums and bass cabs, which is exactly how I used it during testing. This is not to say that it can't be used for other applications; it just wouldn't be an obvious first choice.

My first test was miking a small jazz kick in a country/folk context for which purpose I set the D6 about four inches from the beater head of the kick, perpendicular to the skin. The kick had the front head removed and was lightly damped with a blanket. For comparison I used another well-known kick mic in parallel in the same position.

Comparing the frequency responses supplied with each mic would have suggested a nearly identical sound; the frequency plots were very similar. However, frequency plots give only the most general insight into how a mic will actually sound in practice, so I was not surprised that the two mics sounded vastly different. The other mic picked up much more shell resonance and tended to sound less crisp than the D6, which produced an almost textbook modern rock kick sound—a tight low thump with subdued mids and a prominent click. In fact, this is how I'd summarize the D6 on kick drums: an ideal modern rock kick right out



of the box. I ended up alternating between both mics in the final mix; the punchier songs tended to benefit from the snappiness of the D6, while the mellower numbers were better complemented by the shell tone of the other mic.

The next test was electric bass. The player for this session used a Musicman Stingray active bass into a Trace Elliot 1x12" combo. The EQ was set for a much mellower sound than usual from this combination to blend better into the quieter songs. The cab was again miked in parallel using the D6 about three inches from the speaker cone in off-center position. For comparison the well-known and ubiquitous Sennheiser MD 421 was utilized in the same position on the other side of the speaker cone. The sounds were again rather different across the entire frequency spectrum of the instrument. The MD 421 exhibited a much flatter low-end response than the D6, which led me to reach for the EQ to boost lows and reduce some of the low-mids pro-

duced by the MD 421. On the other hand, I felt the string sound was much more clearly represented with the MD 421 and I had difficulty reproducing the string sound on the D6 with EQ. (This application is better suited to the more flat and accurate D4) I'd characterize the sound of the D6 as "modern" while the MD 421 produced a more "vintage" sound on the bass cab.

Conclusions

I'd have no hesitation in recommending the Audix D6 to anyone. It's a specialty mic that does what it's built for extremely well. The D6 delivers a crisp, modern sounding kick sound right out of the box and is also a useful mic to have in the locker for bass miking. While all the major manufacturers have specialty bass mics in their catalog, in my experience their sounds differ greatly. The Audix D6 sits squarely in the "modern" or "hi-fi" category. If you're shopping for a bass mic, definitely put this one on the audition list.



SOUND CHECK

Audix D6

Price: \$359

Key Features

- No EQ required
- Precision machined solid aluminum
- Made in U.S.A.
- Available in silver or black

Key Specs

- Frequency response: 30Hz – 15kHz
- Polar pattern: cardioid
- Sensitivity: 2.2mV @ 80Hz
- Maximum SPL: 144dB

Pros

The D6 provides an instant modern kick drum sound that is very smooth. It can handle high SPLs, is easy to place and is not placement-dependent.

Cons

The specific frequency response is not ideal for multiple applications.

Contact

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