

SOUNDCHECK TESTING 1...2...3...

AUDIOFILE

PRO AUDIO IN REVIEW

SHOCKING BLUES

Blue Microphones Dragonfly, Blueberry and Baby Bottle mics.

BY EMILE MENASCHÉ



Old-School Cool:
(from left)
Blueberry,
Dragonfly and
Baby Bottle

In the few years that they've been available in the United States, Blue Microphones' products have grabbed the ears of discerning musicians and producers alike. Combining old-world capsule design, solid construction and innovative features, Blue mics are designed to deliver top-drawer vintage-flavored sound. Although they don't come cheap, the Blues perform like comparable mics costing several times more, and they produce tone so classic sounding as to be priceless. They look pretty cool, too.

I tested three of Blue's large-diaphragm condenser mics: the Dragonfly, Blueberry and Baby Bottle. Each has a fixed cardioid pickup pattern, Class A circuitry and Blue's six-micron Mylar film diaphragm, which is sputtered with gold and aluminum. Yet, as I discovered when testing the mics (with a Trident preamp) on acoustic and electric guitar and male vocals, each offers its own distinctive tone and features.

Dragonfly

The Dragonfly is named for its unusual shape, but like the other mics in the Blue line, its unique construction is more than a fashion statement. For instance, the capsule is housed in a ball-shaped grille that can be rotated nearly 360 degrees. This feature made positioning the mic much easier; it was especially helpful when miking acoustic guitars, where a subtle shift in position can completely change the miked tone. The included shockmount is another cool design touch. It's so well integrated into the mic's design that at first I thought it was part of the mic.

The Dragonfly sparkled on acoustic guitar, capturing the instrument's attack and top-end detail without sounding harsh or losing

the heart of the midrange. Vocals sounded clear and upfront, especially at close range, where the mic produced full tones without being overly boomy in the low mids. On electric guitar, the Dragonfly had plenty of presence and a vintage flavor that reminded me of Clapton's Cream-era tone. I especially liked how I could sculpt the tone by rotating the capsule. Overall, the Dragonfly has the airy quality usually reserved for multithousand dollar mics.

Blueberry

Like the Dragonfly, the Blueberry has a specially designed shockmount, although it can be used without it. The test mic came with Blue's optional pop filter, which handily attaches to the shockmount.

The Blueberry excelled at capturing the nuances of acoustic guitar performance and delivered detailed sound that's rich with overtones. Vocals sounded fat and upfront, intimate and powerful—they practically grabbed the track and took over the mix. In this respect, the Blueberry is especially well suited to rock and pop, where the voice has to compete with numerous instruments and timbres. Used on electric guitar, the mic performed smoothly and responsively. Offering less sizzle than the Dragonfly while still transmitting plenty of presence, the Blueberry would be especially well suited to jazz, blues and rich chord styles.

Baby Bottle


The most affordable of the three Blue mics I tested, the Baby Bottle is the solid-state offspring of the Blue Bottle, a tube condenser

mic. It may not be the glamour puss of the trio, but it held its own and—it should be noted—outperformed competing mics that cost twice as much. The Baby Bottle has a spherical capsule that, unlike the Dragonfly's, does not rotate. The mic comes with a swivel mount; a shockmount and pop screen are optional accessories.

Although it employs circuitry similar to that of the Dragonfly and Blueberry, the Baby Bottle produces a very different sound, one that has less presence in the upper midrange. It was acceptable on acoustic guitar, but I liked it better on electric guitar and vocals. The electric sounded chunky, creamy and smooth—in fact, of the three mics tested, the Baby Bottle would probably be my

first choice for general amp miking. And while vocals through the Baby Bottle didn't have the Blueberry's sparkle or the Dragonfly's detail, they sounded solid and retained plenty of presence. Because the mic is so neutral, tracks recorded with the Baby Bottle should be easy to work with come mix time.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Blue mics sound great, are well made and boast the kind of clever design touches that make studio life easier. All three were incredibly quiet, delivered a nice robust signal and handled high sound-pressure levels without distortion, making them suitable for loud guitar amps and drums. If you've lusted after top-grade mics that were out of your price range, check out the Dragonfly, Blueberry and Baby Bottle. You'll be surprised at how little green you need to get the Blues. 

List Prices

Dragonfly, \$1,095.00; Blueberry, \$1,299.00; Baby Bottle, \$649.00

Manufacturer

Blue Microphones, 766 Lakefield Rd., Suite D, Westlake Village, CA 91361; (805) 370-1599; bluemic.com