

Studio Projects
C1, C3 and T3
Condenser Microphones

by **John Gatski**

In the last few years, professional, microphones manufactured from the Far East have proliferated by the score, showing up on our shores under a number of different monikers including Marshall, Audix and ADK.

The Studio Projects line, distributed by PMI in the U.S., now offers a number of Chinese-made, 1-inch diaphragm mic models for different budgets. The line includes the cardioid-only C1 (\$299), three-pattern C3 (\$499) and the three-pattern, tube T3 (\$799).

Features

The **C1, C3 and T3** all share the same **1-inch 6 micron** mylar capsule and same-size body, but the price dictates the features. First, the C1 is a basic, phantom cardioid with the full-size element. **Its only internal feature is a -10 dB pad, and 150Hz 6 db per octave hi-pass filter.** The mic does include a nice aluminum carrying case and shock-mount. The **C3** offers up the same capsule and mounting options with a three-pattern selector switch (cardioid, figure-eight, and omni), -10 dB pad and same high-pass filter.

The under-a-grand T3 is a three pattern tube mic with nine variations of the patterns controlled from the dedicated power supply. It comes with mount, power supply and all dedicated cables included.

The C1 is said to be ideal as a low-buck, full-size mic for close-miking guitar rigs, broadcast voice-over and general vocal work. The **C3's** pattern versatility is said to suit the mic for overhead placement for strings, choirs, pianos and drums, miking of acoustic instrument, as well as voice-over and general vocals.

The multi-pattern T3 is designed to impart tube warmth for vocals, acoustics and other close-mic duties. The mic is designed with a Chinese-made 6072 dual triode tube. The power supply provides the pattern switching and includes the mic-to-power supply cable.

In use

I have to admit that the Chinese-made microphones are getting better, with more consistency from model to model. In the past, I have tried similar models that did not sound the same, and had questionable build quality and reliability.

The Studio Projects line of Chinese-made microphones seems to be very consistent. I have listened to a number of the same models, and they have sounded similar to the sample tested here. If you have consistent quality, the low price makes them an attractive microphone choice.

I used all three microphones with their included, elastic-band shock-mounts. The mics were connected to either a Mackie 1402 VLZ Pro or my trusty Night Technologies PreQ3 microphone preamp. In each case, the connection to the preamp was made via an Alpha-Core solid silver mic cable. I recorded acoustic guitar and voice samples with each mic on an Alesis Masterlink at 24-bit, 88 kHz sampling. Playback was made through a Pass Labs X-150, Legacy Classic speakers and Westlake 8.75 monitors, all wired with Alpha-Core interconnects and speaker cable. I also listened, via Grado SR-325 headphones, to monitor the self-noise a little more closely.

First, the C1: When recording my Martin D-35, which has strong bass and crisp highs, I found the C1 to be a surprisingly accurate-for-the-money transducer. There was no harsh midrange or peaky low treble, but a slightly warm, shall I dare say, “Neumannesque” quality. Also, it did not have as much of a proximity effect as I would have predicted for recording the bassy Martin.

On voice, the C1 sounded quite nice with just a hint of bottom-end warmth and not that much breathiness. The mic sounded a little smoother and open using the Night Pro preamp than it did through the Mackie board, but the dedicated pre cost quite a bit more than the Mackie.

At \$299 retail, the sound to dollar ratio makes the C1 one heck of a bargain. The mount is not the best, but it serves the purpose. I should also note that my sample did not have a pad switch, but the newer versions do — at the same price.

I next tried the C3 — with its three-pattern capability. In cardioid mode, it sounded exactly like the C1 when recording the acoustic. But in the omni pattern I got a beautiful spacious sound that really captured the D-35. Sonically speaking, this one quickly became my favorite of the three. On voice, it, again, sounded similar to the C1 without any hyped edge.

I did have a bit of a mechanical problem with this particular C3; the polar pattern switch kept hanging up and slipping from the figure-eight back to the omni position. The switch cutout in the body was the problem. It did not align correctly with the switch, so I eventually unscrewed the housing and realigned it by twisting and holding the body tightly and retightening the screw.

Last, I tried the T3. Being a tube design, it sounded different from the others. Utilizing a 6072 Chinese-made dual-triode tube, the T3 was the darkest sounding of the Studio Projects trio. In fact, in omni or cardioid, I found it too dark for the Martin without higher placement up on the neck or moving further from the guitar. I eventually engaged the filter on the NightPro to roll off some of the bass tubbiness.

This mic works better as a vocal mic or on other instruments with higher treble content. With my vocal it definitely added fullness, and I liked the smooth mids and treble. The T3 has a more vintage flavor and requires placement that helps offset its strong bottom end.

Summary

The Studio Projects **C1, C3 and T3** are quality condensers that are bargains at their street prices. The C1 and C3 are best buys (with my ultimate winner being the C3) and the T3 is a vintage tone-tailored, three-pattern tube mic that gives a warm, full presentation. Other than the C3's switch alignment problem, I had no problem with any of the mics.

As with any audio product, especially microphones, go out and audition one before you buy.

For more information, contact PMI at 877-563-633, or visit the Web-site at www.pmiaudio.com.

*John Gatski is group publisher of **Pro Audio Review**, **Audiomedia** (U.S./U.K) and **Realisa Son** (France).*

Review Setup

NightPro PreQ 3 stereo microphone preamp; Mackie 1402 VLZ Pro mixer; Alpha-Core Goertz solid silver interconnects; Grado SR-325 headphones; Legacy high-current monitor preamp; Pass Labs X-150 FET stereo amplifier, Legacy Audio Classic II, Westlake 8.75 loudspeakers.