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REVIEW

Fluid Audio Axis

A versatile, new large-diaphragm condenser microphone that's easy on your wallet

REVIEWED BY CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

The Axis Condenser is the first in a new line of studio microphones from Fluid Audio. Featuring a high sensitivity, low noise floor and high SPL handling, this large-diaphragm cardioid condenser is designed for use on acoustic instruments, vocals and more. The Axis is offered at a very attractive price point.

Fluid Audio History

Speaker designer Kevin Zuccaro founded Fluid Audio in 2011. We have been covering Fluid Audio products since November 2016, when we looked at the inaugural coaxial FX8 studio monitors. In January 2020, we checked out its successor, the FX80. In addition to traditional and coaxial speaker designs, Fluid Audio has added headphones, audio interfaces and now microphones to its lineup.

On-Axis

The compact, lightweight Axis measures 7" x 2" with a stylish dark gray textured finish on a solid brass body. Inside it features discrete Class-A FET electronics with a transformer-coupled output with a low noise floor. The cardioid capsule features a gold-sputtered 34 mm diaphragm. There are no pads, filters or switches on the Axis.

The Axis ships in a solid, foam-lined road case with a number of handy accessories. These include a robust, open-front shock mount that is well made and quite visually striking compared to the standard off-the-shelf shock mounts. There is a vintage-style elastic-band pop filter for plosives, a hand-soldered Scale Technologies XLR cable with a 4-core twining cable, and a zipper pouch.

Specs

The Axis offers a 20Hz–20kHz frequency response with a 136dB max SPL, a 12.4mV/Pa sensitivity, a 16dB equivalent noise level and a 77dB signal-to-noise ratio.

Tonally the Axis has a 2dB boost centered on 30Hz. It is neutral from 40Hz to 500Hz with a flat 2dB shelf-style boost from 275Hz to 2kHz. There is a 6dB peak from 10–18kHz followed by a sharp roll-off.

Balanced Sound and Sheen

Sonically the Axis is a nice balance of accurate and clean while exhibiting a noticeable upper mid-forward coloration. This is coupled with an airy top-end sheen that sounds especially good on vocals. When you are right up on the microphone, a slight proximity effect balances well with the top end, offering a clean, full, smooth sound.

Use

I love the detail and depth typically found in a quality large-diaphragm condenser microphone. On vocals, guitar amps, acoustic guitar, shaker and congas, the Axis is no exception.

I was fortunate enough to have a session where the artist let me do a test run with the Axis mic alongside a familiar studio staple. The Axis captured her vocals cleanly, with slight coloration, good body and an airy top end. We both determined that this microphone totally held its own against my usual and much more expensive condenser mic.

This led to my excitement to record acoustic guitar next. I typically bump the high frequencies a bit to accentuate the crispness of the acoustic guitar, However, thanks to the +6dB presence boost, I didn't need to. This, coupled with the mic's slight upper-mid boost, gave the acoustic a balanced presence and body as well.

The above attributes and the gentle low-end bump make the Axis a great percussion mic, and congas and shakers sounded full and thumping. Based on that, in my opinion, a stereo pair of Axis microphones would be a good choice for clean, crisp overhead capture. I would not hesitate to try a couple as a spaced pair for room miking, choir or piano.

Wrap-Up

The Fluid Audio Axis is one of those well-rounded microphones that is THIS versatile and sounds THIS good! I continually had to wrap my head around its performance versus its cost. Technology truly is advancing at an uncanny rate. The Axis is a great tool to have in your arsenal of microphones. If you are doing any acoustic recording or vocal tracks, try this mic out.

Christopher Wright is a freelance audio engineer and musician living in Boulder, CO. You can reach him at Coupe Studios or workitbirdstudios.com

Frequency Range	20Hz-20kHz
Sensitivity	12.4mV/Pa
Rated Impedance	100Ω
Rated Load Impedance	1000Ω
Equivalent Noise	16dB A-weighted
Max Acoustic SPL	136dB SPL
Signal-To-Noise Ratio	77 dB
Maximum Output	+11 dBu

Price: $249
More from: fluidaudio.com

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