

CAD Audio Stage 4 Drum Mic Pack

Here is a wallet-friendly solution for players starting to record themselves at home

Words: Mark Whitlam

Let's get this out the way from the get-go: a set of drum mics costing around the same price as one industry standard bass drum mic is not going to be appealing to drummers and engineers expecting audiophile results. What CAD have presented, however, is a highly inexpensive solution for the budget-conscious player who may be starting to record themselves at home or in live situations (let's be optimistic) when pub and local club gigs come back on the radar.

Similarly, this set may be a neat solution for schools who are looking to mic up their drumset in lessons. This particular set is intended for a one-up, one-down tom configuration with a dedicated snare and bass drum mic. CAD also make a Stage 7 set that includes a pair of overheads and a third tom mic, should you need an all-in-one solution.

Ain't no Mounting High Enough

Each mic is fairly lightweight due to the plastic housing yet feels pretty ruggedly put together, with a simple mounting system for the snare and tom mics. The physical size of the grille is rather large compared to something like the stalwart SM57, which could make positioning (of the snare mic in particular) something of a challenge, given the limited real estate around a set of drums.

The clip mounts directly to the rim of the

tom by means of a simple screw-clamp design. Clearly, the more direct contact you have with the drum, the more undesirable vibrations are going to get transmitted to the housing of the mic, which can colour the primary sound source of the drumhead – not least low-end rumble – but more on this later.

Positioning can be tailored, to some degree, by the two pivot points. The mid-section 'arm' has a cut-out allowing for around an inch of linear extension in either height, forward-backward positioning or an angle in between, depending on how you use it. This gives a fairly decent range of locations from which to choose, but falls a bit short for the greater variety of snare drum mic positions one may want.

The limitation here is two-fold: firstly, how far back towards the edge of the rim you can place it, and secondly, in terms of height. The combined height of the clamp and vertical mount is around 5cm, so anyone wanting a low and more horizontal position – looking across the head, rather

than angled down towards it – is going to be disappointed.

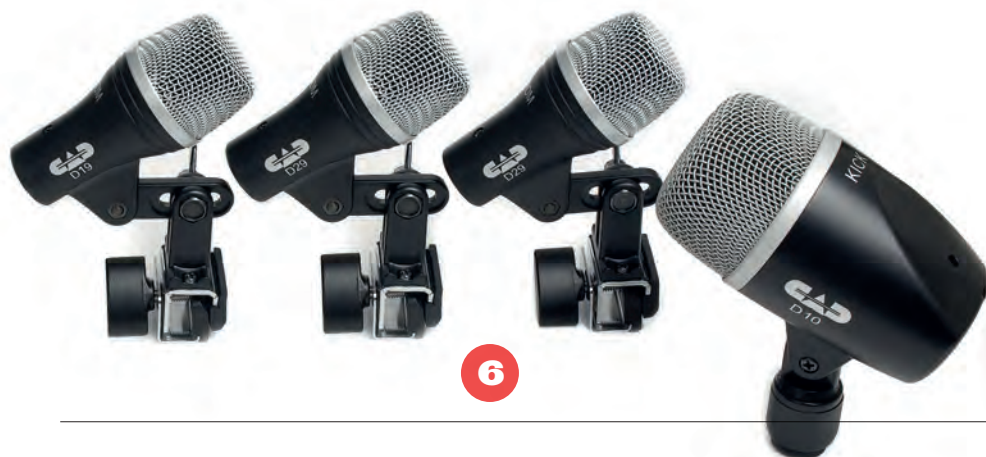
What's the Frequency, Kenneth?

As mentioned earlier, these mics come pre-EQ'd. The tom and snare mics have a low-frequency roll-off from around 150Hz to try and combat any unwanted vibrations resulting from direct-to-drum mounting. This could be something of an issue if you prefer to get some real lows out of your floor tom, so judicious EQ-ing on your desk or in your DAW is likely to be required if that is what you want.

We are informed that the D10 bass drum mic has been designed to enhance "the 'thump', 'crack' and 'click' while reducing 'boxiness'," pointing to an EQ profile benefitting the characteristics we desire in a standard rock/pop bass drum tone.

This claim is something of a surprise looking at the frequency response graph. For example, the go-to frequency we boost to some degree is around 60Hz, where the meatiness of our low end is

"THE SNARE MIC IS PROBABLY THE STAR PLAYER IN THIS SET, WITH A FAIRLY OPEN TOP END, THANKS TO THE PRE-EQ'D 4-10KHZ BOOST."




found. In contrast, the D10 has a significant (10dB) boost around 100Hz (which can be a real danger zone for some kicks) and a steep cut so that the 60Hz sweet spot is actually flat.

There are a number of erratic boosts in the higher frequencies, which we associated with the attack of the beater required for pop, rock and metal genres. In practice, this translates as expected. The bass drum mic does provide some low end, but it veers towards a more guttural result than a beefy punch in the sternum. Clearly, this can be tailored somewhat



using EQ on your mixing desk or DAW. It does, however, provide some clarity as the beater strikes the head.

All mics are cardioid pickup patterns, except the snare mic where they have opted for a supercardioid design – the rationale here being it has a narrow pickup angle in an attempt to reduce hi-hat bleed. Both snare and tom mics produce a fairly present stick attack, but any extra meat you may want will have to come from EQ-ing them.

The snare mic is probably the star player in this set, which has a fairly open top end, thanks to pre-voiced boost in the 4-10kHz region. 

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1. Clip-on Design

Simply attach to your rim and you're away. Only the bass drum mic needs an external stand.

2. Specific Snare Mic

The side-rejection of this mic is greater to avoid hi-hat bleed due to the supercardioid pick-up pattern.

3. Ready EQ'd for the Bass Drum

Frequency boosts and cuts have been pre-loaded into this mic, which are claimed to tailor it to the bass drum.

4. In your Grille

The family large grille headpiece could make snare positioning tricky.

5. Getting a New Angle on Things

The variable arm length along with two hinged points allows for a decent range of positioning.

6. Box Set

The four mics fit snugly in foam-padded cut-outs inside this lunchbox-sized hard plastic case.

Verdict

A decent starter set for budget-conscious drummers looking to record themselves at home or in live situations.

**Rhythm
Rating**

6/10