

## Beyond The Instrument

Live tryouts of the new A-T PRO 63 Microphone

By Chris Kathman

**W**hen I was asked to check out the new Audio-Technica PRO 63 instrument microphone, I decided to take a pair of PRO 63s on a couple of festival dates for the band Cake. Later, I talked to Don Tartaro, production manager at the Avalon club in Hollywood, to see if he'd also be interested in having some of his guys use these mics and provide their input. Don said no problem.

Bobby Mack, who handles monitors for Cake, checked out the specs on the PRO 63 prior to giving it a try, and he told me it looked like what he prefers for a snare mic. But the first night, at Merriweather Post Pavilion in Maryland, I put them on the two guitar amps that belong to the lead guitarist and the lead singer (the latter feeding an

acoustic guitar through his amp).

I had no problem with the mics and felt they were comparable to a (Shure) SM57 or (Sennheiser) 609. Any feedback experienced at soundcheck on the acoustic guitar was the fault of the instrument, which is very resonant and has a prehistoric pickup.

We then flew to Aspen and got some rest before our show there the next day. It was actually in Snowmass, and was called Jazz Aspen, I'm not sure why, since it featured Cake, Robert Randolph and the Family Band, Shelby Lynne, the subdudes, and Lucinda Williams.

I decided to put the PRO 63s on snare and trumpet. It worked fine on snare, but I was really surprised at how rich and brilliant the trumpet sounded. The next morning, I was standing in front of our hotel talking to Bobby about his impressions of the mics when trumpeter Vince DiFiore walked by and heard us.

He remarked that, "I really liked that mic yesterday, too!" Vince methodically works the trumpet in and out of the pickup pattern of whatever mic he is using, and senses where it sounds best. Bobby added that the metal structure surrounding the element of the PRO 63 makes it ideal for use as a snare mic in a club, where it's going to get bashed.



C.K. and his new PRO 63 friends.



The mics proved adept for vocals with Kenni Ski, as well as on snare and other instrument applications. (Photos by Chris Kathman.)



Once I got back to Los Angeles, I dropped off the mics at the Avalon. A few weeks later, both Don and James "Hatter" Hatz commented that the PRO 63 reminded them of the (Shure) Beta 57a. That got me thinking. The Beta 57a is an excellent vocal mic, though not too many people (aside from Oasis) know this.

What about trying the PRO 63 on vocals? I'd just been hired at the Vault 350 club in Long Beach, through my friend Byron McNeish, and I asked him if it was O.K. to bring the mics down, and he replied no problem. I was mixing an evening show for the City of Long Beach business community and decided to sneak one in as a vocal mic.

I set the PRO 63s on the monitor board before the show and a stagehand noticed them. "Wow, this is a nice mic," he said, picking one up, "what does it cost, about \$500?" I busted out laughing and assured him that

it cost much less. (A-T's suggested retail price is \$79.)

The band that night, Lift Ticket, featured some pretty heavy hitters, such as bassist Carmine Rojas and keyboardist Phil Parlapiano. I put up the PRO 63 for lead vocalist Kenni Ski, and it didn't just sound okay, it sounded superb. Production manager Dan Devries got a rough mix going in the house, while I dialed up the monitor mixes before camping out at FOH for the rest of the night.

After, while we were breaking down, I mentioned to Dan how much I liked the mic on the vocal, and he said, "Yeah, it had an edge to it, it almost sounded kind of condenser-y." That is exactly what I'd been thinking when the band was playing, with that elusive "air" that studio wankers are always yapping about.

So, I don't mean to cause any conflict with A-T's description of the PRO 63 as an instrument mic, but just between you and me and the lamp-post, anybody that needs to add to their inventory of reasonably-priced mics can use it for both vocals and instruments.

Obviously, I don't know how it will hold up over extended use, but it seems solid and well made, as my stagehand friend noticed. Good job, AT! ■

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### PRO 63: Just The Facts

*Element:* Dynamic, neodymium magnet  
*Polar Pattern:* Cardioid  
*Impedance:* 300 ohms  
*Frequency Response:* 70 Hz to 16 kHz  
*Open Circuit Sensitivity:* -55 dB (1.7 mV) re 1V at 1 Pa  
*Weight:* 10.09 ounces  
*And:* Two-stage ball-type headcase provides added "pop" protection; gold-plated XLRM-type connector



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