



Tape Op

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[MICROPHONES [/ REVIEWS / CATEGORY / MICROPHONES]

Bock Audio (<http://www.bockaudiodesigns.com>): 195 large-diaphragm condenser mic

REVIEWED BY THOM MONAHAN [/ REVIEWS / BY / THOM-MONAHAN]

ISSUE #84

[p://tape](#)BROWSE
ISSUE

JUL/AUG 2011



Bock Audio

So many microphones... I once had a friend tell me, “Every mic, no matter what kind or what condition, will be better than every other mic on at least one thing. Your job is to figure out and to know what that one thing is.” Sage wisdom. A large part of our daily work comes down to a simple choice. “What do I put on this sound source?” We stress and experiment, try different approaches, specific placements, put mics where they’re not supposed to go, listen and do it all over again. Some things sound great. Other times there’s a lot of “meh” going on. When a microphone just constantly sounds good everywhere, no matter where you stick it; handles anything put in front of it with ease; and constantly provides great results, so that you just wind up moving on to the next part of your work — believe me, you take notice.

The Bock 195 is a large-diaphragm cardioid-only FET mic that distinguishes itself at first listen with a clear, focused sound that is impressively full but not boomy. Swapping it into position as an ambient guitar amp mic on the day it arrived, I literally said “finally...” with a sense of relief when I heard the 195 come up. And I had already been pleased with the mic I was using at the time! The 195 just brought a sense of presence and depth to the guitar without suffering from any hyped top end. This would happen over and over again with the 195, anywhere I used it from kick drum to acoustic stringed instruments, piano, percussion, and vocals. It just delivered. It’s a wonderfully musical microphone, with an easily tailored low end that makes this an easy choice on any kind of bass source, but the 195’s top end is so lovely sounding that it would be a mistake to just think of it as a bass mic.

The 195’s build is solidly impressive; one of the first things that you notice when you first pick it up is how heavy it is — not overly so — but you immediately get the sensation that there’s more going on under the hood here than you might have originally thought. Not surprising as more than half of the body cavity is taken up by Bock’s proprietary transformer. On the back, you find three recessed switches that are definitely going to take a very small screwdriver or a paperclip to flip. The plus side is that you’ll never have to worry that they might get switched accidentally. There’s a 10 dB pad, a low-cut filter that cleans up the signal down at 20 Hz, and a Fat/Norm switch that changes the overall curve of the mic. The Fat setting

increases bass response and sounds fantastic on bass cab and kick drum. It would be easy to just leave this on most of the time.

In day-to-day use, one of the most appealing characteristics of the 195 is just how pleasant and downright useful the mic sounded off-axis. The best EQ is always at the mic, and with most cardioid microphones, I find I'm always only thinking of the very front — straight ahead and not much else. With the Bock, it was easy to tweak the response of the mic by just rotating the mic in position. More often than not with other microphones, this reveals resonances and unpleasantries that will bring you back to the straight and narrow quickly. The Bock's off-axis response is really lovely, yielding a whole other set of tonality that makes the 195 probably my favorite ambient mic that I've ever used. On a session at Water Music in Hoboken with Vetiver, the 195 was amazing as a distance mic on pedal steel, and I was able to just turn the mic until I got the top-end response that I wanted. On a record with singer/songwriter Neal Casal, the 195 became part of every guitar overdub, occasionally taking the place of the tighter amp placement completely during mix. With percussion, the 195 positively killed, handling tambourine hits with ease. According to Bock, the mic's internal gain structure is set to leave as much headroom as possible to avoid distortion, and I found the 195 handled transients with ease.

I don't really subscribe to the idea of just using one mic on everything during the overdub phase — I really mix things up a lot — but the 195 has made me reconsider that position. I think it's an amazing value for the money, and if you're only going to get one mic, I'd handily suggest the 195. It's unfussy, stupidly easy to use, and is up to just about any task. I think it's awesome. (\$1080 street; www.bockaudiodesigns.com)



***Tape Op* is a bi-monthly magazine devoted to the art of record making.**

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PRO 37 Small-Diaphragm Condenser Mic (/Reviews/Gear/47/Pro-37-Small-Diaphragm-Condenser-Mic/)

BY PETE WEISS (/REVIEWS/BY/PETE-WEISS)

At last year's TapeOpCon, I found myself loitering at the Audio-Technica table, chewing the fat with affable A-T Marketing Director Gary Boss. I was completely bewildered by the huge number of...

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C 1000 S Microphone (/Reviews/Gear/35/C-1000-S-Microphone/)

BY ANDY HONG (/REVIEWS/BY/ANDY-HONG)

With fellow engineer Scott Craggs giving away all his secrets in the MXR review, I figured I should come clean and give away one of my recording secrets too. My all-time favorite guitar amp microphone...

LDCS (/REVIEWS/CATEGORY/LDCS), MICROPHONES
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ID-One Condenser Microphone (/Reviews/Gear/26/Id-One-Condenser-Microphone/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE), EZRA MEREDETH (/REVIEWS/BY/EZRA-MEREDETH)

Okay, you might have thought large-diaphragm condenser mics were getting cheap - but now PPA blows everything out of the water with the \$99.95 ID-One. Of course it's another one of those inexpensive...

MICROPHONES (/REVIEWS/CATEGORY/MICROPHONES) | NO. 48
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Rubicon 6a Active Ribbon Monitors (/Reviews/Gear/48/Rubicon-6a-Active-Ribbon-Monitors/)

BY KYLE BITTINGER (/REVIEWS/BY/KYLE-BITTINGER), BRYAN CORD (/REVIEWS/BY/BRYAN-CORD), RAMSEY TANTAWI (/REVIEWS/BY/RAMSEY-TANTAWI)

We've been big fans of ribbon tweeters for a long time here at WMBR Radio, especially after having reviewed the ADAM P11A's in Tape Op #33. So when we received a pair of Samson Rubicon 6a's for...

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AT3060 Tube Microphone (/Reviews/Gear/37/At3060-Tube-Microphone/)

BY SCOTT CRAGGS (/REVIEWS/BY/SCOTT-CRAGGS)

The AT3060 is a large diaphragm tube mic that runs on 48V phantom; there's no external power supply. There's also no frills: it's cardioid only, there's no low cut, no pad, no nothing. Just mic. It...

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DK25/R Drum Kit System, DK25/L Drum Kit System (/Reviews/Gear/49/Dk25r-Drum-Kit-System/)

BY ANDY HONG (/REVIEWS/BY/ANDY-HONG)

I've been a believer in Earthworks microphones ever since I got my first pair of TC30K omni condensers. Since then, I've added a bunch of Earthworks SR69 and SR68 cardioid condensers to my cabinet...

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MK 219 (/Reviews/Gear/24/Mk-219/)

BY MARTIN CHITTUM (/REVIEWS/BY/MARTIN-CHITTUM)

Russian microphone manufacturer Oktava has been around since the 1950s. The MK 219 (a.k.a. MC 219) has been one of their most known and respected models for quite some time now, and is considered a...

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Ela M 14 (/Reviews/Gear/44/Ela-M-14/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

Telefunken NA has been reissuing the classic line of Telefunken mics, like the Ela M 251 and U 47M, for the last few years (see our review of the 251 in issue #34). This mic, the Ela M 14, is the...

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I-5 Dynamic Instrument Mic (/Reviews/Gear/44/I-5-Dynamic-Instrument-Mic/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

The i-5 is Audix's attempt to offer a mic as versatile and rugged as the ubiquitous Shure SM57. Given the number of 57's out there and the amount of use they receive, that's a tall order indeed. The...

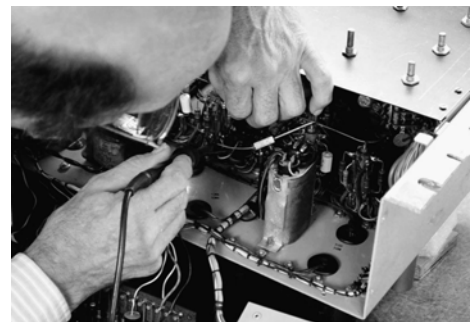
BEHIND THE GEAR

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Restoring The "Holy Grail Of Compressors": Behind The Scenes At The Vintage King Tech Shop (/Interviews/Bonus/Vintage-King-Restoration-Series-Part-1-Outboard/)

BY

Vintage King co-founder Michael Nehra shares some of his love, knowledge, and practical advice for diving into the world of vintage audio gear, and then takes us behind the scenes for a walk through...



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Jim Williams: Behind The Gear With Audio Upgrades (/Interviews/Btg/90/Jim-Williams/)

BY MIKE JASPER [/ARTICLES/BY/MIKE-JASPER]

Jim Williams has spent much of his 56 years working with some of the biggest names in the music business, including Frank Zappa, John McLaughlin and Stevie Wonder. He's the owner of Audio Upgrades,...

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From WWII Planes To Stax Consoles: Behind The Gear With Bill Cheney & The History Of Spectra Sonics (/Interviews/Btg/102/Bill-Cheney/)

BY JOHN BACCIGALUPPI [/ARTICLES/BY/JOHN-BACCIGALUPPI], LARRY CRANE
[/ARTICLES/BY/LARRY-CRANE]

Bill Cheney and Jim Romney are the men responsible for keeping the amazing legacy of Spectra Sonics, a legendary, if criminally unheralded, pro-audio company alive.



BEHIND THE GEAR [/COLLECTIONS/BEHIND-THE-GEAR/]

Rich Williams: Behind The Gear With Burl Audio (/Interviews/Btg/105/Rich-Williams/)

BY LARRY CRANE [/ARTICLES/BY/LARRY-CRANE]

Burl Audio, under the direction of owner/designer Rich Williams, has developed some of the best new recording equipment over the last eight years. Their mic preamps, summing amps, and control room...



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