



FIVE ALIVE

Can these RED5 drum mics make Chris Underwood's band even LOUDER?

Words: Chris Underwood



RED5 AUDIO DRUM MICROPHONES

WHAT ARE THEY?
They're a flight-case full of microphones from Scottish audio specialists Red5 designed to make your drum kit sound even better and even louder than it already does.

WHY SHOULD I WANT THEM?
Anyone who has ever played with a mic'd up kit will know just how much better one can sound than an acoustic kit. With these mics, you can have that sound even in rehearsal.

SRP:
RVK5 - £145
RVK7 - £199
RVK7+ - £295
RVK7 DELUXE - £377

UK DISTRIBUTOR: RED 5
01475 725800
WWW.RED5AUDIO.COM



ROADTEST!
"Listening back to the kit through a pair of headphones, it sounded enormous..."

I'm not sure our drummer really needs miking up, for the simple reason that when he hits those drums in our rehearsal studio in West London, lizards basking on rocks in the Mediterranean look up with an alarmed expression.

The point with drum mics in a live situation, however, is not necessarily to make the drums louder but rather to give them a tonal quality that they simply don't have acoustically. For example, when you put a snare drum through a desk you can gate it, compress it, take frequencies out, boost other frequencies and add a little reverb or delay to the whole sound to give the drum a totally new timbre. That said, I made damned sure I brought my ear defenders along with me for this *Roadtest*.

For the most part our drummer guinea pig (not a real guinea pig obviously, although that would be amazing) plays a typically configured kit. He has loops and triggers and samples and funny looking rubber disks that he occasionally gives a good pummeling but generally speaking it's two rack toms, a floor tom, a snare, a kick drum, hi-hats and a weird and wonderful range of cymbals.

The kick drum was a little tricky to mic up as the review mics we received didn't come with a tripod.

Luckily, you can order a tripod to go with this set-up for another 12 quid – we advise that you do.

The toms and the snare were a doddle, however, as they simply clamped to the rim of each drum. We put the overhead mics into a simple stereo configuration, with one mic pointing down onto the left-hand-side cymbals and the other mic pointing at the cymbals on the other side. I have to confess I kind of left this up to our drummer as he seemed to know what he was doing. The configuration worked too – listening back to the whole kit through a pair of headphones out of the desk, it sounded enormous.

When it came to getting a really dynamic drum sound we used a lot of kick drum with really tight compression, the overheads Eq'd so as to deliver mostly cymbals and a really bright gated snare sound.

Everything sounded great without a hint of distortion and plenty of separation between the individual mics. We tried recording a couple of drum tracks with the mics and found that they made the whole kit sound really bright without being trashy. There are more than enough mics here to get a really exceptional sound out of a conventional drum kit. Even better – with mics like these, your drum kit will also sound incredibly loud. **PM**

of these in front of your drum kit and with a little intelligent mixing you'll get a drum sound coming out of the PA that'll punch your audience in the gut like a rock and roll medicine ball.

That's the big guns then. The artillery, however are the four RVD3 microphones designed specifically for your snare and toms. These are small, inconspicuous dynamic microphones, capable of dealing with very high SPLs and with a tight cardioid polar response pattern, ensuring almost total rejection of unwanted noise. The really smart thing about these mics is actually to do with those clamps that come as part of the package. Rather than miking up the kit so that it looks like some kind of metallic alien tree, with stands jostling for space all

designed to be used as 'overheads'. In other words, placed carefully above the kit, their role is to pick up the cymbals and overall sound of the kit. They're small diaphragm Electret condenser mics running off either phantom power or a single AA battery. With a smooth flat frequency response and a cardioid polar pattern, they should be comfortably capable of picking up the intricate timbres of those big bronze-coloured disks that are such a crucial part of the sound of a drum kit. They also have a high SPL (136dB) so would be equally well suited above a snare.

It's worth mentioning, in fact, that despite this kit being marketed towards drummers, all of these microphones would work equally well with other applications.

over the place, these microphones simply clamp onto the rim of the drum. Not only does this help prevent unnecessary clutter but it also means you can flail your arms about as wildly as you like without any fear of whacking a mic stand instead of a drum skin.

So now you have a pumping kick drum sound and the snare and toms are all mic'd up, we come to the icing on the cake. The last two mics out of the case are a spankily gorgeous pair of RV4 condensers. These microphones are

The kick drum mic would make a great microphone for a bass cab, while the dynamic mics would do a great job in front of a guitar amp. The condenser mics could be used with acoustic guitars or even for high quality vocals in a studio. In fact if you bought two of these cases, and at this kind of reasonable price there's no reason why you shouldn't, you could mic up the entire band. You'd also have two CIA-style attache cases then and could do a great 'Men in Black' impression. **PM**

The first really smart thing that strikes you about these microphones is the case they arrive in. It's a beautifully constructed professional metal riveted flightcase and to be quite honest it makes you look as if you're planning a Presidential assassination rather than a bit of close miking. You could have an awful lot of fun trying to get it on-board a transatlantic flight.

Inside, the case is foam-lined, with all the microphones and accessories neatly arranged in their own compartments. Even at first

term... yet) windshields – handy for outdoor gigs. The exact content of the case is as follows: one kick drum mic, four dynamic mics and two condenser mics. Then there's the accessories, which comprise four clamps, two pop-shields, two stand adaptors and most importantly, the keys for the case (yep, it's got proper lockable latches too). That's easily enough gear to get a superb drum sound coming out of any half-decent PA set-up. By the way, all of the microphones use gold plated

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glance the whole presentation looks incredibly professional. Start getting the microphones out of their CIA-style attache case, however, and you find that your first impressions were bang on the money.

Each of these microphones is precision engineered from solid zinc die-cast metal and hence has a reassuring weightiness about it. The grilles are made from virtually indestructible (and we're talking drummers here) steel mesh. While the capsule inside is protected further by a foam baffle behind the grille. Incidentally, the condenser mics also come with separate muppet-nose (not a real technical

connectors, which are less prone to oxidation and hence last longer than nickle ones. So let's look at each of these components in turn and see why they're included. For starters, the RVD1 kick drum mic is self-explanatory. It's a great looking microphone with a screw stand incorporated into its design. Seeing as its job is to sit right in front of your kick drum, it's designed to withstand very high sound pressure levels (SPLs) and deliver an uncoloured and precise low-end response. In other words, shove one