



REVIEW

BY PAUL VNUK JR.

Primacoustic IsoTools

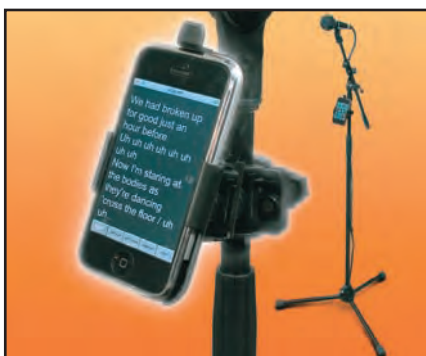
New studio gadgets improve your sound... and rescue your iPhone?



While primarily known for room treatment solutions, Canada's Primacoustic also offers a line of products known as IsoTools. Each of these items is designed to aid in solving common studio and stage problems with isolation, improving your miked sounds. The first IsoTools product we reviewed was the Recoil Stabilizer speaker isolation pads (March 2008), and now we have five new IsoTools products to check out, any of which would make an awesome gift.

VoxGuard

First up we have the VoxGuard, which is the latest player in the portable vocal booth trend. This version is a lightweight 15" x 18" curved piece of rippled foam affixed to a layer of durable ABS plastic. It features a simple mounting hole that attaches like a washer to your mic stand threads just



below your mic mount. While much of the competition may be seen as having a more robust build, most of them are heavy and they feature complicated mounting systems. The VoxGuard is the opposite. It is very portable, easy to attach, and is lightweight enough to be attached upside down with a hanging vocal mic.

Functionally, it surrounds the back and sides of your microphone and aids in masking room reflections and outside leakage. It works well even in treated rooms to add focus and a touch of weight to vocal tracking, spoken word recording, and even as a low-profile gobo for instrument tracking. My favorite use was for podcasting and voiceovers, which I do in a run-of-the-mill noisy office, and it did its job well, helping to take the focus away from the persistent background CPU and ventilation noise.



CrashGuard

Next up and similar in style is the smaller (7 x 3.75 x 2 inches) rectangular CrashGuard. The CrashGuard's function is twofold. First it lessens leakage and crosstalk between drums and cymbals, snare and hi-hat bleed for example, and secondly it protects your microphones from errant drumstick hits.

While they do not get rid of bleed altogether, they do well to lessen it and add increased separation to your drum recordings. Be aware that they are great for use with SM57-style end-address microphones and traditional mic stands, but do not work well with larger mics like the MD421, or with many of the clip-on drum mic mounts from Audix, Sennheiser, Claw and such. [Primacoustic reports that new models for these types of mics are on the way. —Ed.]



TriPads and KickStand

Next we move to the TriPad mic stand isolators. Each set contains three circular foam footies that fit snugly onto the legs of most average tripod style mic stands. A simple decoupling device, they help control and lessen stray resonances caused by footsteps, automotive rumble, and even fidgety performers, that can and do travel through mic stands (especially cheap ones) in to the microphone and ultimately, your recording. An added bonus is that they can help keep the mic stands from sliding out of place on hardwood floors.

The KickStand is similar in construction to the Recoil Stabilizer speaker pads, the KickPad is a 9.5" x 7.25" laser-cut metal plate, mounted onto a 1.5" piece of dense acoustic foam. Attached to this plate is a built-in mic mount which fits most boom arms (purchased separately). It serves double duty: it helps to decouple the microphone from the floor to lessen low-end muck from traveling back into the microphone, and its construction and weight hold the

I will admit that my first thought was, "Why would anyone need this?" Then just last week I performed at a music festival where many of the musicians had their iPhones on stage with them, running a plethora of apps including drum machines, music sequencers, guitar tuners, software synths and more. Without exception, each one of these expensive gizmos was left sitting precariously on top of keyboards, amp racks, and music stands, and more than once I watched one get knocked over and end up dangling at the end of its audio cable after a scary drop halfway to the floor. There was my answer—if this sounds like something you're facing at gigs more and more, check the TelePad out, in versions for the iPhone rev 3, rev 4, and soon the iPad.

Final thoughts

All of the above products work well, but may be more quantitative vs. qualitative in their effect. What I mean is, you may not have an instant "hear the difference" moment with any one of these products, but when you



microphone much more firmly in place than any other drum mic stand I have used.

It is especially useful when tracking a full band live in the studio, and even more so when used in live situations where sonic mud from cheap drum risers and loud PAs can creep into the kick-drum mics. It's pretty handy on guitar amps as well. Just as a heavy, skidproof, weighted mic stand base, it's well worth the investment even before you factor in the sonic improvement!

TelePad

That leaves the most eccentric piece in this roundup, the TelePad. The TelePad is a mic-stand mountable iPhone holder, but unlike the similar variety that may live in your car's cup holder or dashboard, this one is exceptionally overbuilt! A spring lock holds the iPhone in place and attaches to a thick plastic rubber-lined clamp that can be adjusted to any angle.

start to stack and mix your tracks you'll notice that the overall effect is to give you more focused and clear audio. Naturally, the better your recording environment, the better they work—none of these tools can make a bad room good, but they can make a good room great, and can help make a bad environment (like a typical club) more acceptable.

So there you have it, a bunch of useful gizmos from Primacoustic that are seeing a lot of use in my studio, and will do good work in yours as well... five prime examples of "Wow, why didn't I think of that?" right when you need them. ☺

More from: Primacoustic,
www.primacoustic.com.