

A simple idea brings brilliant results, as ALAN BRANCH captures the perfect sweet spot of a guitar with the tiny GM10 mic.

Don't you just love good ideas when they come along? Well, SE Electronics (whose last big success was the Reflexion Filter, a funky aluminium sound absorber for capturing recordings with much reduced ambience), has a solution for recording the perfect sweet spot of an acoustic guitar with the GM10.

Mic reviews can be pretty boring, but you might just want to take note of this one, and I don't say that with many bits of gear I come across. This is a specifically designed and developed mic clamp system integrated with a newly developed capacitor mic. The whole system can be easily fitted to an acoustic guitar and fixed to capture the perfect recording without worries – even if the guitarist moves around.

separating the body and the capsule – this is what SE has done, joining the two with a small unobtrusive cable. The small, disembodied capsule has very little weight, so it can be positioned with the utmost of ease, and without any weight balance issues pulling it back out of position.

The benefits really start to come into effect when you realise, as I did, that the mic apparatus can simply be left fitted to the guitar, so working on an album project or at a home studio, the set-up time for recording an acoustic is greatly reduced: simply lift it from its stand and plug it in. The XLR connector is on the base of the main clamp's body, just like any normal pencil mic, so any careful positioning of the mic is easily retained.

The sound of this small fixed cardioid mic is fantastic,



SE ELECTRONICS GM10 CLAMP-ON GUITAR MIC

Firstly, recording acoustic guitar is not the most straightforward process, and the extreme importance of mic placement with this instrument is vital to a great sounding recording. Too close a mic position and the sound can become too direct and unnatural, too far away and it can capture too much ambience. Although there are various methods, most engineers will use a high quality small-diaphragm capacitor mic, positioned around the base of the neck, get the guitar player seated and comfortable, and then listen within the studio. The trick is to get the guitar player to move slightly, and listen to the difference in the sound, or have an assistant move the mic until you get just the right sweet spot of the acoustic you want. The hope then, is that when you start the recording, the guitar player doesn't move around, but movement with a guitar is often inherent to playing a great take. You also might be recording for some time and then every time the guitar player takes a break you have to make sure he sits in the same place. Of course there is little chance of getting that same perfect sweet sound recorded every time.

So, SE Electronics has come up with the brilliant solution of a clamp-on mic. Okay, that might not be anything new, but conventional clip-on mics aren't exactly a high-quality capacitor mic. Besides which, a full size mic, or even a small diaphragm model, will take up some room when clamped to the body of a guitar. To really make the whole idea work, SE Electronics has developed what it claims is the world's smallest true gold splattered capsule. This beautifully made mic sits atop the sturdy clamp apparatus, which fits with some firm rubber material around the guitar body using an adjustable chromium aluminium finished screw clamp. The surface area of the rubber and grip being ample enough to hold everything in place, without over tightening, ensuring no damage to the finish and also offering an amount of isolation from the guitar body.

This clamp also holds both the mic's body/pre-amp assembly and the boom assembly. This easily adjustable mechanism with thumb screws allows the boom arm to move in a 360-degree rotation whilst the arm itself can be slid back and forth. At the end of the arm is the capsule, which is fixed in place via a shock mount and another adjustable swing arm, into the boom arm via a second shock mount.

Imagine chopping off the top from a mic and

in comparison with a conventional large diaphragm mic; it was quickly noticeable how well it captured the high frequencies and its off-axis response really gives a very natural sound with plenty of harmonics from the guitar. I really have to take my hat off to SE Electronics for the approach it seems to have with its hand-built mics. It's probably this care that enables such a small capsule to have such a high degree of engineering quality in its sound. I hope they develop it further, and we might see an omni version capsule, or even a version with interchangeable heads. Unless you're doing windmills like Pete Townsend, I can't see the clamp system being awkward. If I had to find something to moan about, it would be the lovely aluminium box it comes in, as I have to either reposition the mic or wind up the clamp to fit it back in the pre-formed cut out. I'd rather have a simple piece of foam so I could lay the mic in any position.

Conclusion

SE Electronics is gaining an incredible reputation in the professional recording world, its existing mics being one of my top recommendations for singers and producers, whether recording in the project studio or a large professional one. Now the acoustic instrument market will certainly take note with this newly developed small capsule design. The GM10's ergonomic design and clever thinking will certainly will make life much easier for recording high quality acoustic guitars with a minimum of fuss. **FAW**

INFORMATION

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