

BLUE Baby Bottle Cardioid Large-Diaphragm Condenser Microphone

Milk this baby bottle for all it's worth

The latest addition to BLUE (Baltic Latvian Universal Electronics) is the Baby Bottle, a lower-priced sibling to the company's high-end Bottle switchable-capsule mic. The Baby Bottle is a large-diaphragm condenser, utilizing discrete Class A electronics throughout, with transformerless output. Finished in black powdercoat, the mic looks sharp; it comes in a heavy velvet bag inside a very nice wooden case — a bonus at this price point. A swivel mount is included, but unfortunately BLUE's "Baby Shock" shockmount is an optional accessory. For this review, BLUE also supplied one of their Blueberry high-definition mic cables.

As its name implies, the Baby Bottle is substantially smaller than its big brother, coming in at less than nine inches long and two inches wide. With its smaller size and unique shape, the Baby Bottle is easy to position into tighter spaces than many large-diaphragm mics, but it's not so small that you don't feel like your standing in front of a "cool" studio mic when you step up to do a vocal.

I used the Baby Bottle in a number of situations, running it through an Oram MWS as well as the Focusrite preamps in a Digidesign Controll24. In addition, I used the Baby Bottle extensively with the Apogee Trak2, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Comparison mics included a Shure KSM44 and an Audio-Technica AT4050cm5.

I found the Baby Bottle to be an excellent all-around mic. It performs very well on vocals, offering a round sound with plenty of low end. Its proximity effect is strong, as you'd expect from a fixed cardioid capsule. Off-axis rejection is good, with smooth response across the front of the polar pattern.

In fact, "smooth" is a good word to describe the sound of the Baby Bottle.



▶ BLUE BABY BOTTLE

MANUFACTURER: BLUE Microphones, 766 Lakefield Road, Suite D, Westlake Village, CA 91361. Tel: 805-370-1599. Web: www.bluemic.com.

SUMMARY: For those whose needs are focused around large-diaphragm condenser applications, the Baby Bottle offers a cost-effective, great-sounding solution. As with all BLUE mics I've seen, construction, appearance, and packaging are impeccable. A worthy addition to your mic collection.

STRENGTHS: Nice tonal quality. Quiet. Strong proximity effect. Un-hyped response. More compact than similar priced and spec'd mics.

WEAKNESSES: Does not include shockmount.

PRICE: \$649.99

Its response is un-hyped; especially in the upper-mids and highs. Because of this, I found it ideal for taming harsh electric guitars while preserving a fat, round tone. Because of the nice proximity effect, you can really dig in and capture the thump and punch of a 4x12 cabinet.

But just because the highs are smooth don't infer that there isn't plenty of detail on the top end — there is. However, the smoother highs can make it sound a bit darker in some situations. I didn't find this a problem, in fact, just the opposite; I felt that the Baby Bottle's high-end came across as very natural and well-suited to drop right into a mix.

The Baby Bottle is a worthy addition to BLUE's mic line, and a solid choice for expanding a mic locker. If you've been looking for a large-diaphragm cardioid condenser, this one deserves your attention. Solid, quiet performance, and round, smooth, natural sound quality combined with excellent manufacture add up to a mic that's easily worth its asking price. ■

MANUFACTURER SPECS

CAPSULE TYPE	Edge-terminated single-membrane large-diaphragm
DIAPHRAGM	6-micron mylar, gold/aluminum sputtered
POLAR PATTERN	Fixed cardioid
SENSITIVITY	33.5 mV/Pa
IMPEDANCE	50 ohms
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO.....	76 dB (CCIR468-3); 87 dB-A (DIN/IEC651)
SELF NOISE	5.5 dB-A
MAXIMUM SPL	133 dB
DIMENSIONS	8-3/4 x 1-3/4 (inches)