



John Wheeler and the TLM 103 as Partner

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In the quest for absolute sonic purity and the direct translation of a great musical performance to a recorded medium, I have bought many mics, both industry standards and high esoterica. In disappointment, I have sold most of them. The mics that have remained in my collection have survived the most stringent Darwinistic elimination. I find that as pertains to microphone selection I now own - and depend upon daily - a large cross section of the Neumann catalog, and very little else. I am John Wheeler, purist recording engineer, plug-it-in-the-amp guitar and fiddle player, and proprietor of Renaissance Recording Nashville, a studio which caters to roots rock, bluegrass, jazz, and all things in between. My clients come to me word of mouth. Everyone with whom I work (these days, anyway) calls me because they've heard something else I've worked on and are interested in achieving similar results. As I've never seen music as a competition sport, and as Neumann/USA has been so generous as to allow me this opportunity to offer my \$.02 copper to the internet world, I will happily reveal all my microphone selection secrets. By all means, try this at home. If you want to see how I position them . . . well . . . give me a call and book some time . . .



I spent years searching for the perfect drum overhead mics. I finally found them with a stereo pair of TLM 103s. With these mics, the richness of detail is astounding, and the transient response is unsurpassed by any large diaphragm condenser pair I tried - and believe me, I tried nearly all of them at one time or another. I found greatest satisfaction using the most neutral mic preamp I could acquire for this application. Another item of importance when using this mic pair for overheads is to make certain both mics are exactly the same distance from the center of the snare drum, as the TLM 103s are so sensitive that phase issues quickly develop when care is not taken to assure proper positioning. Placed poorly, they can cancel the snare entirely; placed correctly, they are glorious.

For acoustic guitar and mandolin, I find a pair of KM 184s to deliver outstanding results. I own 3 pairs of these mics, and believe them to have the tightest low end response of any of the small diaphragm condensers I've used. In a properly positioned stereo arrangement, these mics deliver larger-than-life guitar and mandolin sounds that retain concentration, focus, and mixability; the lows stay full but focused, the highs crisp and airy without being tinny. The U87 is my main duty vocal and fiddle mic. It also does excellent duty on dobro and banjo. There are a few female singers who sound a bit shrill with this mic (and for whom a Shure SM 7 usually does the trick wonderfully), but for most woman and every male singer I've encountered, it's excellent. Coupled with the appropriate limiter, the vocal sits right on top of even the most dense of tracks with a sparkle and clarity, and fullness without boominess, I have yet to attain with any other mic. In fact, I've never used the U 87 on any sound source and thought it didn't sound great; sometimes there is a mic which suits the track better, but never one that sounds objectively "better." If I could own just one mic, it would be a U 87. I have recorded everything from piccolo to kick drum with a an '87 at one time or another, and never been disappointed.

Cheers,
John Wheeler
Nashville, TN