



The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet finds "The Way" with Neumann

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Classical guitar is a notoriously difficult instrument to amplify. It is very quiet, which causes the gain to be higher than is required with many other acoustic instruments. Compensating by miking closer can give an artificial sound because of the large variations in timbre emanating from different points on the top of the instrument. The level of difference in the quality of amplification for classical guitar by mic choice alone is staggering. Indeed, we have tried many different mics, and have been nothing but very satisfied with the KM 184 in every area of comparison. Before the KM 184s, the LAGQ traveled with small hyper-cardioid condenser mics lavalier-type mics with a built-in goose neck). After using them for a while, we noticed some drawbacks - they were pretty noisy and the hiss would often be audible through the PA. The low frequencies weren't well enough represented - the guitars would often sound 'boxy' even after trying to dial in some of the bass depth with eq.

But worst of all, the mics we were using didn't travel well. They seemed to degrade in performance over time, and finally began to fail intermittently. That of course is an insurmountable problem when touring. In contrast, the reliability of the Neumann mics has been fantastic; we've yet to have one fail, or even give a hint of a problem, which is remarkable considering our heavy touring all around the world. In 1996, the quartet was invited to perform in an important international festival in Europe, and the sound technician had a variety of mics for the artists to try out. There were models costing several thousand dollars, and we tried many different types, models and brands. The microphone that made us sound best was the Neumann KM 184, which had a very warm and dynamic sound, and excellent realism. We had then heard what we needed to know so that we could decide on which microphone to travel with and use for our concert amplification. Just as many musicians do, we remained curious about product developments and wondered if there might not be newer microphone types that could work even better. About two years ago we met with a company that made sound-hole mics with a clever mounting system. We worked with them all day, tried a dozen different models and capsules. Despite the expertise and best intentions of the company rep, we couldn't get a realistic sound, no matter how we manipulated placement and eq. By comparison, just a quick rough placement of a KM 184 in front of the guitar usually gives a superior sound that other mikes won't begin to emulate without extensive work with mic placement and eq. The KM 184 received Acoustic Guitar Magazine "Player's Choice Award" Fall 1998.

