

At a two-day tracking session at Yellow Dog, I worked with my partner and resident producer/engineer David Percefull (David Cook, Phil Marshall, Brandon Jenkins) and Grammy-winning engineer Adam Odor (Dixie Chicks, Shawn Colvin, Court Yard Hounds) to record basic tracks for a few songs from my upcoming album. We listened at both 15 IPS and 30 IPS and thought the extended low end on the drums and bass we'd get at 15 was worth a little tape hiss, but I'd overdub my vocals and acoustic guitar at 30. After the sessions, Adam remarked, "Once digital recording took over, many engineers became afraid of committing sounds and moving on to the next track. I spent a lot of time trying to make digital recordings sound like tape." He appreciates the flexibility and time savings afforded by *CLASP*. Dave agreed, "As a businessman, it's about getting tones more quickly. When I cut to tape, I feel like I'm getting the tone I want instead of fixing it in the mix. *CLASP* saves me time and maintains creative flow." Bottom line — *CLASP* presents a good investment for the professional studio that already owns an analog multitrack recorder or whose clientele and engineers will appreciate the sound and new-found affordability of recording with analog tape again. (\$7495 street; www.endlessanalog.com)

—Steven Todd Hudson, www.steventoddhudson.com

Cathedral Pipes Regensburg Dom microphone

How many good vocal mics are there out there today? Probably way too many, but how many are truly great vocal mics? Now we can narrow the field, with the choice mics being mostly of the vintage or vintage re-issue breeds. A few boutique manufacturers — really builders, since calling them manufacturers implies a certain level of output — have hit the nail on the head with new and uniquely designed microphones. Here in California, Charles Dickinson's Cathedral Pipes microphones exemplify the spirit of vintage recreation with a modern approach. Cathedral Pipes custom builds a handful of different microphones, developed and updated from proven vintage designs. The mic in focus here is the *Regensburg Dom* U 47 re-creation. I should note that the *Regensburg Dom* draws its heritage from the U 47 but extends the design with many modern benefits, even using some of the circuit design developed for the U 67.

First, the geeky stuff about the mic. The capsule is a custom M 7-type capsule from Canada. The transformer is a U 47 replacement from Cinemag; the Multicap coupling capacitors were chosen to remain true to the '47 sound, but with clean, modern construction and reliability. The tube is not the expensive (and often knocked-off) Telefunken VF 14, but instead an EF86 tube from Amperex in Holland. These updates, plus OCC wiring, point-to-point wiring in the high-impedance tube section, and a self-biasing design, provide the best sounding, most modern and stable tube microphone one could hope for.

Second, the candy. This mic has an LED that lights up the capsule from inside the grill. We have a blue LED in one mic and a red LED in the second, with more color choices available. In a dark room, the LED creates a cool glow inside the grill, without distracting to the artist.

Third, accessories. The mic comes in a very nice, lockable aluminum briefcase, with 7-pin power cable, power supply with pattern control, a beefy shockmount, and even a brief owner's manual. The whole kit feels very solid, heavy, and well-constructed. All that work and soul in a beautifully finished and laser-engraved metal body. The entire kit sells for a very affordable price — much less than a quarter of what a vintage U 47 or U 67 sells for today.

At my home base, Nightbird Recording Studios, vocal sessions regularly start and end with either a U 87 or Sony C800G, but the *Regensburg Dom* has stepped up to fill in the missing rock-and-roll attitude. In a recent session with producer Jed Leiber and singer Johnny Helms, we held a shootout between the aforementioned mics and a trio of mic preamps from Neve, Focusrite and Grace. Johnny's voice can be clean or raspy, and his dynamics can vary greatly from verse to chorus. In every trial, the *Regensburg* sounded solid and huge, with a detailed, natural top-end. The Sony comes across as modern, ultra-clean, and bright; the U 87 punchy, but veiled; while the Cathedral Pipes mic gave us everything in the right proportion. No scooped midrange, no hyped highs, and no anemic lows. The mic provides all the mojo you could want. I wouldn't so much call the sound vintage as simply real, intimate, big and right. Besides this rock vocalist, I have pressed the mic into service on many singers, from R&B to pop, and even as a stereo pair on our 9 ft Yamaha grand piano. In every case, the mic delivered. And I'm excited to put the mics up as drum overheads. Furthermore, the continuously-variable polar pattern ranges from omni to figure-eight, so any pattern in-between can be dialed in. This adjustment is great for adjusting room sound versus proximity effect, or balancing a singer who is simultaneously playing acoustic guitar.

Cathedral Pipes currently builds a few other mics that continue the pedigree of other sought-after mics. The *Regensburg Dom* is the big kahuna of the lot. Oh yeah, Chuck can even custom finish the mic for your studio. For our studio, he laser-etched the Nightbird logo into the power supply before powder coating and clear coating the mic and power supply. That is a very nice and truly custom touch. If you would like to own a truly classic sounding, custom microphone, visit the website for more info and contact details. (\$1650 direct; www.cathedralpipes.com)

—Adam Kagan <adamkagan@mac.com>

Ready Acoustics Chameleon Bass Trap

I can't think of a recording studio that doesn't require acoustic treatment. Like many *Tape Op* readers, we've done our fair share of DIY blended with commercial off-the-shelf solutions. If you run a commercial studio, there can be some serious disadvantages to the DIY approach. Using wooden frames and regular fabric can be considered a fire hazard by your local building inspector. Consequently, looking at professional acoustics products can be the quickest and safest bet. We recently contacted Ready Acoustics for help. Based in Elk River, Minnesota, they offer bass traps, absorption panels, DIY parts, and accessories for studios, institutions, and individuals.

We chose the *Chameleon* line of bass traps to replace the homemade traps in our mixing suite. The *Chameleons* are 48" x 24" x 4" in size, and like the other traps offered by Ready Acoustics, they have an outer metal frame that is powder-coated and features die-cut circles and wave shapes. These perforations look appealing while allowing audio to pass through the sides. Users can choose from seven frame colors. The trap is filled with standard dense fiberboard, commonly known as 703 in the audio community (the name comes from the Owens Corning Company's product line designation, but comparable products are sold by others, e.g. Johns Manville). If you're not familiar with 703, it's a rigid "board" made from inorganic glass fibers that often looks like yellow slices of cheese. Of course, you don't use raw insulation — it goes inside an acoustic bag. Ready Acoustics has 8 color variations

PHOENIX AUDIO

IT'S THE SOUND
...STUPID

"At last, I have a summing box that not only preserves the sounds that I capture and blends them effortlessly, it actually improves on them in a way that is not at all subtle and is nothing short of stunning. 'NICERIZER' is such a ridiculously appropriate name. Bass goes deeper, wider and inky black, without a trace of muddiness. Spiky digital transients are softened in all the right ways, on the order of microseconds to my ears. Midrange is creamy smooth, and highs are completely silkened... this is most apparent when using crunchy drum loops, as I'm wont to do in my own music. Any remaining sense of 'digital' is swept away, and a gorgeous 3-D analog landscape opens up."