



REVIEW

BY PAUL VNUK JR.

Most of our Audix coverage in the past year has been focused on the classic workhorses of the line—everything from newly created packages containing the i5 and D6 dynamic mics to the special anniversary edition of the D6. In addition to the aforementioned studio workhorses, though, it's good to be reminded that

Audix HT5 and HT7 Over-Ear Condenser Microphones

When a conventional handheld mic won't do the best job—try these

Audix offers a selection of specialty microphones as well. These include miniature podium mics with or without state-of-the-art carbon fiber boom stands, similarly equipped choir mics, and the mics we are looking at today: head-worn/over-ear condenser mics.

Remember that the world of professional recording often extends beyond the studio and concert stage. There may come a time when you are called upon to record a speaker giving a seminar in a banquet hall, a pastor, priest or rabbi in a large sanctuary, a CEO in a boardroom, or a cast of singers and actors in a musical stage production. When that happens, these are the sort of microphones that you will want to have handy.

Both mics use an omnidirectional capsule. The mic is at the end of a flexible armature that extends down the wearer's cheek and should be positioned just at the side corner of the mouth, not in front.

You may be wondering why we would choose omnidirectional mics when they will be used in large reverberant rooms with the potential for feedback. The reason is simple: omni mics are more consistent in their behavior than cardioids. They're less prone to air blasts and plosives, they have no proximity effect, and head movements are much less likely to make the speaker's voice in the capsule change dramatically as the mic moves with respect to his or her mouth. Yes, there can and most likely will be feedback issues to sort when setting levels... but in this situation, EQ, compression, and soft gating are your friends. And feedback might not be nearly as bad as you'd fear, since the capsule is so tiny and so near the sound source.



HT5

First we have the older model of the two, the HT5. It sports a 20 Hz to 20 kHz frequency response, a 12 mV/Pa @1 kHz sensitivity, 1000 Ohm impedance, and can handle SPL of 140 dB or greater.

The HT5 is a dual-ear model and is the more robust of the two in every way. The 5mm mic capsule is attached to a miniature gooseneck armature that terminates in a 3' cable, to which you can add an adaptor for use with the wireless or wired system of your choice.

The armature is a simple, highly rigid wire design that slips around the back of the head over both ears. It is firm and tight and once in place this mic will stay put even under heavy calisthenic use. It is available in beige or black and includes a foam windscreen.

HT7

The brand-new HT7 also has a 20 Hz to 20 kHz frequency response. Its has a sensitivity of 17 mV/Pa @1 kHz, a 2000

Ohm impedance, and can also handle high SPL with ease.

The HT7 is a single-ear model. The mic is held in place by a soft yet firm rubber earpiece that can be worn on either the left or right ear. The entire mic is modular: the earpiece can detach from the thin wire mic armature, the 4' cable is detachable, and so is your chosen mic pack adaptor. This is a good place to note that in addition to supporting the many companies who offer wireless systems, Audix has multiple wireless systems of its own, such as the RAD360, which work hand in hand with the HT5 and HT7.

The HT7 comes in beige or black and ships with a foam windscreen, all in a simple compartmentalized vinyl zipper case.

Practicalities

In my job as the tech director of a church with a 1200 to 1800 seat facility, I make use of over-the-ear mics often for sermons, seminars, musical skits, and video interviews. In our church, at least, the days of lavalier mics are long gone except on the rarest of occasions. The over-ear is closer to the mouth and gives more gain before feedback.

In use, both the HT5 and HT7 have their pros and cons depending on your



needs. The pros and cons have everything to do with form and function, however, not sound.

While many speakers love over-ear mics, I have seen lots of unpleasant scenarios: mics falling off the ears of overactive speakers and presenters, the wire armature getting bent and moved by a speaker brushing or scratching his or her face... or, all too commonly, not everyone's ears are conducive to holding a single-ear model securely. It's for these situations that the HT5 is the better choice. It is quick to put on and take off, it is tight and rigid and stays put, including the miniature gooseneck mic arm that can be moved and adjusted with ease. The downside to the HT5 is that some may find it too tight for comfort; it stays put, but it is not easy to relax and forget that you're wearing it.

In contrast, the HT7 has possibly the single best soft molded ear holder I have ever used. It's a perfect balance of snug and comfortable, so much so that it's easy to forget you are wearing it. The downside is that its near-invisible wire arm is so thin and malleable that it bends easily, and if not handled gently it can also develop nasty kinks. It can be straightened gently on the edge of a table, though, if need be. For the most part, if not manhandled too much, it stays put.

Sound

Both models are clean, quiet and clear. They are very controlled on the low end and not as chesty as some other models I am used to. They take EQ well, and I have had no more issues tweaking these out for our room over any other models.

Between the two, the HT7 is about 10% richer sounding; both are nicely resistant to facial noise like rubbing against beards, stubble and such. Recordings captured with both mics have been natural and clear-sounding. Thanks to the omni capsules and their lack of proximity effect, voices recorded with these mics have a great conversational feel to them vs. a radio announcer's thickness.

Conclusions

Both mics sound clear, natural and great. Normally I am a bigger fan of dual-ear models, since the mic stays put better and they are more repeatable and predictable from week to week. Having said that, however, the HT7 is a clear winner here—both sonically and in its combination of firm grip and feather lightness. If security under heavy motion is your priority, the HT5 is a solid standby that won't let you down, but the new HT7 is very appealing and well worth a try for most speaking and theater applications. ➤

Prices: HT5, \$390; HT7, \$345

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