



Microphone Choices:

On the Bus, Off the Bus...

“At The Harmonica Microphone Bench” with Fritz Hasenpusch, Mel Bay’s HarmonicaSessions® eZine

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Our venerable Harpmobile now travels along a smooth swath of microphone pavement that’s in a constant state of reinvention with no end in sight. This strip of audio asphalt is a busy offshoot of the historic and venerable Condenser Boulevard. Though a newer development, it bears the benefits of the parent main drag but on a smaller scale: Electret Avenue.

On our prior outings we’ve learned how sonically accurate condenser mics can be. We’ve assessed their amazingly flexible capabilities of application with regard to their audio advantages. So... the Electret Condenser shares many of the traditional sonic advantages of the traffic on the bigger and broader Condenser Boulevard, but packaged in the Sports Model format, if you please: Smaller in size, typically not dependant on external power supplies due to its utilization of onboard battery power, and for our purposes, significantly lower cost than the full-sized luxury models. Needless to say this is a stretch of roadway that’s ripe for experimentation. The R&D surrounding these babies is ‘pert near limitless.

SOUND and WORKABILITY at the ALTAR of SAINT HARMONICA: Consider the possibilities of a microphone that is small enough to completely enclose within your cupped hands w/harp. Benefit? For hand-articulated effects such as full-on wa-wa’s, country-style expressing, even that Civil War campfire tremolo, it’s clear that the less-obstructing mass of a smaller microphonic unit would allow for more “hand” in the sound. Thus, high marks for **WORKABILITY**.

“HEY FRITZ! WHAT ABOUT OUR MISSISSIPPI SAXOPHONE?” Dig: One of the most prevalent obstacles to achieving the **BIG TONE** most associated with The Blues while playing harmonica through a microphone and amp has to do with the player’s ability to provide a tight seal around the harp and mic: **THE CUP**. If you can’t get your paws around the whole package, it (**SOUND**) ain’t gonna happen. One of the most common requests I hear is to create a mic with a specific traditional sound but comprised of significantly less mass. For those willing to consider getting on the Bus with an alternative approach to mic’ing, the Electret could offer plenty of new pavement to travel.

HOWEVER: All that said, the positive results to be realized by way of the Electret Condenser aren’t automatic. Remember that they are inherently **LOW IMPEDANCE** and that guitar amp you’re blowing through (new or old) is most likely going to be **HIGH IMPEDANCE**. And even if you’re playing directly into the house P.A. system, what about shaping the Electret’s inherently broad frequency response into one that’s harp-friendly and to your tastes? What to do, what to do...

NON-U.N. TRANSLATORS & GEAR BETWEEN... Next time, on THE MIC BENCH.

For pictures and descriptions of most of the microphones listed visit
http://www.harmonicamasterclass.com/vintage_collection.htm

To contact Fritz for his Custom Mics or Repair email him at harpmicman@earthlink.net