



Microphone Choices: SONIC TRUTHS AND MIC SECRETS REVEALED...

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

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Practical information, being a lot like the ice cream in an ice cream sundae, is another one of those things that warrants extra servings—especially when dealing with the elusively mysterious, fog-shrouded, Juju-encrusted world of Microphonicus Bluesharpoid Majorus: The HARP MIC. So, once again I slip into my Midnite Blue sharkskin HAZMAT suit and plunge headlong into the voluminous file marked “Correspondence/Questions”. My mission? To provide answers and info that may help clarify the murky waters surrounding the Amplified Tin Sandwich...

“HEY FRITZ! The cable to my Shure 520D ‘Green Bullet’ pulled out of the springy thing at the back of the mic and I’m trying to fix it. I opened the mic so I could re-solder the wires, and found a little brown thing between the loops of the element where the cables connect. What is it? Should I leave it there or take it out?” – signed ROADBLOCK.

Dear ROADBLOCK: First of all, you’ve experienced curse of the “Green Bullet’s” Achilles’ Heel. The fact that all Shure bullets (except for the very early 705A “Rocket”) were born “hard-wired” (cable permanently attached, running directly into the mic by way of a strain relief) has kept many a mic repairman busy. As for the little component you’ve discovered, it’s a resistor (typically 39K, as I recall) that is put there to flatten-out the response peak at 2,000 cycles inherent in that mic’s Controlled-Magnetic element, making its mid-range response more “normalized.” Removing the resistor restores that peak and increases the 520’s “speech intelligibility” according to the related sales material, and gives a little lift to the mic’s over-all output. Experiment with it in place and with it removed. Use little alligator clip leads to connect it if you’re squeamish about repeated hits with a hot iron (careful!). My tendency has been to leave the resistor out, as the peak presents only a moderately increased feedback liability. Speaking of the dreaded FEEDBACK: While you’ve got your 520 open, make certain its gasket seals completely, separating the back of the C.M. element from the rest of the world. Why? Because the C.R. and C.M. family of elements are acoustically “live” both to the front and rear. While you’re at it, should you find that your mic has little “breathers” or “vents” in its underside, plugging them from the inside with a dab of caulk, glue, silicon, or body filler will help keep feedback-inducing sonic sources from entering the mic’s shell. Good luck!

“HEY FRITZ! We were just wondering, is your name really Fritz?” – signed NOSEY NEIGHBORS.

Dear NEIGHBORS: In fact, it's not... Here's what you'll find on my driver's license: Lauritz Curt Hasenpusch. Honest. First name's Danish, last name's Prussian. Can you figure out how I wound up with "Fritz"? Take the last four letters of my real first name (ritz) and add an "F" to the front and... Presto! FRITZ! I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Don Stupfel, freshman high school arts teacher for simplifying that aspect of my life for me... See? Confession/truth IS good for the soul (and the microphone)!

SONIC TRUTHS — AND CONSEQUENCES! — Next time, on THE MIC BENCH

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED (Email them to me at HARPMICMAN@earthlink.net).

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