

by Mich Gallagher

Audix D6

The key to capturing booty-shaking low end

Type: Dynamic “sub impulse” instrument microphone
Price: \$349; \$449 (nickel); \$549 (gold)
Contact: Audix, www.audixusa.com

Transducer type: Dynamic
Polar pattern: Cardioid
Frequency response: 30Hz to 15 kHz
Maximum SPL: 144dB
Sensitivity: 2.2mV @ 80Hz
Finish: Black, nickel, or gold
Included accessories: Mic clip, Corduroy carrying bag

The Audix D6 microphone goes against the trend: Most mics these days seem to want to excel at vocal applications, with special emphasis on high end . . . everyone’s after smooth, detailed highs and nice presence. The D6 takes a different tack. Audix makes no bones about designing it for maximum impact on the low end, with suggested applications including kick drum, floor tom, percussion, and acoustic and electric bass.

The D6 is a dynamic mic with a cardioid polar pattern. It’s compact and feels solid—the mic body is, after all machined from solid block of aluminum. There’s no pretense of flat frequency response with this baby; according to the enclosed manufacturer’s response curve, there’s a broad hump (up to 15dB boost) around 60Hz, and the mids and top rise smoothly from 1 kHz to a peak at around 12 kHz of about 18dB. Audix says this curve is optimized for kick drum, bringing out the thump and attack while minimizing boominess. And there’s no question they’re right — stick this mic in front of, or inside, your favorite kick drum and you’ll probably be pretty pleased with the result before you even start moving it around to find the sweet spot. On kick, the lows hit you in the chest, while the attack is strong and clear.

Okay, so this mic is aimed at kick drum applications, and hits the mark right on target. But, being an ever-curious reviewer, I had to give it a spin on a few other sources. I next tried it on an electric bass guitar cabinet; I already had a solid DI bass recorded, but wanted to add

some grit and punch. The D6 worked great, and gave me more than I’d hoped; in addition to the punchy mids and amplifier-induced grunge, the deep lows came through loud and clear. But I also got excellent top, with a nice lively sound. I ended up using more of the miked amp than the direct bass in the mix.

I next shifted my attention to crunchy electric guitar miking up my Marshall 4x 12 cabinet. Placed about a foot away, the D6 captured the lows and lots fizzy highs, but didn’t have the meat I wanted — think death metal scooped mids. I moved the mic right up on the speaker, about an inch in from the edge of the cone. This was more like it; fat, punchy lows; full, aggressive highs; and the midrange filled in nicely. A touch of EQ pumped up the lower mids just right. I had been tracking some condenser mics at the same time, one set up a foot back from the speaker. When I switched this mic on, everything sprang to life. The D6 added the deep low-end thump the cabinet was pumping out, and captured the attack and top end. The other mic filled in the mids — perfect!

It may be irrelevant, as the D6 isn’t intended for vocals, but my tests wouldn’t have been complete without giving it a spin in front of a singer. Let’s just say that as a vocal mic, the D6 makes a pretty good drum mic. Its response curve accentuates plosive popping, while the top end is way too present — the classic home stereo “smiley” curve. Yes, you can EQ it into shape, but you’re better off using the D6 where it shines.

One all source, I found the D6 to be extremely dynamic, excellent

for picking up grace notes and subtleties in percussion. It has fairly low output, which is what you want when dealing with high-SPL sources like drum. It’s also quite sensitive to stand-borne noise — thumps, knocks, and floor resonance. A shockmount would be nice addition. Audix says their CX111 condenser shockmount fits the D6.

The D6 is a mic you can put on low-range sound sources with full knowledge that you’re not going to have to be adding much bass EQ, or cranking up the highs to add clarity and definition. The mic comes pre-EQ’d from the factory! It’s great on kick drum — among my first choices for capturing solid thump with clear attack. But it can do so much more; try it on electric (or acoustic) bass. Stick it on a guitar cabinet whether you use it by itself or blended with another, you just can’t beat the driving subwoofer lows it puts out.

If you record kick drum, you need this mic. If you mic up electric bass cabinets, you’ll want to give it a hard look. If you’re recording heavy metal drop-tuned electric guitars, it can give you what you need. Let’s just say this: Any time you need to capture solid low end with a microphone, the D6 should top your list of tools to consider. **EQ**

Strengths:

- High SPL handling
- Compact size
- Very dynamic
- Thundering lows
- Clear, extended highs
- Heavy-duty construction

Limitations:

- Poor isolation from stand-borne noise

