

Alive & Gigging

SOUND REINFORCEMENT IN REVIEW.

Lip Service

Electro-Voice Co4, Co5, Co7 and Co9 Cobalt Series Microphones. **by Dominic Hilton**

When it comes to shopping for microphones, the choice is often limited to buying the cheap and cheerful budget models or the expensive high-end professional mics. Considering that there is so little to choose from in the affordable-but-good category, it's encouraging to learn that the new Cobalt Series from Electro-Voice brings some tempting choices to musicians with a discerning ear and a slim wallet.

The Cobalt Co4 is a tough, all-around workhorse designed for the stage and studio. The chunky die-cast zinc housing certainly gives the Co4 a robust feel, which extends to the integral XLR connector and top- and side-address screens. This dynamic cardioid microphone offers a smooth frequency response over the 50Hz–18kHz range, with a generous hump in the low-end in close-miking situations. In addition to vocal duties, EV recommends the Co4 for use with electric guitar and bass amps, tom-toms, snares, cymbals and hi-hats, but the company also promises that the mic is sensitive enough for use with acoustic instruments.

Like the Co4, the Co5 features a weighty zinc case, but it has the more familiar domed windscreen to protect the dynamic Neodymium magnet element. Described as a "classic" vocal mike, the Co5 has the same frequency response as the Co4 but demonstrates increased detail in the high end and an enhanced bass response in close-miking situations. These performance characteristics provide the right balance of frequencies for vocal work, as well as a controlled proximity effect, something that enables the performer to "push" the mic harder when a more gritty tone is desired. Small wonder EV recommends using the Co5 with blues harps to create an authentic "growl."

The dynamic Neodymium element of the Co7 provides a desirable combination of increased sensitivity and low handling noise across the mic's smooth 50Hz–18kHz range. This cardioid mic is designed to handle vocal performances in high-volume settings without feeding back, while its low handling noise also enables it to perform well in delicate acoustic situations.

The Co9 is the flagship vocal microphone of the Cobalt series, and its response characteristic is tweaked to flatter any style of singing. This sensitive dynamic cardioid transducer provides a slight bass roll-off and enhanced midrange in its 50Hz–18kHz range, making it

(left to right) Co7, Co9, Co4 and Co5 Cobalt Series mics.



ideal for vocalists who perform live. The insulated element and windscreen and the solid zinc casing also protect the Co9 in the rough live environment.

To assess the performance of each microphone, we used a digital studio to track vocals and, where applicable, a guitar amp and an acoustic guitar; to get a sense of how the mics would behave in live performance, we simply cranked up the studio monitors. The Co4 excelled at instrument work, capturing the amp with great clarity and a satisfying full tone at a variety of volumes and distances. The mic was particularly impressive in high-volume close-miking situations, with a thumping low end that didn't get mushy. On the other hand, the Co4 captured a sweet rendering of the steel-string acoustic, and translated plenty of crisp, airy detail to tape. In short, the Co4 is a very versatile instrument mic with warm, clear reproduction across a spectrum of volume levels.

The Co5 vocal microphone proved to be a very pleasant surprise. Its dynamic proximity effect is perfect for vocalists who like to add texture to their vocals by leaning into the microphone, or for fans of extreme close-up punchy vocals. This lively mic has an exciting edge to its tone, good frequency bal-

LIST PRICES
Co4, \$149; Co5, \$99; Co7,
\$149; Co9, \$169

MANUFACTURER
Electro-Voice, 12000
Portland Ave. S., Burnsville,
MN 55337; (800) 392-
3497, (952) 884-4051;
www.electrovoice.com

ance and keen reproduction, all of which produce a sound quality that belies its low price.

The Co7 proved unshakable at high volumes, demonstrating an impressive feedback threshold and whisper-quiet handling noise. Its finely balanced response bristles with detail and remains supple during the most dynamic performances, while its increased sensitivity provided a lush reproduction of the acoustic guitar that was free of extraneous noise. The Co7 is a very reliable and flexible live performer that easily makes the transition to the studio, with the high-quality sound associated with EV's N/DYM series.

Finally, the Co9 more than proved its worth as a high-level vocal microphone. The massaged frequency response worked brilliantly to deliver vocal tone with full body and increased clarity in the bass range. The Co9 produced a sparkling tone both on tape and at high-volume monitor levels, with impressively low background and handling noise. This microphone would be a wise investment for vocalists who want to give their live performance a polished, professional tone.

THE BOTTOM LINE

From their pleasing, robust design to their versatile performances, each of these Cobalt models would be a rewarding buy for the stage or home studio. 