

Kiwi Microphone—Editors Choice for 2002 *Electronic Musician Magazine* Microphone (over \$1,000)

Once in a great while, a product comes along that sets new standards for excellence in its class. The Kiwi microphone from Baltic Latvian Universal Electronics (BLUE) is such an item. This is the third consecutive year BLUE has captured an Editors' Choice award: the Dragonfly won in the over-\$1,000 category last year, and the Blueberry was our pick for large-diaphragm condenser in 2000. Clearly, BLUE is on to something, and we know what it is: the company is building a reputation not on cost-effective mass production, copying classic vintage designs, or importing cheap transducers from abroad, but by creating distinctive, first-rate microphones that are solidly constructed from the finest components.

Admittedly, EM's emphasis on value rarely finds us reviewing mics as pricey as the Kiwi. But considering what you get for your dollars, the Kiwi is a bargain. After all, this is BLUE's top-of-the-line solid-state microphone, which is saying a lot. Treasure that it is, the Kiwi comes nestled in sumptuous purple velvet inside a gorgeously crafted cherry-wood box. A high-quality, spider-type elastic shockmount is included—something you pay handsomely for from some other mic makers.

Like all BLUE mics, the Kiwi employs Class A discrete circuitry (no ICs) and a handbuilt, hand-tuned capsule that is the main agent of the mic's high-quality sound reproduction. That stands in sharp contrast to designs that use EQ to "improve" an initially substandard sound. In addition, the Kiwi utilizes transformerless output circuitry and a dual-diaphragm capsule that allows for nine polar patterns, including cardioid, omnidirectional, and figure-8. The range of patterns—unprecedented in a solid-state condenser—greatly extends the Kiwi's versatility, allowing users to fine-tune the frequency response and find the ideal character of sound pickup for a given source.

Without a doubt, the Kiwi sounds wonderful: exceedingly natural and transparent overall yet surprisingly mellow for a FET design, with open, silky highs that never sound brittle or harsh. The images the Kiwi captures have remarkable depth and solidity, a quality only the best transducers seem capable of producing. Not surprisingly, the Kiwi is also supremely quiet, has a huge dynamic range, and exhibits superb transient response. We especially liked it on vocals, acoustic guitars, piano, organ, Dobro, dulcimer, mandolin, drums, and all sorts of percussion. In short, the Kiwi is both a workhorse mic and a work of art.