

# Earthworks FullKit Drum Mic System

By David Morgan

If you saw the June issue of *FOH* you may remember that we did a Buyers Guide looking at some of the “pre-packed” drum mic kits available out there. The bias against these kind of kits has been that they are just a way to package mediocre mics and that they weren’t really for pros. If that is your thinking you have not used the Earthworks Kits.

## The Gear

R2T

Earthworks has designed a complement of microphones intended to be used with a 4 tom drum kit called the FullKit drum mic system.

The system consists of one DP25/C snare microphone, four DP30/C tom microphones, five RM1 RimMount mic clips, nine -15/-30 dB inline LevelPads, windscreens to mike one snare, two rack toms and two floor toms. It also includes two SR25s for overheads, one SR30 for hi-hat, one SR30 for kick drum and a designated inline pad/eq network for the kick. There are foam windscreens for each SR series microphones. Additionally, there are two larger SRW2 screw-on stainless steel windscreens for the two SR30s. The entire system comes housed in two high-impact road cases that securely hold each component in shaped foam cutouts.

## The Gigs

R2T

### The Colosseum Theater at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, NV:

Cher drummer Nate Morton uses a 5 tom Pearl set.

Bette Midler drummer Sonny Emory uses a 5 tom Yamaha Pro set.

My experience with miking live drums has customarily influenced me to always choose microphones that impart their particular coloration to magnify and enrich the drum sound... y’know... a thumping kick, a fat snare, and big resonant toms. It’s a philosophy that results in a created drum sound that begins with the natural sound of the drums and then amplifies certain characteristics to achieve the desired end result.

Earthworks has taken an alternative path. All the mics in the system are so transparent that one feels as though one is listening to the live sound of a drum kit being played acoustically in an optimum listening environment. The sound of each drum and cymbal is so well-defined and accurate that even the most subtle sonic idiosyncrasies are captured beautifully. Leakage from adjacent drums is not a problem, because the off-axis frequency response and phase characteristics of these cardioid mics are so consistent that there is no adverse effect to the direct sound. Each component in the kit speaks clearly. Drum attack is amazingly fast. Sustain is clear and undistorted. Decay is natural and uncolored. Cymbal sounds are rendered with incredible detail and complexity.

With this system, shaping the sound of the drums is more about interacting with the drum tech and the drummer rather than simply cranking the knobs on the equalizers. Once the tuning has been optimized, it then becomes a matter of adjusting mic placement to best bring out the particular qualities of each drum. When Sonny Emory first heard the mics, he loved the tom and cymbal sounds, but he expressed some concern about the snare. I asked him to first make sure the drum was tuned exactly the way he wanted it, and then I invited him to move around the DP25C.

Sonny quickly found a placement he liked and he is now extremely pleased with the overall sound of his kit and he greatly appreciates the marked improvement that the Earthworks system has brought to our live drum sound.

Kick drum miking with the SR30 was a trial-and-error experiment. I started off using the SR30 mic in the manufacturer’s recommended position when working with Nate Morton’s kit. However, placing the mic away from the hole in the front head near the rim at a 45° angle to the skin resulted in a marching band bass drum kind of sound that was not the desired result. I tried a variety of positions, but I really wanted both bottom end and top end with good definition. Due to the intense air movement, Earthworks does not recommend using the SR30 in the cutout hole. However, when I used the large screw-on windscreen for the SR30 and put the mic in the hole, it all came

together. Nate has also been very happy with what he has been hearing during the Cher show, and he is an enthusiastic supporter of the change to the Earthworks system.

I am impressed with this system and I am really looking forward to employing these mics on Steve Gadd’s kit during this summer’s James Taylor European tour. I know that Steve is going to love them as much as I do. **FOH**



Each component in Earthworks’ FullKit Drum Mic System “speaks clearly.”

## Earthworks FullKit Drum Mic System

**What It Is:** A high end condenser microphone package for implementation on an entire drum kit.

**Who It’s For:** This is not a low-cost system and is therefore not within reach of every budget. The mics are made for high-end users whose goal is to hear all the subtlety and tone in the drum kit.

**Pros:** The “pros” are easy to state. The nuts and bolts of the system are truly excellent. The packaging is rugged and secure. The mics are made out of tough steel and very strong plastic materials. The goosenecks on the snare and tom mics are supple, resilient and stay in position once they are placed. The rim mounts don’t choke the drum or inhibit the drummer. The small heads (with or without the foam windscreen) on the snare and tom mics make them easy to keep out of harm’s way. As stated above, the sound of each of the mics is extremely transparent and totally accurate in all respects while retaining the essential aggressiveness of drumming.

**Cons:** Aside from cost considerations, the only “con” I can think of would be the lack of coloration if a highly stylized, heavy rock drum sound is the desired result. These mics are super clean and may not provide enough “dirt” for some users unless outboard devices or plug-ins are employed to add the thickness or distortion.

**MSRP:** \$12,000