



Professional Audio and Music Production

JZ Microphones BT-201 Condenser Microphone

by [Barry Rudolph](#)

FIELD TEST

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JZ Microphones' BT-201 Kit

The BT-201 is Latvian manufacturer [JZ Microphones'](#) take on a small-diaphragm pencil studio condenser mic. Its unique appearance is reminiscent of a '60s TV announcer's stick mic, with a slim black body tapering to a teardrop-shaped capsule. The 13-mm-diameter electret capsule offers a sensitivity rating of 11 mV/Pa and a max SPL handling of 140 dB without requiring a pad. Capsules are hot-swappable and come as cardioid, wide cardioid and omni (more on that later).



The head amp is a discrete Class-A circuit that uses an FET (Field Effect Transistor) and no output transformer. There are no pad or low-filter switches. The mic's body is made from a machined-brass alloy and measures 6.35 inches long and one inch in diameter. It will fit into most dynamic mic clips such as Shure's SM57, which is a good thing as no clips or shock-mounts are included. My review pair came with two optional JZ1-7 shock-mounts made by [Rycote](#) that sell for \$104 each.

The mic's body narrows down to a small "interference fit" gold-plated jack assembly that "mates" to the capsule for electrical connection. The capsule is held securely by magnets--no fine threads on the capsules to get wrong. Gently pulling on a capsule removes it making changing polar patterns easier than using a noise-prone pattern switch or fumbling with a remote power supply.

In The Studio

My first job for the BT-201 was recording a Martin D-15 mahogany acoustic guitar here at my [Tones 4 \\$ Studios](#). I placed the mic about 16-inches away, aimed at the 12th fret and at about the player's chest height. I recorded with no equalization or compression, straight into Pro Tools HD at 24-bit/96kHz using 45 dB of gain from my [RTZ 9762 mic preamp](#) (based on the Neve 1272 design). I tried all three capsules.

The wide cardioid pattern produced the best results, as it captured this dreadnought guitar in the most balanced way--not overly bright or excessively boomy. It sounded just like the guitar sounded in the room. The regular cardioid setting was also good but not quite as rich sounding. The omni yielded even less bass because of the lack of proximity effect, but as with any omni mic, the overall sound was more open, pulling in more room sound--including my computer's fan noise.

The BT-201's hot-swappable feature is nice. I liked changing capsules on-the-fly; while in use, they stay solidly on the mic's body, but when changing them you do have to mute the mic's channel to avoid loud pops. The Rycote shock-mounts are a must, and I'd recommend a good pop filter for vocal recording.

Next at The [Village Recorder](#) in West L.A. (Thanks Jeff Greenberg) in Studio A using a vintage Neve 8028 console, the pair went to work as wide-spaced, cardioid drum overheads. Compared to the 30-plus-year-old AKG C 12As that they replaced, the JZs, with wide cardioid capsules, were a lot brighter, making them better for light traditional jazz drumming where you might desire the extra articulation. However, for this particular hard-rock session with a cymbal-bashing drummer, they didn't work out.

But at [University Of The Pacific At Stockton's](#) studio, the BT-201's bright sound worked well for a rock piano sound. I had them set to omni and placed just at the edge of the crook of a Steinway 6-foot grand. Using the school's Digidesign's C24 console mic preamps and no processing, I placed the mics facing directly across the harp and aimed at the hammers.

Compared to a pair of Audio-Technica AT4050s in the same location, the BT-201s were brighter--they gave me the brightness I wanted to cut through a dense track. To achieve this kind of percussively bright sound, I usually place mics right over the hammers. With the BT-201s placed farther away, I got a wider sound that captured more of the piano's total sound: the soundboard, harp, hammers and the recording space itself. It sounded less compressed than it usually does when close-miked.

Rockin' Pair

The JZ BT-201 comes in a foam-lined wooden box in several variants: A single microphone with a single cardioid capsule is \$515. You can also buy a single mic with cardioid, wide cardioid and omni capsule heads for \$635; or \$1,349 buys a matched stereo pair (reviewed here) where each mic has the three capsules. Extra capsules are \$105, and there is also an optional wide cardioid capsule available with a built-in -20dB pad for \$130. JZ recommends this capsule for miking loud sources such as snare drums when your mic pre-amp cannot handle the mic's high output level.

A matched pair of JZ BT-201s makes an excellent addition to any collection. These mics have a high output level and require little or no processing to capture great sound--particularly from pianos, acoustic guitars and quieter or more somber instruments. I liked all three capsules that come with the mics and found the quick-change, hot-swappable feature very useful and preferable to pattern switches.

Specification Sheet

Transducer Type	electrostatic
Operating Principle	pressure gradient
Diaphragm size	13mm
Output Impedance	50-ohms
Rated Load Impedance	1kOhms
Suggested Load	>250ohms
Sensitivity	11mV/Pa
S/N CCIR 468-3	71dB
S/N DIN/IEC 651	82dBA
Equivalent Noise DIN	12dBA
Max SPL @ 0.5%	140dB
Dynamic Range	128dB
Phantom Power	+48VDC
Current Consumption	<2mA
Dimensions	161.5mm L X 24mm W
Weight w/capsule	140grams

PRODUCT SUMMARY**COMPANY NAME:** JZ Microphones**PRODUCT:** BT-201**WEBSITE:** www.jzmic.com**PRICES:** \$515, single mic/single capsule; \$635, single mic/three capsules; or \$1,349, stereo pair (all MSRP)**PROS:** Well-made, three included hot-swappable capsules, bright sound.**CONS:** No mic clips or shock-mount or any other kit included, bright sound.

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