

Although they've been with us for some time, SIMON TILLBROOK decides to re-evaluate the usefulness of Radial's JD-7, X-Amp, and SGI in context of the modern studio.

"You're very small. I can't see your face!" Now that's not a phrase I ever imagined hearing myself say, but sometimes situations dictate. And when I uttered those words I was standing at one end of a gravel track while my colleague Adam was standing two hundred yards away with a portable recorder and the Audio-Technica 4071L microphone.

This makes it, as we discovered, extremely adept at pinpointing a sound source at a long distance. Its makers say it's designed for film and TV production, and for audio reinforcement in theatres. I can imagine it being used to cover large scale sports events like golf where broadcasters want to pick up on the sound of the competitors without getting in their way. And it would

AUDIO-TECHNICA BP4071, BP4071L, & BP4073

Shotgun Microphones



Two hundred yards. That's a long way. If you want to see for yourself how small a person looks at that distance, extend your arm in front of you. Go on, do it. Then raise your thumb, as if you're trying to hitch a ride. See the size of your thumbnail? That's how big we're talking. And at that moment a thumbnail-size Adam was pointing the Audio-Technica at me while I spoke at a normal volume. "You can still hear me right? Wave your hand if you can." A tiny hand was waved.

The reason for this long distance tomfoolery was to test whether the 4071L can live up to its promises. It's one of a trio of Audio-Technica microphones that the Audio Media elves left on my doorstep one morning, and is by far the most striking for one simple reason: its size. Innuendos aside, this thing is a whopper. At over twenty one inches in length, it's certainly the longest microphone I've ever seen and is claimed to be one of the biggest on the market. It's highly directional, with an extremely narrow field.

do that just fine, judging from our test.

The material we recorded was uncanny. Yes, there was the rumble of distant traffic from way behind me. But you could hear what I was saying at a normal level speech. You would have thought the microphone was just a few feet away from me. Two minutes of tinkering with a bit of EQ in software and I was even more intelligible. If I was (and this is highly unlikely) a competitor at a sporting event, you'd be able to hear everything I said as I prepared to tee off/bowl/bat/wrestle a big naked guy. It really, really was freakishly clear. If I was planning the coverage of the 2012 Olympics I'd be buying a truck load of these right now.

Size Isn't Everything

It's not just about distance either. I managed to fit the 4071L into a Rycote pistol grip and tried recording some material closer to hand. I pointed the mic in four different directions, like compass points, to gauge just

THE REVIEWER

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► how directional it is. Very, is the answer. There's a great deal of off-axis rejection; so much so that I could hear the sound of running water only when pointing east. It took a few seconds to find the source of the sound: melting snow pouring from the gutter of a stable building opposite me. To the naked ear the sound was just ambient noise. To the 4071L, held thirty feet away, the trickling water had become a spot effect. Move the mic about and you do get some phasing, as that narrow field sucks in whatever noise is sweeping past the long, long barrel. But the 4071L is not meant to be waved about. It's designed to be fixed in one place and used to focus in on its prey. It is, frankly, a stunning device. The only possible downside might be finding a full windshield to fit, as I can picture it being used outdoors an awful lot. But I'm sure there's something out there that would do the job.

Downsizing

The other two microphones I've been testing are the 4071L's little brother and sister. The smaller of this pair is the 4073, which sits at the other end of the size scale at a mere nine inches in length. But it has the same maximum input level of 141db, and the same 10db pad for when things get really loud. It's also designed for film, TV, and theatre work, but is much more at home on a boom pole or on top of a camera. It reminds me of the DPA shotgun mics we hire when we're recording cars for game audio, and has a similarly high build quality. Being quite small, it could easily be brought in close to a source and fitted into tight spaces.

I recently needed to do a quick voice test for an actor whom we were hoping to use on a game project. The only time we could grab him was in the middle of an afternoon at a café in the centre of York. Hardly the best place to record an audition, but we hoped the 4073 would help us out. The scenario was this: actor sat down with the mic on a table top stand in front of him, hooked up to our trusty old Marantz PMD 671. The café wasn't all that busy but there was still plenty of background noise and a bit of coming and going. The choice of mic was a good one. Despite being roughly the same size as my eleven year old AKG Blue Line cardioid, it has a very focused field. This did a good job of eliminating the café hubbub from our recording. It was also a clean, crisp signal that sounded like it came from a much bigger microphone. Highly recommended.

The middle sibling of this trio is the 4071 (minus the L). Size-wise, it sits between the other two, but still possesses an uncannily narrow field – similar to much longer mics. This is more of a general workday tool than its longer brother, but has the same high build quality and, like all three mics on test, has quite a high output, which is always useful. Like many a middle child it could



be a little overlooked, not having the 'wow' factor of the L variant or the neat pocket-ability of the 4073. But it's a microphone that would doubtless prove its worth over months or years of use.

Conclusion

All three are impressive for different reasons, but the 4071L really does take the breath away. Remind me never to swear if one's anywhere within a half a mile of me. **RAM**

INFORMATION

Ⓜ BP4071: GB£865.00,
BP4071L: GB£980.00,
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