Subject: Micing a Percussion Ensemble
Posted by Ebirah01 on Mon, 15 Aug 2011 14:22:48 GMT
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I have been asked to record a Sulawesi Kakuhla Ensemble and I need some advice: I have eight channels and I need to squeeze in the bossed gong set, the main double headed drum, the vocals (by all the players), and all the other percussion. I would like to close mic the bass drum, and flute player (the only non-percussion instrument), but that would take up all my lines as:

Bossed gong set - 2 mics
Lead vocals - 1 mic
Lead double headed drum - 2 mics
Flute - 1 mic
Bass drum - 1 mic
Other vocals - 1 mic

So maybe I need to take one mic off the lead double drum and use two overheads for the rest of the ensemble, including the backing vocals? Any thoughts?

Subject: Re: Micing a Percussion Ensemble
Posted by Thermionic on Tue, 16 Aug 2011 05:33:57 GMT
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I'd say it depends on what type of recorded sound you're looking for, and how much doctoring you plan to do on the tracks later. I presume by your post that you'll be recording this in one shot, with no overdubs? Also, are you using an analog board onto two tracks? A discrete hardware DAW? A computer-based software DAW?

If you were to use a pair of overheads for grabbing the backing vocals plus the close mics on the lead vocal, bossed gongs, lead drum, and flute, you'd likely end up with some phase problems, especially on the flute and vocals. I'd try a single stereo mic pair to capture the overall ensemble, with a close mic on the bass drum only.

Because it's a small ensemble, you could try an ORTF setup with (preferably) large diaphragm condenser mics. Actually, I'd record a scratch track with both an ORTF, and an AB spaced pair using omnidirectional pattern mics spaced 24" apart, and then see which I liked the sound of best. The ORTF is always gonna have clearer focus and more accurate imaging, while the AB pair is gonna have better spaciousness and better bass response for the drums. But, if you've ever used an ORTF setup, you know it's rather unforgiving of placement, and an AB pair is quite unforgiving of acoustics. And, the 3-to-1 rule must always be closely followed with AB pairs.

When I figured out which stereo pair I liked best, I'd close-mic the bass drum with a proper large-element kick drum/floor tom mic, or something like an EV RE-20 (which works great for such applications, believe it or not) if you have access to one, and go for it.

If you're recording with a DAW (especially computer-based), then that changes everything. You can close-mic the lead vocals and instruments as well, and then time-shift them to focus in with

the tracks from the stereo pair. OR, you could record the instruments first (without any vocals sung), using 6 close mics plus a pair of overheads to capture some ambience, and then mix them down to two tracks, with the overheads time-tweaked. Then, overdub the vocals.

Thermionic
