

# Shure SLX Wireless System

by Jason Spence

The new SLX wireless system from Shure offers up new features as well as many of the capabilities of its premium ULX line, like Audio Reference Companding and Automatic Frequency Scan. These features combined together have made one of the most user-friendly wireless systems available. Of

course, your favorite Shure microphone capsule can be used on the handheld transmitter, and the bodypack can be used for an instrument, lavalier or headset microphone.

The most notable new feature on the SLX system is the Sync function. This allows the frequency on the transmitter to be changed with the touch of a button. Removing the battery sleeve on the transmitter exposes the infrared port. Aiming it at the infrared port on the receiver and then hitting the sync button automatically changes the frequency on the transmitter to match the receiver—no more thumbing around in the dark trying to change frequencies.

Finding a clean frequency is done with ease from the receiver. Again, with just a touch of a button, you are back in business—the next clean channel will automatically be selected. Then hit the sync button, and you're synced with the transmitter. If you want to manually select a frequency, that is still an option.

Most functions are one-touch steps on the face of the receiver, eliminating the need to navigate through pages. The system can be locked so that the frequency can't be accidentally changed or be powered down. Each receiver is labeled on the face with its band and frequency ranges, which, up until now, has not been the case. Multiple systems can be used together and a total of eight frequency bands are available.

Like the ULX, there is no protruding antenna on the handheld transmitter, making it practical to use with a sexy appearance. Because of the sync function, there is no need to navigate through menus to change frequencies on the

transmitter. There are, however, both mute and power lock modes accessible from recessed buttons on the outside. As for the bodypack—check out the size. It is very slim and only weighs three ounces!

The receiver front panel is home to a backlit display—showing group, channel or frequency and an audio level meter. The select button also acts as navigation +/- in program modes. There is a ready light that indicates that transmit and receive frequencies are synched.

The back panel has both balanced XLR and 1/4-inch outputs. There is an output level attenuator and an external power supply with strain relief as well as the A/B antenna BNCs. All of the hardware for mounting a single or dual unit is included, including antenna cable and rack screws. If using multiple systems, an active antenna combiner is available.

As a longtime ULX user, there are a couple of things that I found that I wished were a bit different on the SLX. While searching for a frequency, I

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wish that, once the next clean frequency is found, the unit would not automatically switch, but wait for me to execute the change. Also, the hardwired antenna on the bodypack would be more difficult to replace if damaged as opposed to a removable antenna. Uncharacteristic of my experience with Shure, it took a few exchanges in hardware until I had a complete SLX system that was operating flawlessly, though their personnel were responsive and helpful.

The SLX system from Shure shares many of the most important features of the ULX including the characteristic Shure audio quality. Though the number of channels available simultaneously is half that of the ULX, you can still build an SLX system comprised of up to 20 units, and the half-rack-width case makes for space savings in your rack. The use of AA batteries gives comparable life at lower cost than with 9Vs. The system is extremely easy to use and would make a great option for getting into a wireless system. The SLX system gives you the cool new technology like the infrared sync, joined with the standards you expect from Shure, in a cost-effective package.

Shure  
www.shure.com

## Product information

SLX4 Wireless Receiver: \$518

SLX1 Bodypack Transmitter: \$284

SLX2 Mic/Transmitter: \$330-\$514.

(Price dependent on capsule chosen—SM58, SM86, Beta58, Beta87A, Beta87C)

# CharterOak SA538 Condenser Mic

by Randy Poole

The CharterOak Acoustic Devices SA538 tube microphone makes a good first impression before it's even plugged in. The case and build quality are quite impressive, demonstrated by the sheer weight of the product. It has the look and feel of the some of the old classic European tube mics. With a stylish matte black colored body (machined brass) with an embossed silver CharterOak emblem, you won't get confused on which side is the front of the mic.

The capsule is a dual, 1.07-inch, 6-micron-thick, gold-sputtered variety, behind an open-type protective grille reminiscent of classic designs. The shock mount is also of solid construction with two



large elastic bands in a familiar Germanic style. The power supply, however, looks like the standard deal coming from the Pacific Rim countries these days, while the mic cable has a tight-weaved,

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fabric-covered, outer shell that really adds a nice touch.

In listening tests, it was obvious this mic has a good amount of top end—the kind of high end that feels great on singers who need a little help in that department. With a male vocal, it

was compared to some old favorite mics through a UA6176 channel strip. The SA538 had a little more high mids and highs, with a somewhat subdued lower midrange. It also had less proximity effect than some mics, allowing a singer to work in close to the mic without it becoming muddy so quickly. There is this sweet spot in the high mids that, for certain vocalists, with the right compression, was

found to really make the vocal sit great in the mix, without being overwhelming. There seems to be something unique about this mic's ability to handle good amounts of compression and still keep the clarity of the singer right where you want it.

On a female vocal, we achieved similar results, the mic sounding natural and clear. The mic's EQ curve really helps those singers that need a little extra high-end clarity. I've gotten really nice results with fairly bright mics paired with relatively dark mic pres like a vintage Neve, and the SA538 was suited to that combination.

We also experimented with acoustic guitar recording with the CharterOak, trying several guitars of top-notch session player Mark Baldwin. While the top end seemed to help the darker guitars, we quickly realized the result was generally too bright for this to be this mic's best application.

As always, you'll want to match microphone and preamp to the voice or instrument that you're recording. With its ample high end and detail, the CharterOak SA538 can add a valuable option to your mic collection.

CharterOak Acoustic Devices  
www.charteroakacoustics.com

## Product information

SA538 Tube Condenser Mic: \$1,499



All you need is  
**ONE**

System (single unit) Only \$999 (includes 10-PRO Channel 1 Sound Module) was required to capture the complete picture and the instant broadcast audience of the National Football League and the multi-terrestrial pay-per-view satellite. The CharterOak SA538 Tube Condenser Mic is the perfect choice for your broadcast studio.



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