

The ideal recording space is, for most people, an impossible dream. Although it turns out that dreams are made of punched aluminium. JERRY IBBOTSON reports.

I hate to start a review with the words "many years ago when I..." but: many years ago when I worked in local radio I used to do shifts at an outlying office of BBC Radio Devon in sunny Barnstaple. For those who don't know, Devon is a county in South West England and Barnstaple is a small town on its north coast. Anyway, the office cum studio was in the local council building and had one primary bit of acoustic treatment. It was called a door. There were some BBC sound 'boxes' on the wall close to the mixer but that was about it. The worst thing was the enormous, single-glazed window that looked out over the River Tor. Just over the horizon was an RAF base and every so often a jet would pass by. Oh happy days.

What that studio really could have

sound. We set up the filter along with our own SE Z3300 microphone and I acted as vocal guinea pig while my colleague Tim retreated to the control room.

I'd love to be able to give you a detailed technical account of how the filter functioned, perhaps giving you a precise dB figure for key frequencies and so on. But I have no idea. What I can tell you is what my own ears told me: that it worked. Straightaway my voice was much cleaner and more focussed. The tones of the room, however subtle, had disappeared and the recording Tim made was sharper and more intense. We then tried sitting a second person (thanks Micky) slightly behind me and off mic. The pair of us had a conversation, with me talking into the microphone and filter and Micky chatting over my shoulder. Not terribly scientific but it would show how the

SE ELECTRONICS REFLEXION FILTER



done with was some kind of device to help shield the microphone; something relatively unobtrusive that would help isolate the mic from the room ambience and create a more focussed sound. Something like the Reflexion Filter perhaps?

This is the latest offering from the microphone people, SE Electronics. The firm has a growing reputation for making high-quality, affordable kit and the Reflexion Filter promises to complement the other products in their range. It's basically a small, curved screen that fixes to the upright of a mic stand and kills off unwanted noise around a microphone. It actually looks like a full size walk-in acoustic screen that's been shrunk down to Barbie and Ken dimensions.

Take it out of the box and it feels quite hefty. The frame is made from punched aluminium, through which diffused sound can pass. Inside this is a layer of aluminium foil to break up lower frequency sound. Next comes an air space and then a layer of wool panels that look like diddy bass traps. It's well finished and eye catching; generating a series of "Ooohh, what's that?" comments from passers by. The punched aluminium looks so cool that I couldn't resist a brief spell of walking around with it in front of my face muttering "Luke, I'm your father," until I had to get back to work.

In Use

To get it up and running you have to take your mic off its stand and put it to one side for a moment or two. The filter then clamps to the leg of the mic stand by means of an alloy bracket. I upset Ian Young from distributor Sonic Distribution by describing it as a bit of ironmongery (sorry Ian) but it can probably be described as 'over-engineered'. It also requires a strong grip to tighten all the fastenings properly and prevent yourself from being struck by a drooping piece of shiny alloy.

The microphone then screws on a bracket which you can adjust for the optimum position; the closer to the inside of the filter the deader the sound and vice versa.

At present we don't have a bespoke voice booth at Media Mill, we use one of our audio workshops which although acoustically treated does not have a totally dead

filter coped with isolating unwanted audio.

Playing back the recording, it sounded like we were in two separate rooms! Granted Micky was a little off mic but my voice was 'up front' and punchy while my colleague sounded a lot further away than he actually was.

Last year we worked on an audio CD project that involved recording voice material at various locations around the country. These weren't interviews, but readings from various people, including a former Archbishop. They had to be recorded on-site at people's homes and we did the best we could to isolate the voice from the environment. The Reflexion Filter would have been perfect for the job.

Conclusion

I can also imagine it being great for any situation where you need to record a certain voice (eg. for a game) but at a time when the actor can't come to you. Set this up in a hotel room and you'd have a quiet recording. Then there are the radio and TV reporters who file material from home down an ISDN or by satellite phone. The Reflexion Filter would get rid of that nasty 'reporting live from the bathroom' sound. It's one of those things that once you've tried it, you wonder why you didn't start using it before. Now, how much is the postage to Barnstaple? **AM**

THE REVIEWER

Jerry Ibbotson runs Media Mill, a York-based audio production company started in 2000 that specialises in sound for video games. Prior to this Jerry was a BBC journalist for ten years, ending his spell with the Beeb as a reporter and newsreader at Radio One Newsbeat.

INFORMATION

SE Electronics Reflexion £195 + VAT; \$399 + Tax.

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