

QUE AUDIO SNIPER KIT

Australia's Que Audio is kitting out location sound.

Text: Jon Marsh



▶ As a professional audio engineer for the last 42 years, the first thing I thought when confronted with Que Audio's Sniper Kit was: 'This is an interesting-looking toy'. It didn't take me long to realise that its sound really does belie its size. What's more, its diminutive stature allows it to go places that bigger, more traditional location mics wouldn't dream of going.

The Sniper Kit is very well organised, light weight and compact. It's crying out for everyday use: pop it in the boot, bundle it in your carry-on luggage, or toss it in a suitcase.

Inside the leatherette pouch is the phantom powered mini-shotgun microphone, a telescopic boom (that can be adjusted anywhere up to nearly 1.5m,) a shockmount, table stand, a rubber mount to insulate the microphone even further from vibration, foam wind gag and furry wind gag that the makers are calling a 'Wombat' – yet another gag! There are various audio adapters to suit numerous audio devices such as video cameras and digital recording devices and a cold shoe to suit video cameras, a two-metre straight lead and an optional curly lead that comfortably expands to one metre. All of this comes in a carry case that measures only 42cm x 20cm x 6cm with enough room for extra spares.

The many adapters allow the Sniper to slot into almost any circumstance and I would envisage its use by both amateur and professional filmmakers alike. The microphone can be mounted on the camera and the audio directed to the camera or a separate recording device, or even fed to an optional wireless device, should you wish. You can also mount it on the table stand for more intimate interviews without all of the clutter of larger microphones. The small size and light weight make it unobtrusive and easily handled in tight situations, making it easy to keep the equipment 'out of shot'. This kit would also be very useful for journalists and interviewers for the same reasons – even with the Sniper in the shot, its impact would be subtle compared to its much larger cousins. I could also imagine drama or music students using the Sniper to video and or record their rehearsals and performances for later self-appraisal or criticism.

HEARD BUT NEVER SEEN

That's the Sniper package, but how does the mic sound? This microphone, despite its small physical size performs excellently. Recorded dialogue is clear and crisp, and

background atmosphere is smooth and non-intrusive. The first test I conducted was to set up the microphone in my home studio a mere half-metre from the speakers and subject it to a 1kHz tone at normal listening level. By rotating the microphone 180° I found a remarkable 20dB of rejection. Next, I recorded a short interview in my back garden, which is very close to a busy arterial road in Sydney. Again, the voice was very clear and the rejection of traffic noise from the road was excellent – in fact, most of the extraneous noise came from the reverberations from surrounding buildings. Next, I tried mounting the Sniper on an old video camera using the shockmount, rubber insulator and cold shoe, and this arrangement was very effective at reducing noise from the camera motor. Finally, I set out to find the mic's distortion threshold. I subjected it to various extreme noises, from shouting in close proximity to hitting metal bars with a hammer, and found it quite difficult to make the microphone distort or square the waveform – so loud noise applications, such as a crowded media pack or at major event such as a sporting arena, are well catered for by the Sniper.

Only time will tell how robust the Sniper Kit is when subjected to the rigours of location work. At first glance, the cables and connectors seem somewhat flimsy but with due care they seem to stand up to the job. I definitely wouldn't leave home without a spare cable. There again, I've never left home without a spare heavy-duty XLR microphone cable (I've had many a dry solder joint and even XLRs disintegrate in my hands over the years).

This kit is now be part of my repertoire. I'm still maintaining a larger shotgun, a dynamic and a cardioid hand microphone in my general setup for particular circumstances, but thanks to the sound and portability of the Sniper I'm confident it'll suit a great deal of my needs – I'll certainly keep it packed in my car for that unexpected opportunity.

The Sniper Kit sounds good, and is a well priced, well-appointed, lightweight, compact and easily transportable option. I've no doubt anyone – from the seasoned pro, such as myself, to the novice – will find it very attractive. Yes, microphone technology has generally improved over the last few decades but this is the only one I've seen of this power, size... not to mention the price. ■

NEED TO KNOW

Price
\$479

Contact

Syncrotech Systems
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Pros

Good vocal clarity.
Excellent rejection.
Extremely portable.
Well priced.

Cons

A little fiddly.

Summary

Price is now no longer a barrier to high-quality professional location sound. The Sniper Kit will suit countless circumstances and everyone from the rank amateur to the pro.