

Recording an Old-Time Band with Bartlett Microphones

Copyright 2012 by Bruce Bartlett

“It’s like having an invisible isolation booth for each musician”



The Shakin’ Hammers String Band of Elkhart, Indiana wanted to record an album live in the studio – with everyone playing together at the same time. But they also wanted isolated tracks so they could correct individual mistakes.

That’s hard to do in a live recording because of leakage. The sound from the banjo leaks into the dulcimer mic; the sound from the bass leaks into the guitar mic, and so on. Suppose you’ve recorded an instrument on a track, and there are some mistakes in the performance. So you “punch-in” or record a new performance over the wrong notes. Because of leakage, you might still hear some of the wrong notes in the other instruments’ tracks.

Luckily, the Bartlett instrument mics pick up very little leakage because they are mounted directly on each instrument. The Fiddle Mic hears only the fiddle; the Mandolin Mic hears only the mandolin. So we could punch-in to correct mistakes.

Because the tracks were well isolated, the band could play together – with a good musical feel – yet still record perfect performances. It’s as if the mics provided invisible isolation booths within the studio room.

We used a Guitar Mic on the guitar, a Banjo Mic on the banjo, Cello Mics

on the dulcimer, and so on. In each instrument's track, I filtered out frequencies below the lowest note of the instrument, which further reduced leakage.

When I soloed each track, I heard very little of the band, even though everyone was playing at once.

Another benefit of this very close miking is that the mics do not pick up the room acoustics. So you can record in an ordinary room.