

# Stereo Snare and Fun Room Miking Tips

By José Diogo Neves

## Wide, warm, stereo snare drums and off-center room miking

### Do you like stereo snares? I do!

I don't like to label microphones. Every microphone can record any instrument, any sound. There are no 'vocal microphones' or 'drum microphones', there are only *microphones*. My philosophy is that the process of recording is an open book, a white canvas. I'm always looking for a way to improve my recordings by trying some crazy ideas—for example, recording stereo snares!

For this idea, I used a pair of my favorite microphones—Vanguard Audio Labs VIS pencil condenser mics (with LOLLI capsules) on opposite sides of a snare drum. I set them to cardioid and recorded them through two channels of a Trident Trimix Console. For this technique, the snare was recorded alone without the rest of the drum kit. I placed the microphones fairly wide—about 50cm away from the side of the drum (or about 20" apart, facing each other). Of course, feel free to explore different distances. I didn't precisely phase align the mics; instead, I used my ears playing with the natural phasing and delay to create interesting sounds. In the mix, I hard-panned the results to accomplish a massive stereo sound. The reason I did this was that I was looking for an exaggerated wide-open snare sound to fit into a soulful/electronic track—a sampled snare that still sounded natural and real.



Photo by: José Diogo Neves

I could have easily used a pre-recorded sample from the millions of drum sample companies out there, such as for example from the good people at THAT SOUND, but there is great satisfaction in doing it yourself! That's the point of sound to me—to explore, to continually try and look for other sonic options.

### Get random

In my sessions, I often have my 'random microphones' (I actually use another name for them, but let's go with this one) ready to do crazy things. Sometimes I'll put a microphone under the piano, not to capture the piano, but to capture its resonances when used as a room microphone on my drum tracks. Sometimes I'll place a microphone facing a wooden box a couple of meters away from the drums for added dimension, or I'll aim a mic at a window facing away from the source to capture unique reflections. Another trick I use is to place a microphone in a different room next to where I'm tracking, for example a storage room—I leave the door open, so the sound of the instruments bleeds in and acts kind of like an echo chamber.

### Pick a versatile mic

For mic choice, I often grab the versatile Vanguard Audio Labs VIS+LOLLI. This mic kit comes with a pair of V1 pencil condenser mics along with five interchangeable capsules, my favorite of which is the included large diaphragm multipattern LOLLI capsule. It's by far the best room microphone I've ever used—why? It's so warm, which is generally my problem with many room microphone choices—lack of warmth,



at least the ones I've tried. In addition to its warmth, it also retains the detail and the depth of the space. In his May 2018 review, RECORDING editor Paul Vnuk Jr. agreed that one of the things he liked most about the V34C LOLLI capsule is how it retains its richness when used at a distance. This warmth and depth is why I chose the LOLLI over the other capsules for my stereo snare miking technique.

More than just for rooms, it's one of my first choices for acoustic guitar, drum overheads, and grand piano. This is an excellent reminder that mics are not just about price and specs. Don't get me wrong—those things are important. As a college professor, I teach the technical side of mics and mic placement, but I also teach that in the end, your ears should be the judge of what's going on sound-wise. I've used so-called 'kick drum mics', such as the legendary AKG D12, to record vocals, because it fit the sound I was looking for. On the same song I was working on, I used the same technique I used for the snare to record stereo vocals.



Photo by: Silver Tönisson during the Rita Ray Retrosonic Pro Audio Live Sessions

## Find the fun in the sound

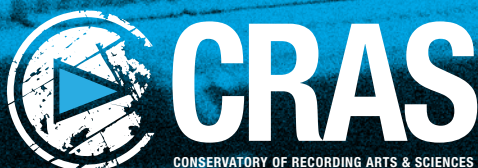
Just explore and find the fun in sound. Don't be afraid to try crazy ideas. Quite often, those ideas will be the best! Point mics at walls, get creative with stereo miking on things we usually record in mono, and let me know how it goes! Have fun!

*José Diogo Neves is an award-winning recording, mixing and mastering engineer working in multiple genres with a diverse array of artists. José is also a Professor at TÜ Viljandi Kultuuriakadeemia - Tartu University in Estonia and recently became an Adjunct Lecturer in the School of Communication at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.*

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