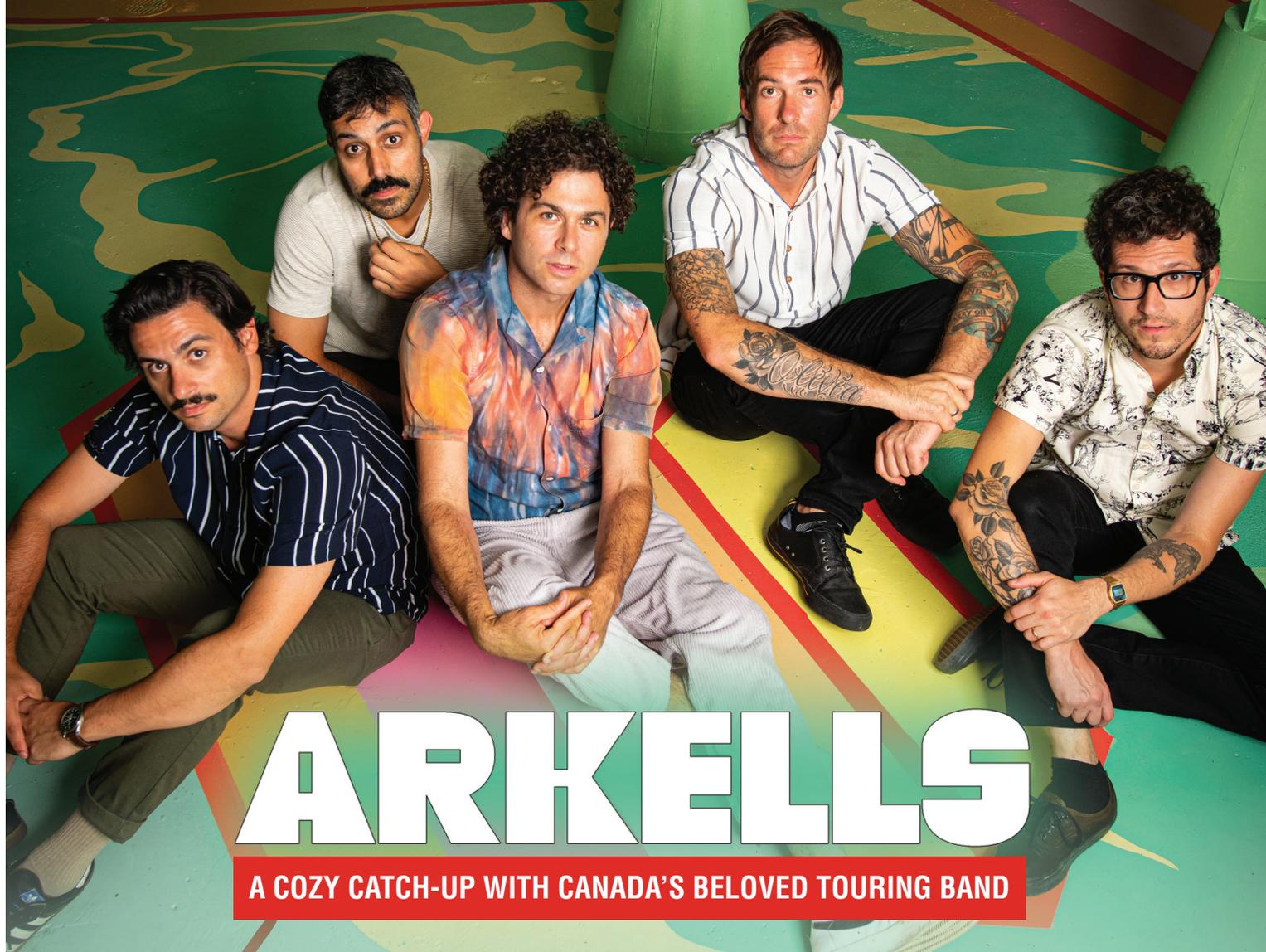


SELLING VINYL: DOES IT MAKE FINANCIAL SENSE FOR INDIE ARTISTS?

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ARKELLS

A COZY CATCH-UP WITH CANADA'S BELOVED TOURING BAND

SATE IS HERE TO "BURN SH DOWN, CHANGE THIS SH** UP"**

THE STRUMBELLAS'
SIMON WARD
LAYS BARE HIS SOUL
ON SOLO JOURNEY

2022 DRUM & PERCUSSION
SPECIAL WITH:
JUNIOR SANTOS, JULY TALK,
KEYS N KRATES, & MORE!

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On *The Fool*, SATE Proves She's Our New Blues-Punk-Rock Queen

By Michael Raine

SATE was born to be on stage and raise hell. The daughter of legendary singer Salome Bey (a.k.a. "Canada's First Lady of the Blues"), she has taken that legacy, turned up the volume, and blown minds with her live shows. Now, on her new LP *The Fool*, she masters her blend of blues, punk, and rock and pulls no punches.

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On His Debut Solo LP, The Strumbellas' Leader Is More Vulnerable Than Ever

By Michael Raine

As the lead singer and songwriter for chart-topping, Juno-winning band The Strumbellas, Simon Ward is known for masterfully crafting anthemic choruses that lift your spirits in communal bliss. But behind those great, big singalongs were often stories of personal struggle. Under the moniker Simon and the Island, Ward is not hiding anything on his debut solo LP.

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Turn it Up to 11! Actually Don't, Because You May Regret It

By Ian Cohen

While practicing, performing, or producing, it's difficult to resist getting louder - after all, you're wailing. But for musicians, engineers, and producers to stay working and have longevity in the music business, they need to consider the positive effects of treating their ears with some mercy during the journey.

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CM's 2022 Drums & Percussion Special

By Michael Raine

Five unique and ultra-talented drummers join *Canadian Musician* for our annual panel-style look at all things drums and percussion. Learn from the stories and experiences of July Talk's Danny Miles, Keys N Krates' Adam Tune, Dominican-Canadian percussion master Junior Santos, rising star Isaiah Gibbons, and Thai-Canadian stick-wielder Salin Cheewapansri (Dominique Fils-Aimé).



COVER PHOTO: ARKELLS BY NATHAN NASH
ART BY DORAS

AKG Lyra & Ara USB Microphones

By Andrew Leyenhorst

A long-time stalwart of the audio world dating back to 1947, AKG carries a sterling reputation for its studio microphones (vintage and modern alike), headphones, and beyond. Now, the Vienna-founded, California-headquartered manufacturer is offering its sound to everyone with their new Lyra Ultra-HD and Ara USB microphones. They're elegant, simple, intuitive, and splendid-sounding condenser mics available at an extremely attractive price point.

Geared towards voiceover and music recording alike, these microphones deliver high-end specs and loaded functionality, with the Lyra acting as the big sibling. Let's begin dissecting these...

Lyra

The Lyra Ultra-HD – or Lyra for short – is AKG's answer to the question, "What if you grew the ideal USB microphone in a lab?" This plug-and-play, USB 2.0 mic is loaded up on features and offers surprising specs given its price tag barely eclipses the \$200 CAD mark – beginning with its hi-res 24-bit/192kHz conversion capability. Both input and output-wise, the Lyra demonstrates tremendous clarity.

In terms of sonic technicalities, the mic delivers a full-range frequency response of 20Hz to 20kHz at levels up to 129dB SPL, while the headphone output stretches from 20Hz to 22kHz.

To delve further into the hardware, the Lyra employs four AKG-proprietary, permanently-polarized backplate condenser capsules, and subsequently features what the manufacturer refers to as "capture modes" – Front, Front & Back, Tight Stereo, and Wide Stereo – allowing the mic to be appropriated for a wide variety of circumstances and sound sources. These are selectable via one of the control knobs on the back of the mic, neighbouring the Microphone Gain knob. Found on the front face are the headphone output pot, the mute button, and a small bank of LEDs to signify the selected capture mode.

I'd argue that the biggest compromise when it comes to the Lyra, though it applies to both, is in the build quality. The mic looks good and is fairly compact, channeling a sleek, modernized vintage character; however, it's all plastic aside from the grille. The build is undoubtedly solid and is certainly serviceable, but as I noted, it's a pretty obvious compromise. That said, it's one

that's worth being made, as the performance of this mic is stellar.

As far as the control layout, I do feel it would be preferable for the mute button to be placed on the back and the mic gain pot on the front, as dialing up gain via reach-around feels a bit counter-intuitive on the fly. Also worth noting is the detachable desktop base, allowing the mic to be mounted on any standard mic stand or boom, adding to its versatility.

In use, this is another one of those products that, quite simply, just *works*; you plug it in, and it goes. It sounds really, really good and is quite smooth and natural on a variety of sources from voice to guitars to percussion. The stereo modes are also fun to play around with, and add a unique dimension to the mic's repertoire. My one qualm is that, especially for "studio" voiceover applications such as podcasting, or other cases where you need to keep recordings dry, you need to be very careful with placement and mic gain, even in the Front mode; it's very easy to capture more room sound than you might like, as the mic is not very directional. The other thing to keep in mind when monitoring directly through the headphone output is that there is no way to balance the input signal versus the output signal – so achieving an ideal headphone mix while also setting the input gain appropriately can take a bit of work, depending on what you're doing.

Don't let that dissuade you, however; it's a killer unit, and I would immediately recommend it to anybody in the market for a USB mic given that it sounds absolutely splendid, is easy to use, and can be deployed for pretty much any small-format application – on top of looking pretty. It's tough to go wrong with the Lyra for what it offers.

Ara

The Ara, an even-more-affordable option, essentially strips down the Lyra to its basic functionality and a smaller, but still elegant, form factor. The main differences lie in the fact that while the Ara can still handle hi-res, 24-bit audio, its sample rate capability caps at 96kHz rather



than the Lyra's 192kHz, and instead of four capsules and capture modes, the Ara has two (Front and Front & Back).

Sonically, the input frequency response still extends for the full range of 20Hz to 20kHz, but the maximum SPL tolerance is slightly reduced to 120dB. No matter, though, as the Ara also sounds fantastic. It also includes a removable base like the Lyra, allowing it to be installed in a wide variety of applications.

My one gripe with this one is that it does away with the input gain knob altogether, instead opting only for two knobs on the front face for capture mode selection and the headphone out (which can be pushed in to activate the mute function), but that's just me being a picky engineer, since adjusting preamp gain within your device's system settings works fine.

Overall, these two mics from AKG are a very welcome addition, and a newly shining beacon amongst the tumultuous storm that is the USB microphone market. They sound great, they're easy to use, and will find themselves at home in just about any application from music recording to video calling to podcasting.

Andrew Leyenhorst is a Niagara-based freelance producer, engineer, mixer, and Consulting Editor at Canadian Musician.