

■ Equipment Review

Yaesu MD-100A8X Desk Microphone

Reviewed by Ron Fisher VK3OM*



Yaesu MD-100A8X microphone.

When I wrote the review of the FT-1000MP I mentioned that I would like to look at the matching Yaesu desk microphone, the MD-100A8X. I guess that Chris Ayres, Dick Smith's amateur radio guru, must read our reviews because a few weeks later an MD-100A8X arrived at the Federal office along with another FT-1000MP to try it out on. No doubt about it, an equipment reviewer's life is never dull.

Just in case you haven't seen one of these very elegant microphones, let me tell you all about it. Firstly, it is a brand new design quite different from the older Yaesu desk microphones. It is now very smooth and rounded and not as heavy looking as some of the previous models. According to the advertising material, and also the operation sheet that comes with the microphone, it is described as having "a heavy diecast base and a high impact plastic mic housing".

The last point is right, but the first is wrong. The base is not diecast at all, but

plastic. The "heavy" part comes from a collection of steel bars glued to the bottom plate. I wonder if any MD-100A8X were ever made with diecast bases or perhaps Yaesu just assumed they were when the delivery came from the Japanese Microphone Company. I assume that Yaesu don't actually manufacture their own microphones. I might be wrong.

In actual fact, diecast or not, the whole thing is very well made and I cannot see that it is in any way inferior for having a plastic base. But Yaesu do need to put their advertising right. (*Stop Press! Yaesu have been advised by Dick Smith Electronics and will amend the instruction sheet. Ed*)

MD-100A8X Features and Facilities

The microphone element is a 500 ohm dynamic mounted to give a cardioid response. That is, it has a pronounced front to back ratio in its sound pick-up pattern. This means that

it will not respond to noise from the back and sides and results in a much cleaner overall sound compared to a non-directional microphone.

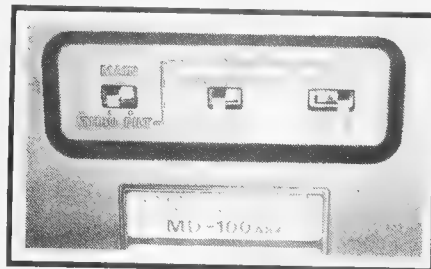
However, the interesting part is the electronics that are built into the base. Here are circuits that provide two positions of bass cut and one position of high boost. Yaesu don't tell us how this is done, and there is no circuit diagram supplied. The whole thing is built on to a shielded circuit board which would require quite a bit of unsoldering to get to. I drew a line at this point.

The bass cut and high boost are controlled with three miniature switches set into the underneath of the base (see photograph). The push-to-talk bar is set right at the front of the base with a PTT lock button on the left hand side. The scanning control is unusual in that it is spring loaded, holding it in the centre position, with a slight pressure needed to produce either up or down scanning. More pressure brings in fast scanning, but note that this control is not (unfortunately) a duplicate of the shuttle-jog tuning of the FT-1000MP.

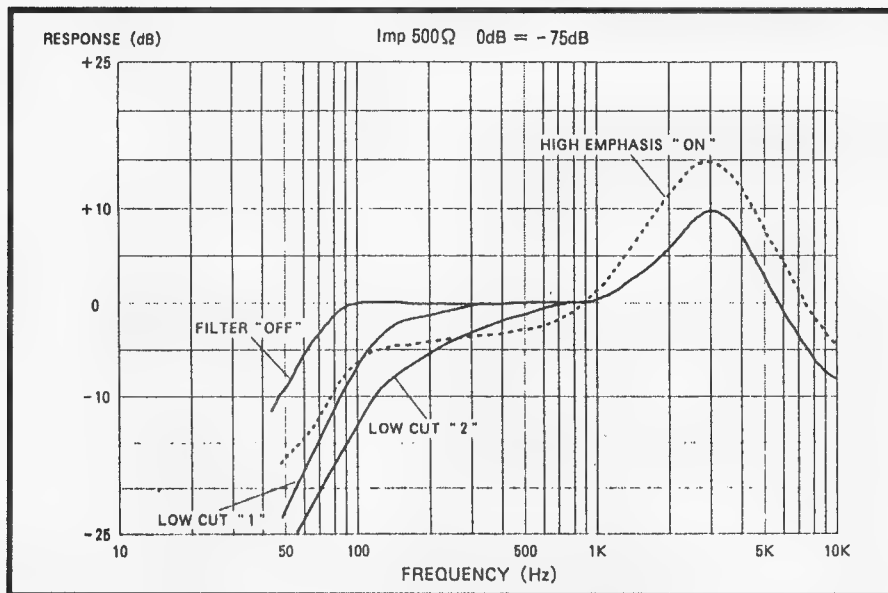
The base of the MD-100A8X is connected to the microphone with a short lead terminating in a standard eight pin metal line socket that mates with the microphone. On the rear of the base are two output connectors. The first is a metal eight pin plug, the second a modular eight pin plastic socket. Our review microphone was not supplied with the standard connecting lead to go to the transceiver so the lead for the MH-31 hand mic was unplugged from the microphone body and the modular plug connected to the socket on the base of the MD-100A8X.

Performance

On-air reports were very favourable with the high boost switched out, but most thought it sounded too sharp with



Bass cut and high boost controls under the base of the microphone.



Frequency response curves of the MD-100A8X microphone.

the boost in. I have included the response curve as supplied with the microphone, which shows that, even in the normal position, there is quite a bit of high frequency boost. Perhaps the extra high frequency output might be useful under very poor conditions.

The two bass cut positions did not affect the quality to any great extent. The first bass cut position produced no audible effect at all while the second gave a just noticeable reduction in the low end.

Well, on-air tests are interesting, but you have to rely on what other people think, so I decided to make up some adaptors to connect the MD-100A8X to a good quality tape recorder and see just what it sounded like. While on the job, I also decided to check out a variety of other microphones as a comparison. The results were, to say the least, very interesting.

Firstly, on air reports indicated that the MD-100A8X on the FT-1000MP and my usual station set-up of a Shure 444 and a TS-940S sounded very similar. However, listening to the two microphones on tape, they were totally different. In fact, the Shure 444 was without doubt the worst sounding microphone of all tested. It sounded very peaky and far too sharp.

The MD-100A8X, on the other hand, had a very clean transparent sound with excellent highs and well balanced bass response. I checked out several hand

microphones, including the MH-31 as supplied with the FT-900 and FT-1000MP. Most of these produced a boxy sound that was absent with all the desk microphones. In fact, there was far less difference between sound quality of the hand microphones than the desk mics with the exception of the Shure 444. Some of the other microphones tested were the Kenwood MC-50, MC-60, MC-42, MC-35 and the MC-10, a very old hand microphone with much better than average quality.

MD-100A8X Conclusion

If you would like to improve your transmitted audio quality, then a desk microphone is the right way to go. The MD-100A8X produces superb audio from the FT-1000MP.

However, beware! Good audio from a good microphone is the beginning. But you also need a transmitter which is capable of producing good distortion-free quality with the response from the filter properly set-up. There are many transmitters out there that don't meet the above requirements.

At a list price of \$229 the MD-100A8X is not cheap, but it will produce quality you can be proud of. Thanks to Dick Smith Electronics for the loan of the MD-100A8X and the FT-1000MP to go with it.

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