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The Briefing Room

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THE SAXOPHONE SINGS WITH MOJAVE AUDIO

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Hollywood, CA ... When it comes to microphones, guys like multiple Grammy® Award winning producer/engineer Al Schmitt can get their hands on whatever type make and model microphone they want. So if Schmitt says he really likes using a particular microphone for a specific application, you can rest assured there's solid reasoning behind his decision—and when it comes to recording saxophones, his microphone of choice is the MA-200 Vacuum Tube Condenser Microphone from Mojave Audio.

With an unparalleled seventeen Grammy Awards for engineering to his credit, along with two Latin Grammys, Schmitt's list of hit recordings includes several of the best-known albums of our time, including Henry Mancini's *Hatari*, George Benson's *Breezin'*, Steely Dan's *Aja*, and Natalie Cole's *Unforgettable*, to name but a few. With Barbara Streisand's *Love is the Answer* and Diana Krall's *Quiet Nights* being among his more recent accomplishments, Schmitt's discography is impressive.

Schmitt recently recorded new tracks for the forthcoming album projects of Japanese vocalist Hiromi Kanda as well as Russian vocalist Oleg Frish. Both projects are English language, worldwide releases recorded and engineered at Schmitt's long-standing studio of choice—Capitol Studios. For the Hiromi Kanda sessions, which Schmitt just finished recording and mixing in Capitol Studios' A, B, and C suites, he deployed four Mojave Audio MA-200 microphones on four saxophones. With the Oleg Frish sessions, whose big band arrangements were orchestrated by none other than Pat Williams, Schmitt deployed his full 5-mic MA-200 arsenal on the five saxophones.

Schmitt discussed how he came to use the Mojave Audio MA-200 on saxophones. "My assistant, Steve Genewick, and I put the mics up on the saxes for an audition and we just loved the sound we got," Schmitt explained. "Not only did we like sound, but the sax players also liked what they heard. Everyone was really impressed with the sax sound we achieved using these microphones."

With the MA-200 angled down and positioned approximately three feet from the horn's keys, Schmitt discovered he was able to capture the ideal combination of sound from the horn as well as the characteristic clicking of the keys. "On one of the tracks," he said, "we overdubbed a solo saxophone and the session contractor, who is a sax player himself said, 'You get the greatest sax sound.' I responded with 'Thank you—part of that sound is the player and the other part is the microphone.' Steve and I received compliments on these microphones from everyone involved in those sessions and that, to me, is the ultimate compliment."

"The sax is a very loud instrument and the MA-200 handles its sound pressure level really well—without any issues whatsoever," Schmitt continued. "The sound was great from top to bottom. We didn't encounter any 'honking' sounds that can occur from a boost in the microphone's midrange. The Mojave MA-200's are nice and flat all the way across the frequency range. These mics are very flattering to the instruments."

In addition to the sonic performance of the MA-200, Schmitt reports he is equally impressed with Mojave Audio's customer/technical support services. "Aside from the fact that I've known Dusty Wakeman (Mojave Audio's president) for perhaps the last 30 years and have both a great friendship with him as well as tremendous respect for his engineering skills, this company is immediately on the case if you ever require support. Should you need assistance, they're extremely responsive and you'll never lose any time."

As he turned his attention to the business of the day, Schmitt offered this closing comment regarding his Mojave Audio MA-200 microphones. "Everything on these two most recent projects came out fantastic with the MA-200's," Schmitt said. "I was so excited about using them the first time and then, when I put them on the five saxes with the big band, it was even better. Steve and I were just thrilled with the results we were getting. I have another big band project coming up the first part of August and, already, I can't wait to use them again."

About the Mojave Audio MA-200 Vacuum Tube Condenser Microphone

The MA-200 is a large diaphragm, vacuum tube condenser microphone with a fixed cardioid pattern. Born to a lineage of fine microphone designs by David Royer, the MA-200 gives warm, full-bodied reproductions of vocals and instruments, with none of the shrillness and high frequency distortion artifacts that are often encountered with modern condenser microphones.