

**Evaluation Sessions
using the
Shure PSM 200
In Ear Monitor System**

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Evaluation Sessions w / PSM200



Artist: Julie Nolen, Austin singer / songwriter

Date: June 19, 2002

Project: Debut CD, "Stand There & Look Pretty"

Session: Guitar and vocal overdubs

Background: Julie is a singer/songwriter from Abilene Texas who moved to Austin to attend the University but ended up beginning a musical career instead. She currently is enjoying a local buzz playing in solo or duo format in Austin bars and with her full band in larger venues.

IEM Function: High quality wireless monitor system with very low bleed into guitar and vocal mikes

Comments: Foam bud covers are too large for small female ears, need to make a second, smaller / thinner size. Small plastic sleeves fit better but are uncomfortable. Sound is great! Likes the ability to move around and control her own volume.



Artist: Don Burns, Austin session musician

Date: June 20, 2002

Project: Julie Nolen CD

Session: Bass overdubs

Background: Don is a seasoned session bassist who plays all styles from country to funk. He stays very busy with live and studio work, currently playing for corporate parties, weddings, and other high-paying functions in Austin-based cover band Blind Date. Don currently uses Samson IEMs in his live work but is dissatisfied with the sound.

IEM Function: Provide high personal SPL he likes to work with, in control room for easier communication. Also to evaluate for live use and possible purchase.

Comments: Comfortable, better sound than Samson buds, not quite as good as Shure E1. Good volume, sufficient bass with some EQ added. Would purchase if price is right, want to evaluate E5s as well.

Evaluation Sessions w / PSM200



Artist: Lost Wolf Band

Date: June 21, 2002

Project: Outdoor concert

Session: BarBQ Cookoff Festival, Thorndale, TX

Background: Lost Wolf is an extremely popular show band in the Austin / Giddings / San Antonio area, performing original and cover country, rock, pop, and rap. In addition to performing 100+ shows per year, they have released a debut CD entitled "Lost Wolf." A single from the CD, "She's Gone," has received heavy regional airplay and done well on the charts. LW is a pioneering band in terms of technology, having used IEMs (Garwood) for more than 5 years, and employing no backline amplification at all.

IEM Function: Provide on-stage monitor for one band member instead of Garwood unit, for comparison purposes.

Comments: PSM200 worked adequately during opening set, which was just one vocalist with an amplified acoustic guitar. Upon beginning full band set, vocalist complained that PSM200 could not be made loud enough to hear over the drum set and monitor engineer pulled the unit, replacing with the usual Garwood unit. Sound crew (including me) then thoroughly tested the PSM200 to determine the fault. A new battery did not help. RF was steady, tone was good, and unit seemed fine. Observation was made that limiter on receiver could not be made to flash without distorting input on transmitter, even if receiver volume was turned all the way up. Use of a "Y" cord to drive both transmitter inputs greatly increased the volume in the earbuds but there was no opportunity to retest on stage during that set. Inexperience of (new) vocalist with IEMs may be a contributing factor. Band agreed to retest at a later date.



Artist: Eddie Green, regular FOH guy for Lost Wolf

Date: June 21, 2002

Project: Lost Wolf live show (see above)

Session: FOH mix for outdoor festival

Background: Eddie has a great ear for sound and is very experienced at his job. He has joined a long line of distinguished soundmen working for Lost Wolf (MrKnobs having been the first), and has been with the organization for about 3 years. He also manages the Austin Mars Music superstore.

IEM Function: Evaluated PSM200 sound from his house mix position, examined receiver and transmitter features.

Comments: Great sound, good idea to combine mixer and transmitter. Thinks it is an excellent feature to add the line in on the receiver. Tried MrKnobs hookup with Radio Shack lavalier mike into the line in, and agreed the gain is a bit low to be effective with this configuration. Eager to get some for sale in his store, thinks a lot of E2s would be sold at the possible \$79 price point.



Artist: Billy Holt, Vocalist for Lost Wolf

Date: June 21, 2002

Project: Lost Wolf live show (see above)

Session: Same as above

Background: Billy is an accomplished vocalist, sharing lead duties in Lost Wolf. He also does some dates as background vocalist in the studio, high on the list in MrKnobs' Rolodex. He can sing high harmonies not often heard from such a big guy.

IEM Function: Unable to test the PSM200 on stage at the Thorndale show due to technical difficulties, but will try at next show and next studio date.

Comments: Liked what he heard off stage, but too soon to comment.



Artist: Julie Nolen (accompanied by yours truly!)

Date: Saturday, June 22, 2002

Project: Live show

Session: Mozart's on Lake Austin

Background: Julie Nolen, as explained previously, is an up-and-coming Austin singer songwriter. Mozart's is very busy with a large, built-in crowd on a Saturday night, as it is located in an upscale part of town and has a very large deck overlooking Lake Austin. She was lucky to pick this up at the last minute opening for Jenny Hollub (see below) who could not get back to Austin in time to play the entire 4 hour show. Julie was determined to make a big first impression at this choice new venue so she asked me to accompany her, which I happily did.

IEM Function: Sole monitor system for drum machine, 2 guitars and vocals during live outdoor show.

Comments: PSM200 performed as expected for this simple job. No guitar amps were used. We used the mixer portion of the transmixer for the first time, letting Julie control how much of her vocal was in the monitors (she likes it hot!!) without having to over mix it in the mains. This turned out to be crucial as we were expecting a monitor system to be provided. Instead, I had to listen entirely through the mains, with one speaker angled a bit in towards me, since we had only the one PSM200. I felt like an idiot for not bringing one of my PSM400 systems for myself, but there was no time to drive back across town to get it. No problems encountered during this show. The PSM200 system is ideal for a band of this size and type, who often play without any monitors, compromising the front mix to hear the vocals adequately. Affordable IEMs solve this problem.



Artist: Jenny Hollub (accompanied by bandmate David)

Date: Saturday, June 22, 2002

Project: Live show w / Julie Nolen

Session: Mozart's on Lake Austin (headliners)

Background: Jenny Hollub is a well-known Austin singer / songwriter who is even better known for organizing and hosting open mike sessions around town. Open mikes are a big tradition in Austin, often heavily attended on weekday nights, with many talented artists vying for a spot on the schedule. Jenny hosts one of the hottest open mikes every Tuesday night at Le Privilege, which is a club with a buzz at the moment. It's located on Red River St., the newest music area now vying with Austin's famed 6th street entertainment district.

IEM Function: Demo'd but *not used* by Jenny and David.

Comments: Jenny and David were tremendously impressed by the PSM200, but didn't want to try it for the first time at an important gig since they'd never used IEMs before. Instead, they suggested that it be made available at Jenny's Le Privilege open mike on Tuesday. I agreed to bring the PSM200 (and possibly a PSM400) to the show on Tues. the 25th. I hope that I can get several other performers to try it out as well. Though they have yet to use IEMs, I've included Jenny and David in my report because they are at the other extreme of the spectrum from Lost Wolf, who are an established band with years of experience with IEMs, and more likely to buy high end gear. Jenny and David had heard of IEM systems, but never considered that they might be affordable for small acts like themselves. In my estimation, acts like theirs are at the low end but within your target demographic for this new system.



Artist: (l to r) Jimmy LaFave, David Webb, Mickey Williams

Date: Friday, July 19, 2002

Project: Live show

Session: Hanovers in Pflugerville, TX (Austin suburb)

Background: Jimmy LaFave's latest album, *Texoma*, is his best seller to date. A single, "Never is a Moment," has done well on the country charts. Jimmy is a veteran Austin rocker and has several other CDs out currently as well; David Webb, his keyboardist has played on most of them. Veteran sound guy Mickey Williams (Faith No More) was running FOH for them that night. An important, well-attended show.

IEM Function: Sole stage monitor for David Webb the entire 2-hr show.

Comments: The band was highly skeptical at first, but by the end of the first set their mood had changed to envy as David reported he was "able to hear his keyboard dynamics more clearly than ever before!" They asked me if I had any additional units they could use. Understandable, considering the club provided only a few little 12" monitors to cover the large outdoor stage. David also reported the PSM200 enabled him to keep his keyboard amps at the volume they sounded best but still hear himself clearly. There were no problems whatsoever with the system. I suggested to David that he feed a line from his keyboard amp to the second input on the Transmixer, but he assured me Mickey would give him a good personal mix from the FOH. I wanted to place the Transmixer at the FOH position to test its range (about 100 ft and elevated) but Mickey frowned on that and placed it stageside. I was then worried that the return from the FOH board might become too hot and clip the Transmixer input, requiring David to adjust it on stage. But Mickey felt the level set at sound check would hold for the show, which proved to be correct. This makes me think the Transmixer should limit rather than clip when the levels increase, since many users will run this on stage and unattended. In this setup, David could easily use the wired version, so you might consider sending him a belt pack and E2 set, if you want. For that matter, the entire band would like to talk to you about using the system! All in all, a very good showing for the PSM200.

Evaluation Sessions w / PSM200 & Ambient Pack



Evaluation Sessions w / PSM200

Artist: Blind Date (www.blinddateaustin.com)

Date: October 25, 2003

Project: Live sound

Session: Wedding reception, Wildflower Ballroom, Richardson TX

Background: Blind Date is one of Austin's premier professional cover bands, known for their incredibly versatile repertoire consisting of everything from dance music to Texas swing to retro to current country and rock. They earn more money in a weekend than most Austin bands make in a year, using only the best gear regardless of cost; would you believe flat screen monitors on the light trusses displaying chords and lyrics, MIDI sync'd to a laptop and click / sequence track? With their high tech sound reinforcement and no amps on stage they're a soundman's dream. The pay's not bad either!

IEM Function: Provide on-stage monitor for drummer Bruce Wayne instead of the conventional large headphones he usually wears, first time IEM user.

Comments: System worked like a dream. After trying several options in sound check, Bruce opted to do his own onstage monitor mix using the little Behringer board in the photo since there is no onstage monitor mix guy. He took a monitor feed from the FOH board and added additional drums to suit. Bruce used the wireless system so he could move from his V-Drums to a (separate) percussion rack without re-rigging. He said the lavalier mike makes a great tie clip, should come in styles! He did not try the E2s (see E1s in photo). Bruce made some important comments: (1) volume control on lavalier mike is essential, (2) IEM system LOOKS much better than conventional headphones, important! (3) He felt more a part of the band (less isolated) using the ambient PSM system than before, (4) he could now hear critical conversations regarding requests, last minute changes, etc..., (5) E1s a little shy on low end, but good with Roland sub, (6) ambient mike was really loud all the way up, just right about half way, (7) turned lavalier up between songs as "bionic ears." Bruce was so pleased he said he will buy a PSM200 system this week instead of the PSM400 which doesn't have the lav mike feature; unless you're going to add ambient pack capability to the PSM400 system (hint hint).



Artist: Casey Just Band (www.caseyjust.com)

Date: October 27, 2003

Project: Live sound

Session: Saxon Pub, Austin TX

Background: The Saxon Pub, though it only seats about a hundred people, is the ultimate prestige intimate venue in Austin. When you're playing the Saxon, you've arrived! Some of the finest talent in the country passes through, and only the very best local bands get a gig, even on a Monday night like this one. **Mr. Richard Vannoy**, legendary Austin soundman, presides over the pristine audio and is a show in his own right. There is no better place to hear and see a band in Austin, if you can get in. **Casey Just**, Originally from northern Utah, has been playing his unique "twang-a-delic" music, writing songs, and playing clubs for 15 years, recently moving to Austin in 2000. He is an up-and-coming young guitar slinger currently generating a big buzz, and rightly so.

IEM Function: Personal monitor mix for Casey, using optional ambient pack. Casey has not used IEMs before.

Comments: This one made me nervous! Any mistake in a very important show in this legendary club, under the critical eye of Richard Vannoy (see picture below) could have made my name mud in Austin for a while! But I needn't have worried, everything went incredibly well. Richard graciously gave up one of his AUX sends for Casey's personal mix, and, given the hard rocking stage



volume I took no chances and mult'd the two PSM200 channels together for maximum gain before limiting. I've learned from much experience with these boxes that with very dynamic material (e.g. live uncompressed vocals and drums) it's often not possible to drive the belt packs into limiting without severely squashing the transmixer input, if only one channel is used. Y cording or multing from the back solves this problem. **I also stopped using the lavalier windscreen as it always falls off.**

Casey was kind enough to EMAIL me this personal review, which is so well done I've included it below with only minor edits:

"I had the ear monitors in from about 20 minutes before we played and all the way through our set. Terry gave me the basic run down on how to use them and we got everything hooked up and ready to go. I walked around the Club before our set to get used to hearing through the ambient mike. It was very interesting as I walked outside several times during set up to chat with my band and I heard the mix from the board while I was hearing the ambient mike as well. I found that the mike placed under my chin on my shirt collar gave me the best outside world representation."

"Saxon Pub is a tiny club. Richard let me check out the vocals sound routed into the mix. The mike was set flat so I had him remove some of the lower mids. Then we just jumped into our set. From the start I could hear every detail in my vocal range. I had the ambient mike turned up a bit too much at first. It was very simple to take care of that with the volume control."

"For the first time I was able to sing dynamically like I do when I play acoustic. During the mellower songs I could hear the details of my voice quite well. This was the first full on "Rawk" gig I've done where I didn't blow out my vocals chords trying to sing over rumble of the band through the wedges."

"I noticed that there was some sort of attenuator built into the system; when I sang the volume of the band was reduced as if there was ducking device running. I thought that was a very great feature although it was set a bit strong at first. (*note: I noticed Richard was running the transmixer into the red and turned it down a couple of songs into the set - TD*) This all equaled out however as the normal wash from the cymbals was not there to confuse my timing with the Rhythm section. I found the monitors very comfortable while I was wearing them. It didn't take long to get used to them."

"The only suggestion I have is to put the mike on a swivel clip."

"This was my first time trying in-ear monitors. All in all it was a joy to use these monitors and the experience has now spoiled me for using standard wedge monitors."



Artist: The Scabs (featuring The GrooveLine Horns)

Date: Saturday, November 2, 2002

Project: Sold out show (800+ people)

Session: Antone's (THE premiere Austin venue)

Background: The Scabs are the number one draw in Austin for good reason. Their nine-piece ensemble plays every style from funk to pop to Latin with proficiency unmatched in Austin and unsurpassed anywhere. Bob Schneider, the front man, has recorded at least 15 strong selling albums, 5 of them with The Scabs, 4 others with The Ugly Americans. He has appeared on the Tonight Show and Letterman after appearing on the sound track of a recent Sandra Bullock movie. The GrooveLine are a big part of the draw, and must be heard to be believed.

IEM Function: Stage monitors for the GrooveLine. I transmixer, three receivers.

Comments: By far the biggest challenge I have put to the PSM200 system. Stage level was ridiculous, topping 110 dB at times. FOH level even at the soundboard in the sky topped that level as well. Horn players have never been able to hear themselves well even with 3 high-powered wedges. **Results:** went without a hitch in sound check. During the show, the IEM mix was great at first, but the monitor mix engineer kept cranking up the transmixer inputs until they were showing solid red, hard limiting. I wore an extra belt-pack, walking from the stage to the tower to monitor the horn players mix. For a while, I had the best seat in the house everywhere I went, but the mix became increasingly compressed sounding as the level was cranked, though the horns could clearly be heard. Horn players liked the isolation from the stage noise but not the tone of their horns after the hard limiting began. The FOH sound was so incredibly loud it was only slightly dulled by the in-ear foams. I could not understand why the sound was so compressed in the IEMs so I left the building where I could hear just the IEMs. I discovered a great deal of kick and bass in the horn monitor that could not be distinguished inside due to the ambient sound penetration. The low end was triggering the limiter and causing the horns to pump in the mix. After an hour, the horn section discontinued the IEMs and used the wedges.

Conclusions: A more experienced monitor engineer would have HPF'd out the low end, and added no bass and kick, or maybe just the click from the kick. I recognize this scenario from a previous show, and I think it might be worthwhile to include a low cut switch on a future version of the PSM200, as well as a switching jack to automatically Y the inputs together when only one is used, for more clean gain. A multi-band comp on the transmixer would be the bomb, but I understand it would be too expensive. Horn guys are very interested in working further with IEMs and Shure.