

Cajon Essentials

PART 3 BY BYRON MARK

Have you ever wondered how to effectively mic your Cajon?

How to translate the awesome acoustic sound you hear in rehearsals to the audience? And make the bass tone nice and 'phat'?

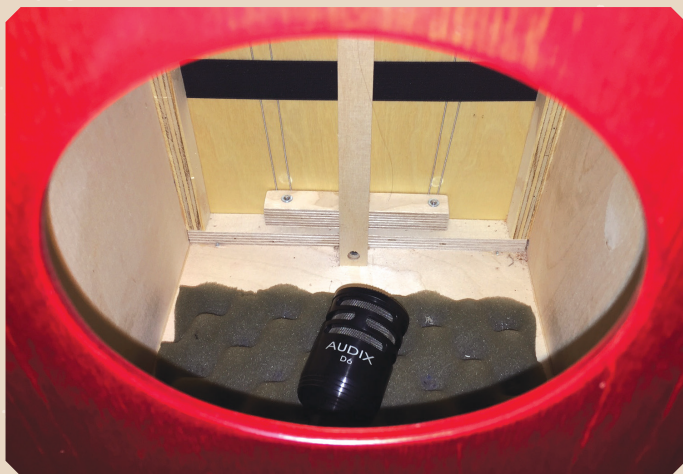
In this article, I share with you my secrets and tips on how to capture the best sound from your Cajon; both on the stage and in the studio, (and using affordable equipment!)

MICS TO USE AT A GIG

The core microphone I bring with me to EVERY gig is the **Audix D6**. This microphone already has massive credibility in the industry as being a reliable and effective dynamic mic for kick drums. Whether I am performing to a small crowd of 50-100 people or a festival with an audience of 1000+, the D6 has never failed me yet! However, there is a trick to it....

What's the Secret? I place my Audix D6 microphone *inside the actual cajon* (see image). On the base of my Cajon, I have a thin layer of soft foam cut perfectly to size; upon which I then place the D6. This way, the mic doesn't roll around and knock against the Cajon wood.

I have a large dynamic range when performing and I find that having a mic on the outside near the sound hole for live gigs (the default option for most people) doesn't capture the full depth of a Cajon bass tone or the dynamic touches, and I also risk knocking the mic with my Cajon if I lean back during a performance. In terms of EQ, sometimes it sounds great flat, or other times I will turn up the High and Low EQ's a little, and turn down the mids – creating a nice crispiness on top of a massive bass!



Add another mic! If I am playing a flamenco show, or something more intimate where I want to capture as much of the sonic differences performed on the Cajon as possible, I will also use a mic on the front of the cajon, in addition to the D6 (see image). My preferred choice is another well-known industry mic – the



Photo by Raquel Perez

Shure Beta 57A. I place the beta 57A about 15cm in front of the Cajon, to avoid striking it with my hands. These 2 microphones combined create an awesome live sound!

However, the Audix D6 is great at capturing the wide range of Cajon frequencies **on its own** and is also very resistant to feedback!

IN THE STUDIO

Believe it or not, I also use the D6 and the beta 57A when recording! However, there are some key differences:

1. I place the Audix D6 on a mic stand, placed just outside the sound hole (I find for recording purposes this is a better sound).
2. I always add a stereo pair of overhead pics to capture the **room sound** of the Cajon (and pan them left and right in the mix). For my home recordings, I use a **stereo pair of AKG C414** condenser microphones.

For me, it is extremely important to use all 4 microphones when recording. If you rely just on the two close mics, your sound will be crisp, but very dry and lifeless; and if you just rely on overheads, you will miss the clarity and intricacy of your playing. However, the combination of close mic and overheads, much like a drum-kit – allows you maximum control of the Cajon sound for your record.

Good luck implementing these mic techniques, and I hope they help you bring a clean, crisp, yet massive Cajon sound to your gig or recording session. **Enjoy!**



YOUTUBE Performance Links: "Kinetic Method ,This Boys in Love (The Presets)", "White Chilli Sydney Trio" – watch these to see me play the Cajon using **ONLY** the AUDIX D6 in the sound hole to project to an audience of 250+!

Stay tuned for the next edition of PERCUSscene where we'll be looking at more exciting news and performance styles on the Cajon!

Have any comments or suggestions? Please share them with me at byron@learncajon.com. Want to learn more about modern Pop & Rock Cajon playing? You can download a free video and PDF notation on '4-to-the-floor Grooves' at www.learncajon.com/learn

Byron Mark has been performing, recording and teaching percussion for 10 years. With a Bachelor of Music, Masters of Teaching, and undergoing intensive study regimes in Spain and Africa, he has an energetic performance style that has paved the way for many tours using his unique percussion station.