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Five bucks for GarageBand, $129 retail for the Andrea SuperBeam Buds, and you have a portable recording studio.

Quick and Dirty Demos (That Are Actually Pretty Clean)

BY MATT BLACKETT

I LOVE MY NORMAL HOME RECORDING setup: a nice guitar collection, a great-sounding Fryette Sig: X amp with a 2x12 cab that has Neumann and Shure mics ready to go on the speakers, all of which I send to Cakewalk Sonar. When I was jamming the other night and came up with a cool progression, however, I was too lazy to fire up the whole system to capture it. I also wanted the demo to be a little more fleshed out than what I could get with the Voice Memo recorder on my iPhone (which is my favorite way to record an idea *really* quickly).

Here's what I settled on: I was already using a drum pattern in my iPhone's GarageBand app as a glorified metronome. I was monitoring it through Andrea SuperBeam Buds, which happen to have stereo mics built right into the earbuds. My amp sounded good to my ears, so it seemed to make sense that microphones that were at the same spots as my ears should pick that sound up pretty well. I added a track to GarageBand, selected Audio Recorder from the Instruments selection, and hit the record button. I could track my guitar while listening to the drums with no discernible bleed at all (when I really crank the guitar track in the quiet moments I can just *barely* hear the drum track). I had a take down in less than five minutes, which kind of blew my mind. Obviously I could have thrown something down in even less time using Voice Memo or my trusty little mini-cassette recorder, but using GarageBand and the Andrea SuperBeams had several advantages. First, this method gave me discrete tracks. To be honest, I probably won't reuse anything I got down in that session, but I love the idea that I could. Second, this method sounds way better than what I could hope for with those other devices—the Andrea mics have a cool tone and they imparted a slightly hollow-sounding but musical vibe to my guitar signal. It might not be a tone that you would base a CD on, but it definitely has character. Third, I could add subsequent tracks to my mix. I called up the bass on GarageBand and added some low end to the line and then did the same with a piano patch. Try that with a mini-cassette. Lastly, and maybe most importantly, this way of getting an idea down was just more fun. In no time at all I had a drum track, a decent guitar performance, and some bass and keyboard ideas and it was exciting. What's also exciting is the fact that this setup is so ridiculously portable that armed only with an acoustic guitar, my phone, and my trusty mic-equipped earbuds, I can do this anywhere.