

## Rode NT1000

Latest from the Rode microphone stable, this solid cardioid condenser is a worthy addition. Dave Foister feels its presence

WHEN RODE STARTED OUT it looked as though the company had every intention of sticking with the one idea for as long as possible, enjoying its deserved success. More recently we've seen a sharp upturn in the new products curve from Rode, with specialised models of various kinds and significant upgrades on established models. Now we have two new models alongside each other, cosmetically similar but technically very different. One is a new twist on the valve theme; here we're looking at a much simpler straightforward solid-state condenser model, the NT1000. Bad luck Microsoft, you'll have to think of a new name when the fixes, sorry upgrades, get that far.



Rode has apparently employed an image consultant. Gone are the plain functional boxes that the microphones used to be supplied in; in their place are fancy colour printed boxes announcing the microphones to be Recording Artistes and depicting them mounted in a picture frame against a painted backdrop. I only hope we're not paying too much for them, as they're almost certainly going to find themselves in the bin within minutes of the microphone being unpacked. Inside, in the case of the NT1000, is the microphone, a stand mount and a soft carrying pouch, complete with a little bag of silica gel for drying--always worth keeping with the microphone in my view.

Rode has cleverly decided to settle on a standard system for mounting its microphones on to stands, so that the same mounts can be supplied with every model. Part of what constitutes the difference between the expensive models and the less expensive ones is whether or not you get both types supplied as standard. The NT1000 comes with just the simple one, a ring that attaches to the base of the microphone body by means of a big knurled nut, with a swivel locked with a substantial handle. And there's a thread adaptor--why can't they all give you one? The SM2 suspension mount, supplied as part of the package with the big valve microphones, is an optional extra here, and if it's man enough to support the Classic II it clearly won't have any problems with the NT1000, even at nearly 700g in weight. On the other hand, the capsule already has shock mounting fitted internally so should be reasonably immune to being knocked about without having to buy the SM2. There's no windshield, not even as an optional extra.

The specifications make interesting reading. Although the instructions don't trumpet it, Rode is proud of the noise figure, which is an impressive 6dB SPL. At the other end it can handle over 140dB SPL at 1% THD, giving a dynamic range of 134dB. Its frequency response is clearly intended to have a character rather than to make the NT1000 a neutral all-purpose unit; a smooth low and mid spectrum gives way to all kinds of lumps and bumps at the top end from 2kHz upwards, with a peak at 12kHz no less than 6dB up. It's 4dB up at 5k, so it's clearly meant to have a strong presence, although the drop off back to 0dB at 20kHz should avoid harshness.

Operationally it's the simplest configuration possible: a fixed cardioid polar pattern, and no filters or pads at all. Cosmetically this results in a very sleek appearance, with the make and model quite modestly displayed on a black band around the bottom of a satin nickel body. The front is identified in traditional Rode fashion by a gold dot below the grille, and the grille itself is clearly pretty heavy duty. On some Rodes the grille is a bit coarse, but here it's smooth and close-woven--the spec says it's welded and heat-treated. Overall the impression is of a solidly-built, elegant microphone in the classic tradition.

The sound the NT1000 produces bears out what both its appearance and the specifications would suggest. This is a highly capable and versatile sound, which is smooth enough to be used for a wide range of applications but with the kind of presence emphasis that seems to be Rode's trademark. It's not hard and it's not extreme, but it definitely favours certain instruments, and makes the NT1000 a very

appealing vocal microphone. It has that lift around the vocal presence region that pushes a voice forward in the mix without EQ, but it stops short of emphasising sibilance or excessive edge. This same characteristic makes it worth trying on acoustic guitar, where its other attribute, the very low noise, comes into play. This is indeed a quiet microphone, with a noise floor that lies well below 16-bit dither levels even at high gain, unlike the standard model I was using as a comparison.

The flip side of the presence coin is often an apparent loss of depth, and on some sounds this starts to manifest itself here. You wouldn't want to put a pair of NT1000s up on an orchestra, but then it probably wouldn't occur to you anyway. But on most things the impression is of a very complete sound, with nothing lacking anywhere and this distinctive forwardness that can be so useful.

Priced just under the original NT2, this is not a cheap microphone by today's standards, but there's nothing cheap about the way it's put together or the way it sounds. There's real quality here, coupled with a useful sonic contour that is rarely restricting and subtle enough to allow the NT1000 to become a popular all-rounder.

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