

Schoeps CMIT 5U

Depending on how you look at the issue, the first shotgun from Schoeps is either the mic that everyone has been waiting for or a dive into a crowded market full of long-lived 'industry standards'. **NEIL HILLMAN** believes that this changes everything.

MY WIFE HAS A new car, you may be pleased to hear. A Ford Focus Ghia, top-of-the-range, now you ask. With only one previous lady owner, it had the right mileage, the right service history and it sold at the right price. Apparently, squire, it's never been raced or rallied. She's delighted; ipso-facto, I am too: and my inheritance of our old faithful — a 1996, 126,000-miles-and-still-counting, Turbo diesel estate — made us a two-car couple. I could now venture off my preferred 2-wheels for the warmth and security of four, which made my daily commute sheer luxury as the first flakes of winter snow fell.

I should have been pleased by this inherently more stable mode of transport, given that the icy mornings were now upon us; and I was, for a whole week; in fact right up to the point that I drove Mrs Hillman's new purchase for the first time. But then I experienced the sensation of using two similarly-purposed products separated by 10 years of development. The response was smoother, the handling was lighter, it was less noisy and my sense of security was heightened; overall, the performance was simply superior. I was experiencing the benefits of a new generation. I had been happy with the old car, but now all I can focus on are its inadequacies. To compound my misery, at the same time I made the mistake of placing my old, faithful, trusted, workhorse shotgun microphone, side-by-side with the pretender to what I thought, pretty much, was an occupied throne.

Unlike its modular Collette range — this one is not interchangeable — the Schoeps CMIT 5U (Condenser Microphone, Interference Tube) is a new departure for the German manufacturer; it has never before made a shotgun microphone, even though it has been consistently pestered by recordists keen to supplement their supercardioid Schoeps CMC 641s. This is an eagerly-awaited product; and all the more so for originating from the pen, pad and PC of Schoeps' technical director Joerg Wuttke. As a former student of Professor Günther Kurtze — the inventor of the Interference Tube shotgun microphone, no less — he should start with more than half an idea as to what constitutes the ultimate shotgun. Joerg is also a champion of small capsule microphones, explaining that the smaller the diaphragm, the faster the transient response can be; and arguing that given their smaller mass, they are also not prone to the phase non-linearity suffered by large

diaphragm capsules. Given this background then, the first Schoeps shotgun should be a very interesting microphone.

And it is. From the moment its polished-wood case is opened, it looks very special indeed. Glance down its anodised, electric blue body and your eyes arrive at three filter-select pushbuttons, mounted within subtly machined oval recesses, with six tiny associated LEDs, two per filter. Accessible and discreet — the legends on the microphone body are engraved in white. This microphone exudes quality at rest; if the CMIT 5U had a voice of its own it would whisper: 'Plug me into the Phantom'. And while heavy with expectations, at 89g, it is feather-light.

The three pushbuttons control two roll-off filters and an emphasis filter, with either a red LED showing the 'off' state, or a green LED showing that the appropriate filter is in-circuit. The top switch provides a high-frequency emphasis of +5dB at 10kHz, which is designed to enhance speech intelligibility and compensate for any HF loss due to the use of the optional but obligatory Rycote Windjammer. The middle switch is a steep low-cut filter, providing an 18dB/octave slope with a roll-

over frequency of 80Hz, and designed to minimise any handling or wind noise. The bottom switch is a gentler 6dB/octave roll-off filter, operating below 300Hz. This is primarily designed to compensate for the proximity bass tip-up typically associated with shotgun microphones — the some time bane of a dubbing mixer faced with close-miked voice-overs from a location recordist desperately striving to eliminate surrounding extraneous noise from the recording. The filter settings are remembered when the life-giving +48V phantom power is removed, and the LEDs are easily viewed in daylight once the windshield end-cap is removed.

The CMIT 5U is marketed to be of use in the studio, for music and voice, as well as outdoors; but its design philosophy would seem to indicate that Schoeps has the location recordist very much in mind. The mic's directional pattern is consistent in both the horizontal and vertical planes, unlike some other leading manufacturers' models; it enjoys low off-axis colouration due to the low and high frequency pickup angles being closely matched; there is extra 'suck' from the CMIT's unusual degree of directivity built-in to its mid-frequency response, while its HF pickup pattern is looser than other shotgun microphones. In short then, it has all the attributes a production mixer is looking for in a microphone that will be mounted and worked in the free space at the end of a boom pole, and especially when a boom operator is working hard to keep actors on-mic during busy dialogue scenes. These frequency design details should more enable a boom operator to gently drift off artistes as their individual lines come to an end, but be bang-on axis for the start of each actor's successive line. It's an old trick, but it works.

The CMIT 5U (UK£1151 + VAT) is uniquely, reassuringly, expensively, Schoeps: clear, light, neutral, airy, transparent, spacious, accurate — what adjectives can I draw on without delving into the ephemeral lexicon of a home hifi reviewer? Perhaps the highest compliment I can give it is that it disappears as an interface between what you want to record, and what you want to record to. It certainly heralds in a new generation of shotgun microphones, and



significantly raises the bar. The response is smooth with its weighted frequency design; its touch is light, it's quiet; and with a robust attitude to RF interference, it inspires total confidence. My old faithful four-one... oh, you know which one, suddenly feels very high mileage now. ■

PROS

The quality and passion is in the detail; imagine it as the equivalent of driving to the location in a Ferrari 360.

CONS

'Once listened, forever smitten'. OK, I've invented a poor slogan — but you will be. Prepare to cough-up some cash.

Contact

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