

DPA 4006 TL

The brand responsible for the widescale acceptance of omnis as workable studio mics has taken its original superperformer and hot-rodged it to an improved spec. There are also a variety of options available. **JON THORNTON** gets stuck in to rediscovering a favourite.



DPA'S 4006 MICROPHONE will be familiar to many and has attained a deservedly classic status in recording applications where honesty and transparency are the main priorities. Although the 4006 has been around in its classic form since 1982, DPA has recently released a revised version featuring an electronic output stage rather than the transformer previously employed. Claiming significant improvements in low frequency extension and sensitivity as a result, it's a good enough excuse to put this versatile performer through its paces once more.

The kit supplied for review was a complete stereo kit, comprising a pair of matched microphones, microphone clips, a stereo bar and a complete set of grids, nosecones and ball-shaped Acoustic Pressure Equalisers that allow the response of the microphone to be tailored to fit different applications. All of this is supplied in a purposeful looking Samsonite briefcase with a secure place for everything in the custom foam inlay.

The capsule and acoustic design of the 4006-TL remains the same as the original — a small diaphragm pressure transducer with a pre-polarised backplate. As standard, the microphone is fitted with a nearfield protection grid, which gives a neutral and linear response to on-axis sound sources, and in this configuration two microphones were initially mounted as a near-coincident pair over a drum kit.

I challenge anyone not to be impressed by this microphone's initial performance, with a focus, accuracy and openness of sound that makes playback a truly three-dimensional experience. It's not a microphone that will flatter or one that will cover up any shortcomings in the source — but in this configuration it's as close to the truth as you are likely to ever want. This is helped somewhat by the natural tendency of a small diaphragm pressure transducer such as this to show significant off-axis attenuation at higher frequencies, which aids in focussing more on direct sound with the diffuse sound-field being partially rejected. In applications where ambient sound is more important, the standard grid can be unscrewed and replaced by a nose



cone that counteracts this directionality and gives a more-or-less perfect omnidirectional response at all frequencies.

In addition to this, two other grids, supplied with the stereo kit, can be fitted to the microphone. The first is a close-miking grid, which results in a much earlier roll-off of high frequencies around the 15kHz mark. This is a useful addition as moving to an acoustic guitar with the standard nearfield grid tends to give the impression that the microphone always wants a bit more distance from the source. It's not that it doesn't remain accurate but that it struggles to deliver a musically pleasing response. Switching the grids makes an immediate

and useful difference in this regard, rounding out the sound without making it overly dull. A final grid tailors the response of the microphone for working at longer distances by creating a linear diffuse field response up to 15kHz, but creating a 6dB boost at 15kHz in the on-axis response.

Not content with that, and realising that a perfectly flat response might not be the ideal for all applications, DPA's acoustic pressure equalisers can also be attached and all 3 sizes (30mm, 40mm and 50mm) are supplied with the kit. These are ball-shaped devices that slip over the front of the microphone so that the tip of the grid is flush with the top of the sphere. They all, to different degrees, modify the on-axis response to include a presence peak, while simultaneously increasing the rejection of these frequencies off-axis, thus focussing the microphone more on the direct sound than reflected sound.

These work extremely well, and being purely acoustic devices, achieve an exceptionally smooth tonal shift. The smallest of the three, particularly, was of great benefit in pulling a little more clarity and definition out of a female vocal — and this is an application where I would have instinctively reached for a large diaphragm cardioid. I found myself pleasantly surprised with the results. In effect, the 4006 with all of the accessories gives you seven different microphones, which starts to make it look almost cost-effective.

But the real question is how the new transformerless version compares with the original and fortunately I was able to compare them directly. My original versions aren't exactly shabby performers but the 4006-TL had a definite sense of being more open — particularly in the sense of solidity in the low-frequency range. And while I might have been imagining it, they also seemed to demonstrate a touch more bite and attack on stringed instruments and percussion. Not radical differences, but ones that are positive enough for me to prefer the new version over the old. This surprised me, as I had always actually preferred the sound of the old 414B-ULS to the transformerless version, for example.

The good news if you are an existing 4006 owner is that DPA is offering a factory based retrofit to upgrade your microphone to TL spec. And if you aren't an existing owner, you owe it yourself and your recordings to give this microphone a try. ■

Contact

DPA MICROPHONES, DENMARK:
Website: www.dpamicrophones.com

PROS

Detail, clarity and transparency of sound; flexibility in conjunction with APes and alternate grids; stereo kit is superb.

CONS

Not cheap — especially in stereo kit form; some might find the truth a bit too revealing in some close-miked applications.

EXTRAS

4006 owners can upgrade their mics to the 4006-TL for Euro 415. This covers factory retrofitting of a transformerless preamplifier, close-miking grid, DPA 4006-TL type ring, calibration chart and new mic case.

