

Microtech-Gefell M1030

A new release from the M-G camp is always an occasion. **JON THORNTON** gets to grip with a large one with a certain presence.

The M1030's existence seems to be based on the assumption that size actually does matter. Sharing the same electronics and a broadly similar capsule to the diminutive M930, the key difference is in the size of the associated housing. To quote M-G's own literature, "The size of the microphone housing is optimised with regard to the expectations of a large diaphragm microphone for studio applications". Which I guess means that vocalists (and others) figure that unless the microphone pointing at them is big and chunky looking, it's not worth bothering with.

Even if you don't agree with this, M-G has made a good job of the aesthetics — producing a still fairly compact design that succeeds in looking classic and contemporary at the same time. There are some similarities in looks with the current Neumann TLM49 and TLM103 — not that surprising given the two company's shared history.

Internally the capsule and electronics are elastically suspended to minimise structure-borne noise, and the specs quote a very healthy output (sensitivity quoted as 21mV/Pa) and extremely low self-noise (7dB(A)). The review unit shipped with an elastic suspension mount, with microphone and mount packed into a vastly oversized aluminium case although I suspect this is simply for the review product rather than another case of 'size matters'.

Plugging in and powering up wasn't quite as straightforward as it might be — the screw-in base for the suspension mount proved a tight fit as did the XLR into the base of the microphone. I'm all for machining to tight tolerances, but the slightest deformity in the XLR of a microphone lead makes it impossible to fit. With everything finally connected — albeit very snugly — a green LED sitting behind the head grille shows that phantom power is being applied, and indicates the side of the microphone that should be addressed.

Polar pattern is fixed cardioid, and there are no external controls for pads or filters — you have what you're given. Initial testing with spoken voice shows that there's been a little

tinkering with the response of the microphone other than just its aesthetics. Compared to the M930, which has a broad presence peak in the high-mids that can make it sound a little too 'glassy' on some vocals, the M1030 sounds more neutral in the high-mids but with a narrower presence peak in the HF band. The overall effect of this is to add a good sense of 'air' to the sound but without it sounding hard or strained — particularly with female vocals. I'm not sure whether this difference is due to a slightly different capsule design/tuning or simply a side effect of the changes to the enclosure and internal structures, but it works well.

Out of the box, the sound is eminently well suited to voice over work. There's a decent weight low down, plenty of transient detail in the crucial mid-range and that HF lift that takes EQ well to either tame it or accentuate it. There's a very pronounced proximity bump as you get close in but this requires a little care when working it — get closer than 10cm or so and things get rather too lumpy in the bottom octaves.

Off-axis response is nice and even, with a gentle HF drop but no really objectionable artefacts, although the absolute attenuation of level at 90 degrees off-axis isn't that great as a result. Nevertheless, it's a sensible trade-off to add to the flexibility of the microphone. Putting a little more distance between microphone and source with a steel strung acoustic guitar proves this point well. Backing the M1030 off to nearly 1m away still results in a sound that delivers the harmonic and transient detail, but also allows a fair bit of 'room' into the sound. This sounds very smooth and natural with none of the honkiness that can sometimes creep in here.

Taking this approach a little further, and setting the M1030 up as a room microphone for a drum kit with a fair amount of compression strapped over it, again showed its strengths in

this respect. While I'd normally opt for an omni or maybe a fig-8 pattern for a single room mic, the M1030 gives plenty of options and a surprising degree of flexibility by deciding whether to keep the kit on-axis or off-axis to a distant mic. Again, there's quite a lot of room in the sound, even when on-axis to source but also a retention of detail and resolution that made blending with the close mics easy. A spaced pair would be nice to play around with in this context.

At its price point, potential buyers will have plenty of other choices — obvious candidates being Neumann's TLM103 or the latest incarnation of an AKG C414 — not to mention a host of more esoteric options from the likes of SE and Rode. Compared to a TLM103 the M1030 sounds a little more natural on most voices but the flip-side here is that you lose the slightly more characterful edge that the Neumann delivers in the mid-range — something that you won't notice on some voices, but will miss on others. The M1030 is a little softer overall than the 414, meaning that it's a little more forgiving on thin voices, but it lacks the flexibility of multipattern switching. And then again — you obviously have to consider which one is biggest... ■



PROS Nicely screwed together; nice sounding on a range of male and female vocals; VO right out of the box; quiet; works well at distance.

CONS Some tight fits with XLRs and suspension mounts; proximity effect can become too intrusive close up.

EXTRAS The standard version of the 1030 with the standard holder MH 93.1 is Euro 1475 net; with Elastic suspension EA 92 in a case Euro 1735 net; with microphone holder MH 80 Euro 1500 net.

Contact

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