

# Røde NT2000 and K2

**It's been more than a decade since Rode introduced its first microphone, the NT2, and helped redefine the price/performance ratio associated with studio quality capacitor microphones. What started as an ostensibly 'budget' range of microphones soon attracted a dedicated following that was drawn not just by price but by the distinctive sound of these early mics.**

**JON THORNTON**

**T**HE RØDE BRAND is now capable of cutting it among more established competition, and its latest two offerings seem to

represent a concerted move away from the budget image, but with a competitive price tag still intact (NT2000 UK£382 + VAT; K2 UK£485 + VAT).

Starting with the NT2000, we find yet another large diaphragm, solid-state capacitor microphone. The capsule comprises dual 1-inch diaphragms, and is assembled in Australia at Røde's new production facility. The dual diaphragms, as you would expect, imply that polar patterns are switchable — in fact they are continuously variable between omni and fig-8 courtesy of a centre-detented thumbwheel control on the front of the microphone.

Similar controls also provide a continuously variable pad (from 0 to -10dB) and a variable high pass filter with roll-off points between 20Hz and 150Hz. Construction and build quality is very good throughout, indeed the NT2000 is quite hefty. Luckily the supplied shockmount, manufactured from some form of dense plastic, is well up to the job. However, the mic and shockmount together are quite sizeable, which makes positioning in tight corners a little tricky.

Røde claims that the NT2000's FET-based electronics are ultra-low noise, with a published EIN figure of 7dBA — and on plugging it in, this would seem to be borne out. Even with great gobs of gain at the mic pre, self-noise is never an issue. In terms of its sound, the NT2000 surprised me slightly.

I was expecting the bright, slightly over-emphasised HF traits of many microphones at this price point, but in reality the NT2000 sounds much more restrained. Not dull, you understand, but more like a slightly mellowed out, and more flattering C414. The enclosed frequency response charts confirm this,

with the characteristic large diaphragm bumps in response, but no large deviations until an even dropping away from about 15kHz upwards.

On male and female vocals, this sounds quite open and natural — although there is a very pronounced proximity bump when used close-up. This can be a little too overwhelming on some voices, but a neat trick here (room acoustics allowing) is to gradually swing the polar response from cardioid towards omni to tune this out a little bit.

The low noise of this mic would suggest that it should also be well suited to room miking, or indeed as an overhead for drums. Despite the fact that only one was available, I tried it as a single overhead on a jazz kit, and again it surprised me. Not this time in terms of tonality, which I was expecting (smooth, progressive, and ever so slightly understated), but in

the clarity and smoothness of its dynamic response. A good reminder that 'detail' doesn't just mean a hyperactive HF response. I liked this microphone a lot.

The K2 is another large diaphragm capacitor model, but this time incorporating a Class A valve-based preamplifier, built around a 6922 twin-triode valve.

Externally, the K2 has a typical 'classic' look about it, with a chunky tubular housing topped by another dual-diaphragm 1-inch capsule. No external controls interrupt this simple design, which is connected via a 7-pin XLR to the external power supply. The power supply features a single pot that allows continuously variable polar pattern selection between omni and fig-8. An earth-lift switch is provided on the rear of

the unit, with a power switch and a blue LED power indicator on the front panel as the sole reminder that this is in reality a very modern mic.

Rather than try to emulate a particular vintage valve microphone, Røde has been content to offer its own take on what a valve mic should sound like. As a result, in direct comparison to the NT2000, the K2 immediately sounds more 'voiced'. The cardioid pattern has an obvious presence peak at around 4 or 5kHz, followed by an even more obvious one at around 10kHz followed by a progressive fall to -4dB at 20kHz. Set up and plugged in (the K2 ships with the same shockmount as the NT2000), this immediately delivers a far more up-front sound on vocals than the NT2000, with a sense of solidity in the mid-range but 'air' in the higher registers. While not in exactly the same league as some currently available esoterica and vintage copies, the K2 does an admirable job in adding its particular sound to a recording without ever becoming too intrusive or aggressive. Like the NT2000, it's also very quiet — particularly for a valve design.

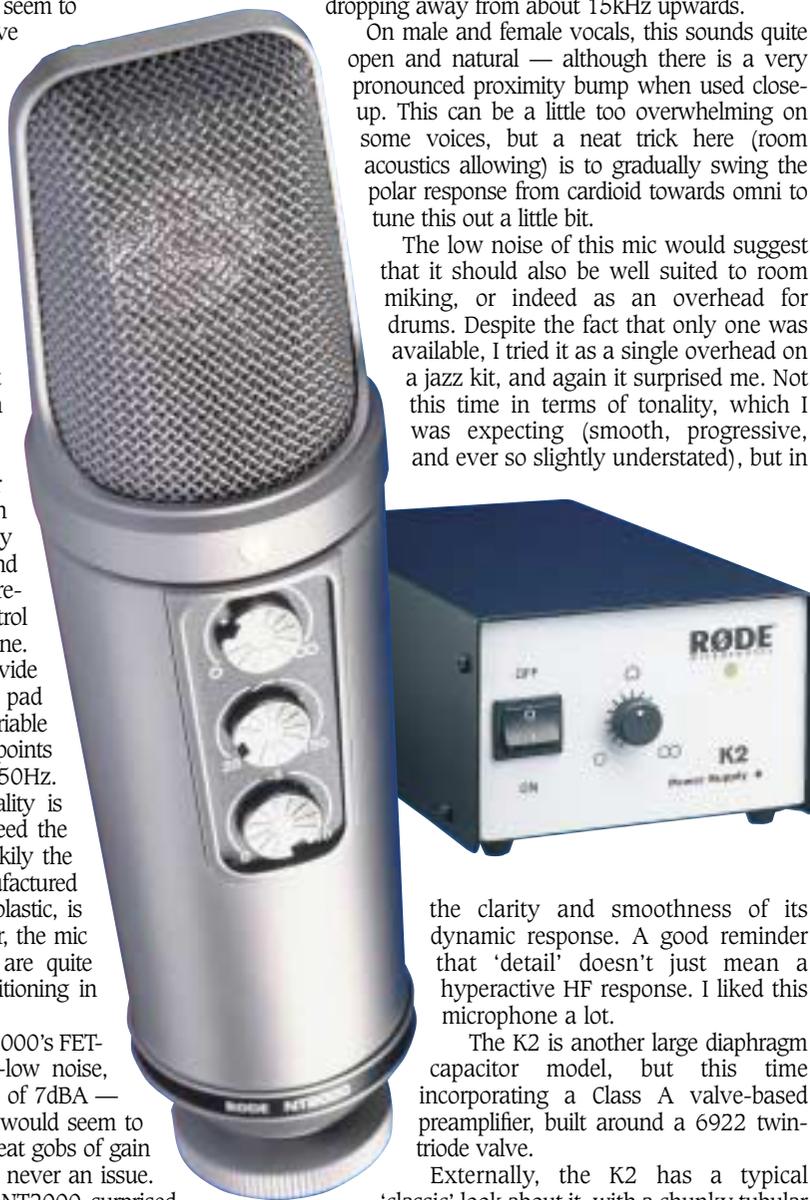
Giving it a little more of a workout, the K2 was set to record a Mesa-Boogie for a mildly crunchy rhythm guitar part. Again, the sound both close-miked and at three or four feet distant was immediately compelling

and 'complete' sounding. There's also sufficient difference in the frequency responses of the omni and cardioid patterns to usefully tune the response of the microphone to match different sources, with the omni pattern losing the mid range presence peak while retaining the 10kHz bump.

Duly impressed with its performance on a guitar cab, I decided to give it what I consider one of the most difficult challenges — a miked up bass guitar cab. Even some of the big boys have been known to fall over at this hurdle, struggling to deliver a defined low end together with sufficient low-mid detail without sounding too clinical. And the K2 delivered all of this with the minimum of fuss — a great performance.

Both of these microphones — and in particular the K2 — are very good.

No, they are very, very good. Not in the way that some mics can completely blow you away, but in a much more useful, solidly competent way. They are workhorses, but quality workhorses. And they are proof that Røde as a manufacturer has, in many ways, come of age. It is a force to be reckoned with at all levels of the market. ■



## PROS

Great sound; good build quality; useful variable controls on NT2000; quiet.

## CONS

NT2000 might be a little too neutral for some tastes or applications; lack of any form of pad/HPF on K2.

## Contact

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