

Røde NT6

Røde has been quietly carving out a niche for itself in some specialist areas over the last couple of years, most notably in broadcast and theatre applications. **JON THORNTON** reports on a compact capacitor.



THE NT6 SHOULDN'T come as much of a surprise for those who have been watching Røde's progress as it further expands its range to include a small diaphragm, true capacitor microphone in as compact a package as possible. Designed for use in situations where placement possibilities are limited, or where visual impact needs to be minimal, the NT6 follows an established design philosophy of separating the capsule and the associated electronics, and connecting the two with a dedicated, lightweight cable.

Internally, the business end of the NT6 features the same 1/2-inch capsule found in the Røde NT5, giving a cardioid pickup. This connects to the amplifier with a supplied 3-metre Kevlar reinforced cable, terminated at both ends with a miniature 3-pin connector. The preamp body has a -10dB pad, and a switchable high-pass filter (80Hz, 12dB/octave), something that is actually lacking from the NT5, so it's nice to see here.

Also supplied in the kit is a standard mic clip for holding the preamp, a foam windshield, and a rather elegant clip for the capsule. This is of solid metal construction, which the capsule screws firmly into, and incorporates a swivel joint to allow accurate positioning even in fairly tight spots.

Quoted specs put equivalent noise at 19dB SPL (A weighted), reasonably typical of a small diaphragm design, but certainly noisier than the NT5 which shares the same capsule. How much of this is down to differences in the electronics, and how much to the additional cable between capsule and preamp is difficult to say. In use, though, the microphone does not seem unduly noisy, even with gobs of gain on very quiet sources.

The sound of the microphone is broadly similar, as you'd expect, to the NT5, although perhaps a little brighter sounding in some applications. The NT5 always seemed to roll off its HF response quite early to my ears, and the NT6 is similar in this respect, making reasonably closely miked stringed instruments sound fairly smooth in the upper registers but performing less well as distance to source

increases. Compared against an AKG SE300 with cardioid capsule, the NT6 stands up well. Mid range detail is good, and there seemed to be a little more transient detail than the SE300 when used at the bridge end of an acoustic guitar.

Low frequency response is smooth and progressive here — although I couldn't compare them directly — this seems fuller than the NT5 in this regard. Used close in, proximity effect comes in rather suddenly and in a very pronounced fashion, but is countered nicely by the high-pass filter if desired.

Given the likely application of this microphone in situations where space is at a premium and/or discretion is the order of the day, I also tried the NT6 set at the bottom of a snare drum. Positioning the mic was easy, and the pad seemed to keep the electronics out of clipping in all but the most extremely close positions. It certainly wouldn't be my first choice of microphone in this application though, but it's perhaps an unfair test to simply restrict its use to the studio. With this in mind, its final test was in a very confined pit band as a vibraphone overhead. While having a pair would have been useful here, the NT6 worked very well in terms of the sound it delivered from the vibraphone, and indeed in terms of the relative smoothness of its off-axis pickup, which meant that the inevitable bleed from the brass section wasn't at all problematic front-of-house.

There is mention in the manual of some interchangeable capsules for the NT6, offering a range of pick-up patterns although I couldn't find any details about these on the company's website. Certainly, if this were a potential future offering it would add to the versatility of the NT6 (UK£229 inc VAT).

As a microphone that would spend the majority of its life in a studio situation, I wasn't really won over by the NT6. But as a flexible solution in broadcast, theatre or live sound applications it offers a good balance of price and performance. ■

PROS

Tidy and unobtrusive package; useful and well designed clip; not too noisy; good value.

CONS

HF response and noise may limit its use in some applications; no alternative capsules at present.

Contact

RØDE, AUSTRALIA:
Website: www.ode.com.au
UK, HHB: +44 208 962 5000

tannoy.com