

Schoeps CMC1 mic amp

SIMON CLARK finds room in his bag for a little'un

Now why, you may ask, am I excited to be given, not a whole new Schoeps microphone to review, but just a redesigned head amplifier? Well I love a modular microphone, and that's because I have to work with camera departments. Nobody ever walked out of a cinema whistling a wide shot but, bless our image-gathering chums, they often think it crucial for your enjoyment of a drama that they frame a picture which makes it all but impossible for us to get a mic where it needs to be. For this reason, us film and TV recordists favour smaller microphones, and making them modular is one way of shrinking them. The only component which needs to be on the set is the capsule itself. Head amplifiers and High Pass filters can be at the operator end of the boom pole connected by a so-called 'active cable'.

Admittedly this does introduce potential weak spots in the mic. Firstly the joint between removable capsule and head amplifier. Secondly if one is extending the distance between the capsule and the head amplifier, the active cable itself can be susceptible to electromagnetic interference. I cut my teeth on AKG's long-defunct C451 range which, in any environment less arid than the Sahara, would produce a deafening sound reminiscent of frying bacon. Luckily for us Schoeps have been producing their excellent Collette range since the early '70s, and they have perfected the mechanical joint to the point where electronic interference is not an issue.

How big did you say?

The predecessor to CMC1 is confusingly, CMC6, this is still in production and is a conventional looking unit 116mm in length. Both CMC1 and CMC6 incorporate as standard high-pass circuitry, which rolls off 12dB per octave from 20Hz. In order further to reduce unwanted LF as a result of mounting these mics on a handheld boom pole, it is common practice to insert a steeper (24dB per octave) high-pass unit named 'Cut 60', effective from 60Hz, between the capsule and the head amplifier. If you do this using CMC6 you will have a microphone measuring 155mm in length — not a problem in a recording studio but difficult to keep out of shot under a



/ CMC1 is one third the length of the CMC6

low ceiling or hide from the all-seeing camera lens behind some small object on a desk.

Enter CMC1, one third the length of the older unit at a compact 36mm. Now our entire microphone, complete with Cut 60, comes in at 75mm. Combine this with a low profile XLR connectors like CT-LPXLR-3F by Cable Techniques and you have a neat little noise catcher that is unlikely to intrude on top of the frame. Leave out the HPF unit and the resulting 57mm microphone could be concealed behind a coffee mug satisfyingly close to the onscreen talent no matter how wide the shot.

Size isn't everything

Schoeps haven't just produced a physically smaller unit, CMC1 draws a miserly 2mA from the Phantom supply, half as much as CMC6. If you are providing current from battery powered mobile equipment (and especially radio mic transmitters), this is very useful. The new circuitry even provides for an extra 4dB maximum SPL handling over CMC6. Importantly with today's usage of digital radio transmission from the end of the boom pole (and in common with CMC6), CMC1 features Schoeps' excellent RFI (Radio Frequency Interference) shielding. Of course, radio frequencies in themselves are vastly higher than the audible spectrum, but if RF does get into a microphone it can produce audible artefacts as it travels through the circuitry. Some older condenser microphones produce high frequency noise when in close proximity to digital transmitters, but I can confirm that no such problem occurs when using the Schoeps Collette.

So, what does it sound like? That is the shortest part of this review because I can find no audible difference between a Collette capsule, in this case an MK 41 hypercardioid, partnered with either CMC1 or its predecessor. So why are Schoeps still producing the longer unit? Well a tiny lightweight microphone can be a bit of a fiddle to mount and to isolate from mechanical vibrations so, if you are not concerned about the visual impact of your setup you may find the CMC6 more convenient.

Surrounded by the little devils
So far I have only considered the benefits of this new unit in my world of



/ CMC1/MK41 concealed behind a cup on-set

location sound for film and TV drama, but there is another situation where having such a small microphone would be advantageous. As immersive audio becomes more prevalent, the need for surround recordings has increased dramatically. One of the popular ways to achieve these is using double coincident MS (middle and side) microphone setups. If you want to derive height information as well as 'conventional' horizontal surround, you need to squeeze another figure-of-eight capsule into an already crowded array. Managing that with 155mm long versions of Collette would require a bulky, heavy rig with a very large windshield if it was to be used for exterior recordings. Less dead cat on a stick, more deceased badger.

Constructed to Schoeps' usual high standard and compatible with all the existing modules in the Collette range, CMC1 isn't a revolution — but a very welcome evolution. **f**

resolution/VERDICT

PROS Lower current drain, higher maximum SPL, smaller and easier to conceal, superb build quality.

CONS Let me get back to you when I think of one.

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