WHAT IS IT?

Multi powered cardioid electret condenser mic fo studio or stage use

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Fairly flat response
- 2 Powering options
- 3 Rugged construction

SPECS

Directional pattern:

Frequency range: 40Hz ~ 20,000Hz

Selectable High Pass Filter: 80Hz 12dB/octave

Three stage selectable pad (0, -10dB, -20dB) Sensitivity: -40dB +/-3dB re 1V/Pa @ 1kHz

Equivalent noise: 21dBA SPL (A - weighted per IEC651)

Maximum output: +9.22dBU (@ 1% THD 1k)

Dynamic range: 121dB Maximum SPL: 142dB (@

1% THD into 1k)

Signal/Noise: 73dB SPL (@1kHz, rel 1Pa)

Weight: 390g

Rode M3 £89

Got vocals and instruments to record on a budget? Trevor Curwen finds the one mic to record them all

ustralian company Rode

have a more-bang-for-the-

buck reputation of turning out quality microphones at affordable prices and their latest, the M3 (a small-diaphragm cardioid response, end-fire condenser) certainly falls into the affordable category at just £89. Technically speaking, the mic is an electret design, which means it has a permanently polarised capsule giving it the capability of being able to run from an internal 9V battery as well as from phantom power. This facility makes it a very practical choice for location recording or situations where phantom power is not available and a dynamic mic not the preferred choice.

The M3, plus mic clip and foam

plastic carry case giving it a nice level of protection. The mic is reassuringly solid and almost nine inches long with a high strength mesh head and an internal shock mount for the capsule, which could reduce handling noise, although the mic's cylindrical shape doesn't make it feel at all comfortable as a hand-held mic.

Should anyone choose to use it as a hand-held, however, they're unlikely to accidentally switch it off midperformance as the on/off switch is recessed into the body. That switch has three positions - off, on with a flat response and on with a high-pass filter engaged, rolling off the extreme low end below 80Hz at 12dB per octave. A red

LED in the same recess indicates low battery power. A 10dB and 20dB pad are also available but these can only be accessed by unscrewing the mic in its centre position revealing the PP3 battery compartment. The three-position switch is a little fiddly requiring the use of a pen or a small screwdriver. It would have been a more practical proposition if placed externally on the mic body but Rode placed it inside to guard against 'unauthorised or mistaken activation'...

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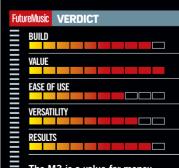
Value

Award

While a large diaphragm condenser would be the choice for recording vocals, the M3 works really well in capturing a natural vocal sound that's well-balanced across the frequency range. The published frequency response plot is resolutely flat across most of the range with a couple of humps in the high end, most notably around 10kHz, which is borne out by a pleasant degree of airiness in the voice.

That crisp response also lends itself to use for hand-held percussion, hi-hats and as a drum overhead – a pair of M3s would represent an inexpensive way to acquire a condenser stereo pair. Decent results were also obtained recording acoustic guitar and the M3 had no problems with a loud guitar amp. I could also see it being put to good use on brass or woodwind.

If you're recording vocals and other acoustic sounds, it goes without saying that you need a mic - but which one? If you can afford to buy several different mics you'll be assured having the tools at hand for any number of studio tasks but if you're on a very tight budget you're more likely to be looking for one decent all-rounder that can cover plenty of options. The M3 is a practical choice that won't let down those looking for their first mic, and a worthy option for anyone looking to extend their arsenal with a small, affordable diaphragm condenser (or two). FN



The M3 is a-value-for-money versatile performer that's a sound choice as a first mic.

windshield, comes in a large moulded

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