

# RØde Videomic Pro

**Built-in microphones are never at the top of camera manufacturers' priority lists so anything that improves on the standard issue is good news, says ROB JAMES**

Constructed mostly from ABS plastic, the VideoMic Pro is quite a bit smaller than the original VideoMic. Given that many cameras are positively tiny these days this is a good thing. It's also very light at 85g naked and 135g including battery and this will not upset the balance of any but the most compact of cameras. For off-camera use there is a 3/8-inch threaded socket in the hot/cold shoe mount for a pole or stand. The mic consists of two unit groups — the hot/cold shoe mount with cradle and the mic and head amplifier with the battery compartment at the front. The battery compartment could use improvement. The user manual speaks gaily about using the thumb and third finger to grip and the index finger to push but the truth is it's awkward at best and worse when you're trying to get it back on with a battery inside. On the other hand a 9V PP3 alkaline should last for some 70 hours.

The two units are coupled by four 'posh' rubber bands and the output cable. Two spare bands are included in the box and they are handed, so there are two different types. The captive cable is thin and floppy, just what is needed for maximum mechanical decoupling. It passes through a rubber block mounted on the cradle and a clip moulded into the underside before terminating in a right-angled exit 3.5mm jack. Cable length is not so long that it gets tangled up in other things but long enough to reach the socket on all three cameras I tried.

At the back of the capsule assembly, on/off/on-with-HP-filter and gain slide switches are small but positive. A bright little LED lights red briefly when the mic is switched on, then turns green. When it turns red in use RØde reckons you have up to an hour to change the battery. The capsule and interference tube are covered with a sculpted, removable foam wind gag.

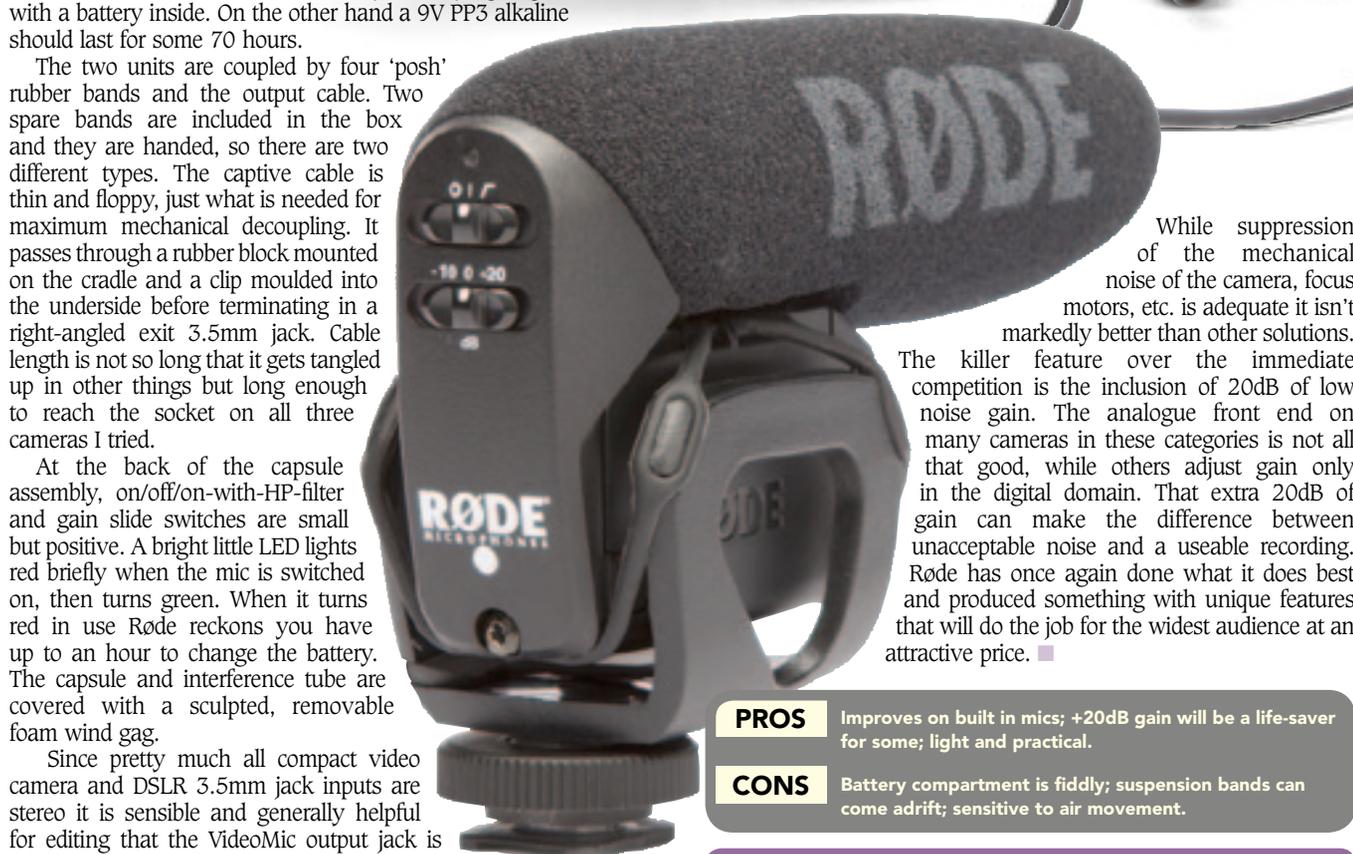
Since pretty much all compact video camera and DSLR 3.5mm jack inputs are stereo it is sensible and generally helpful for editing that the VideoMic output jack is wired as dual mono. If you want to use the mic on camera together with an additional handheld or lav, one on each track, then an adaptor cable will be needed. One big problem when using third-party mics with compact camcorders and DSLRs is

the lack of gain on the camera inputs. The VideoMic Pro addresses this and the opposite case (where the camera is too sensitive) with switched output levels of -10dB, 0dB and +20dB.

There's an optional furry cover that fits over the foam windgag and the mic is, as is to be expected, pretty sensitive to moving air. Initial impression of the sound on cans while filming is that it's 'a bit bright'. Adding the furry reduces this somewhat. The same effect is noticeable in post. I found myself reducing the top and boosting presence. On examining the frequency response

plot in the user manual this impression is confirmed. There is a 4-5dB lift at around 10kHz. I would have preferred to see a lift lower down, in the speech region, for maximum intelligibility, rather than sparkle.

No-one is going to pretend that an on-camera mic is ever a good substitute for a boom or other mic closer to the source. However, in the real world of run and gun, a separate mic is often just not practical. Anything that offers an improvement over built-in camera mics is to be welcomed and the VideoMic certainly does that and at a good price. This is a (very) short shotgun design (6-inch) and directivity is not especially pronounced.



While suppression of the mechanical noise of the camera, focus motors, etc. is adequate it isn't markedly better than other solutions. The killer feature over the immediate competition is the inclusion of 20dB of low noise gain. The analogue front end on many cameras in these categories is not all that good, while others adjust gain only in the digital domain. That extra 20dB of gain can make the difference between unacceptable noise and a useable recording. RØde has once again done what it does best and produced something with unique features that will do the job for the widest audience at an attractive price. ■

**PROS** Improves on built in mics; +20dB gain will be a life-saver for some; light and practical.

**CONS** Battery compartment is fiddly; suspension bands can come adrift; sensitive to air movement.

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