

DPA d:vote CORE 4099

JON THORNTON gets extreme with close mics



/ A range of clips securely mount the 4099 without damaging instruments)

Since its original launch, DPA's 4099 has garnered a solid reputation for being a capable and thoroughly flexible microphone for close miking instruments. As the only microphone in the company's d:vote range, it's been updated with the CORE amplifier technology first seen in the d:screet and d:fine headset and lavalier microphones, which aims to improve useable dynamic range and lower distortion in this type of miniature microphone.

The 4099 is a super-cardioid back electret design, and what you see mostly is foam windshield in a suspension assembly that is attached to a thin gooseneck. The base of the gooseneck carries the capsule's output on a microdot connector, which can then be extended or connected to a variety of cable and adapter options. Two versions are available: what was originally known as the high sensitivity version is now labelled 'd:vote for Loud SPL', and the previous low sensitivity model is badged 'd:vote for Extreme SPL'. The models are differentiated visually by a thin coloured stripe at the base of the gooseneck.

Extract the innards from the windshield, and you find what looks like a miniature interference tube design — a tiny shotgun microphone. This goes some way to explaining one of the 4099's most useful characteristics — very strong side and rear rejection. Directionality doesn't seem to come at the expense of off-axis colouration. Things sound pretty smooth with a quick check on speech. Handling and wind noise, the other trade-offs of a super-cardioid, also seem to be well controlled by the windshield and

suspension.

Speaking of trade-offs, a sub-miniature design like this is never going to win in a self-noise shoot out when pitted against designs with more room for both capsule and electronics. The inclusion of CORE technology doesn't really improve on the quoted figures here when compared to the original, 23dB(A) is quoted for the Loud variant and 28dB(A) for the Extreme. Where gains have been made is at the other end of the dynamic range equation, reducing distortion levels across the SPL range. The Loud variant (supplied for review) quotes less than 1% THD up to 131dB SPL, and the Extreme similarly low distortion up to 137dB SPL. This marks an improvement of up to 14dB in the case of the Extreme variant.

Using the mics in most recording situations requires adapting the microdot to an XLR connector. A supplied double-ended microdot cable connects between the gooseneck base and an XLR adapter, also enabling phantom power to be applied. Two types of XLR adapter are offered, one of which includes a permanent high pass filter. Other adapters enable the 4099 to be interfaced with a range of manufacturers' wireless systems for live use.

Versatile instrument mounting

The product listing for the d:vote range suggests a huge number of different microphone types, but in truth, apart from the Loud/Extreme sensitivity variants, there is only the one microphone. The listing is really referring to the frankly vast range of mounting accessories available. These enable precise,

flexible and close positioning of the microphone on a range of sources, from guitars and stringed instruments to drums and piano. Other accessories allow the gooseneck and associated microdot connector to be extended. Some of the mounts aren't terribly intuitive for first time users, but helpful documentation helps minimise head scratching here.

Placement, unsurprisingly, is generally best close to source. There is some useful proximity effect as you'd expect, but this seems to have been tuned to favour placements between 10 and 15 cm. A gentle boost between 10kHz and 12kHz is also dialled in, and both of these help to give results that are, in most cases, eminently useable straight out of the box. If you've ever had preconceptions about using this type of microphone outside of sound reinforcement, now is the time to put them aside.

Clipped securely to a guitar, the gooseneck makes positioning a breeze, and crucially, the microphone stays exactly where you put it. The sound is clean, full and detailed; although you can hear some of the voicing of proximity effect and that HF lift, it sounds natural and honest. The mic takes EQ well, but very little if any corrective EQ is required. What is most impressive is that you can simply lift the microphone, switch the mount, place it on a very different instrument (tenor saxophone in this case, clipped to the bell and aimed just over the rim), and the results are just as good and immediate. And, more as an experiment than anything else, tracking both guitar and bass together in the same room really showcases the ability of this microphone to focus on source, with very strong rear rejection, and any off-axis pickup isn't coloured, so works with the balance rather than against it.

The revised 4099 is very much an evolution rather than a revolution — but it builds on what were already very solid foundations. It is one of the most eminently flexible instrument microphones around, in terms of placement and in application, both in and out of the studio. **i**

resolution/VERDICT

PROS Tight, focussed pick-up; works superbly as a close instrument mic; huge range of mounting option; small and discreet; sounds great out of the box on a range of sources.

CONS Not the quietest mic choice; having access to all possible mounting accessories could prove expensive..

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