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**11**

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# REVIEW

BY PAUL VNUK JR.



## ADK Thor

### A multipattern mic with a multitude of useful voicings

The Thor is the newest member in the ADK pantheon of microphones. By way of introduction, ADK is the brainchild of Larry Vilella. Over the past fifteen years his company has built a reputation for balancing quality and price point, and this was one of the earliest companies to offer good sounding large-diaphragm alternatives at an affordable price that allowed budding engineers to get into the game.

ADK also has a deserved cult following for its line of mid- to upper-level custom-shop microphones that pay homage to the classics of yesteryear. Two years ago (September 2010) we looked at the ADK Cremona 251Au and the Berlin 47Au (one of my absolute favorite front-of-kick mics). One of the many things that made these microphones interesting was that they were all essentially the same microphone (along with ADK's Hamburg 67Au and Vienna 12Au), just voiced differently.

This time around, as we summon the ADK Thor, we return to the non-custom-shop beginner side of ADK, but the paradigm remains the same as we look at a mic that started life as three separate models in the ADK line!

#### Three mics in one and more

Thor's roots lie in a microphone that we reviewed back in our September 2007 issue, known as the S-7. I was first introduced to the Thor by its formal name, the T-7, a few years ago at NAMM. But the T-7 was a bit more than just a revoiced S-7.

If you know Larry, you will know that he loves a challenge and he loves to tweak his mics. As Larry's story goes, a few years after the S-7's introduction, he received requests from brass players to make a darker version of the mic, which he did and dubbed the A-7B (for brass). Of course, then why not make one that is just the opposite for dull sources, one that is bright and sparkly, and call it the A-7C? He did that as well.

That brings us to the next logical step, which combines all three voicings into one microphone. He did that, too and named it the Odin, which (like the previous A-7 mic variants) is cardioid only. The Thor mic on review here is the multipattern version of the Odin, with multiple voicings and a variety of polar patterns.

#### Thor

The Thor is a large-diaphragm, solid-state, multi-pattern (omni/cardioid/figure-8) condenser microphone. It has a 14 mv/Pa sensitivity, 150 Ohm impedance, 80 dBA signal-to-noise ratio, 148 dB max SPL level and a 14 dBA self-noise.

With a max SPL of 148 dB, it is well suited for extremely loud sources. When you consider a jet engine puts out 140 dB and a shotgun by your ear is 165 dB, it puts your typical 120 dB full-stack guitarist and a snare rim shot of 125 dB comfortably in this microphone's range, so unless you are recording a 12-gauge shotgun at close range you should be in good shape!

The key to the Thor's many voices is a single 3-position switch that controls the high-frequency response of the mic. Additionally, the Thor also offers two low-cut filter settings of 100 or 150 Hz, and a two-stage pad with a choice of -8 or -18 dB of attenuation.

#### Physical

The Thor is essentially housed in the same body as the older S series, but is just tad longer. Overall it is a shorter, stockier build than most budget LDC's and measures 6 1/4" by 2 1/4" in diameter. It is dressed in matte black with white etched lettering and is overall sturdy enough for the studio or the stage. All of its 3-position switches are located just under its head assembly, with the lowcut and pad switches on the front and its polar pattern and high-frequency switches around the back.

Behind its double-layer black mesh grille is a 2" dual-diaphragm center-terminated capsule. Internally it is an FET design that uses a balanced transformerless circuit. It comes in a classy blue velvet-lined black wood box with a standard mic mount. An ADK shock mount is available separately; it's included free with the Thor until the end of 2012.

#### The different sounds of Thor!

As you may guess, the Thor is a very sonically malleable microphone. Its three high-frequency voicings—known as neutral, mellow and brilliant—offer a healthy choice of aural variance, especially when mixed with the lowcut and pattern choices.

In its Neutral state, in cardioid mode with all of its pads and filters off, the Thor is at its most utilitarian. Like the original S-7, this is

one of those non-imposing ultra even-sounding mics that can be used on any source. It exhibits a natural top end that is clear, but not excessively bright, along with a smooth, full, yet non-exaggerated low end.

Moving the switch to Mellow does just what it says. Rather than putting a dark pillow over the sound, it nicely rounds out the top end to take the brashness out of sources like trumpet, piccolo flute, penny whistle (yes, I do lots of Celtic music), tambourine, and thin piercing cymbals. It's also adept in this mode on sources that have little need of high end, such as bass guitar cabinets, and thanks to its high SPL level when padded, this is a large-diaphragm condenser that can get right up on the skin of a kick drum or floor tom.

Moving the switch to the Brilliant setting is much more extreme than the corresponding cut that Mellow brings. This high boost takes this mic back into very modern and bright territory and is useful

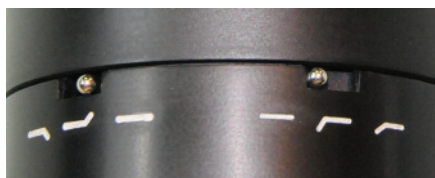


for sources that really need to cut through a mix, or for any dull source that needs a touch of life returned to it. Although I found the Brilliant setting a tad too crisp for my tastes in many applications, I did find it very useful on finger-picked and strummed nylon-string acoustic, for the abovementioned reason.

The real magic and versatility of this mic happens when you start to use the high filter settings in conjunction with the polar patterns and the lowcut choices. Cardioid has a very smooth and even off-axis response, one that is frankly surprising for a microphone in this price class. Of course figure-8 has the biggest side null point and the most bass proximity effect, and Omni is very wide and open with the least proximity effect.

### Thor live on stage

Thanks to Thor's versatility it is also a very convenient microphone, especially live. If you travel with the same band and are forced to wrestle with the different sounds of constantly changing venues, or if you call one stage home and deal with different bands with different volumes and levels of equipment, the Thor makes a great choice for both drum overheads and guitar cabinets.



It's quick and easy to just flip switches to find the right sound, versus swapping out microphones. This convenience and versatility works great in the studio as well. I could leave a pair of Thors up as easily adjustable front-of-kit and/or room mics for most of my sessions.

### Wrap up

I think ADK should have a thundering success on its hands with the Thor (and even its little brother the Odin...). At \$399 street it's just above the rock-bottom beginner crop of mics, but when you consider that just a year ago a full set of the S-7 mics would have set you back \$750, and factor in the Thor's multiple patterns, this mic is poised to be ADK's A-51 for a new generation. You get a lot of mic for very little outlay, and that makes the Thor a worthwhile mic to investigate closely. ➤

**Price:** \$399 street

**More from:** ADK Microphones,  
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