

RØDE NT6

The NT6 is one of Rode's latest offerings, designed to go where few mics have gone before.

Text: Greg Walker



► It's pretty hard to miss Rode microphones these days. From the ubiquitous NT2s hanging over a drum kit to the distinctive double-headed NT4 catching a rehearsal or a live gig, they've become a common sight in many film sound recordists' and recording musicians' tool kits as well as countless studio mic collections. It's amazing how quickly Rode has made the transformation from cheap, cheery and Chinese to offering a range of seriously high quality, locally produced (and still relatively cheap) microphone products. (Is Rode, in fact, the only audio manufacturer in the world to move away from Chinese manufacture into local design and construction?) The latest in Rode's increasingly sophisticated range is the NT6 small diaphragm condenser, aimed at applications such as theatre, film and live performance where an unobtrusive and flexible microphone mounting setup is required.

The NT6 features the same ½-inch gold sputtered diaphragm that graces the NT5 and it looks identical from front on. That's where the similarities end however, as the NT6 is very much a microphone of two parts. The capsule itself is housed in a very small 45mm-long body, which has its own multi-swivel mount that's connected by a thin 3m Kevlar cable to the rest of the microphone (the preamplifier and associated circuitry). The preamp section, which also has its own mic clip, is a weightier item, measuring 160mm and housing switches for a high pass filter and -10dB pad. The flexible but durable three-pin cable is detachable via a simple plug system allowing the various parts to be stowed separately and a couple of handy Velcro mini-straps are provided for tying the cable snugly alongside the mic and out of the way – a nice touch.

Initially, I found the most fascinating part of this mic 'system' was the petite swivelling capsule holder, which just begs you to fiddle with it. A smooth rotary locking mechanism allows quick adjustments on the vertical plane, and a second rotary lock controls the horizontal axis. A dedicated foam windshield and a series of adaptors are also supplied to enable mounting on almost any mic stand or boom arm thread and the capsule can also be unscrewed from the mount and freed up for more vertiginous placements such as the 'dangle' and the 'flop'.

I've got to say I'm very impressed by the build quality of this mic – its small and finely-machined parts and satin

nickel-plated bodies certainly inspire confidence and the general impression is of a quality microphone that's built to last.

I've never had the 'German mic snob' attitude (or the budget) that you sometimes encounter in the recording industry so I've always been able to listen to Rode mics with an open mind, and have used just about every variety of Rode microphone at some stage (actually my favourite is still the original NT1). And after putting the NT6 through its paces, I have to say that this is another accomplished offering from the Australian manufacturer. It gave a smooth and ear-pleasing account of my battered old acoustic guitar and did a very nice, realistic job as a room mic on piano. In front of a wound-up guitar amp it also delivered plenty of serviceable tone and detail, though probably not as much grunt as you might capture with something bigger. I've been a fan of small diaphragm condensers on vocals for a long time (especially on quieter 'character' singers) and I found the NT6 well and truly up to the task here as well.

Given its price, size and intended uses, sonically it's hard to find fault with this microphone. It has the characteristic treble boost around 7kHz that many modern manufacturers favour, and while the odd purist may dislike this, it's a bonus for the majority of us who would, often as not, EQ the same thing in later anyway. Placing the NT6 unobtrusively while filming an interview or miking stage instruments with minimum visual impact would be a doddle, and with the flexibility of the -10dB pad and the high-pass filter toning things down below 80Hz, a wide variety of miking tasks can be undertaken with this mic.

Interestingly, Rode now offers a range of interchangeable NT45 capsules that can be used with the NT6 housing. These include: omni, 'flat response' cardioid (as opposed to the NT6's standard 'presence peak' cardioid), and hypercardioid. The potential for this mic to be used in location and field recording as well as in a variety of other non-studio applications becomes even more obvious once these additional capsules come into play, and the combination of diminutive design smarts, reliability and sonic integrity will no doubt see this microphone become a popular choice in a wide variety of roles. ■



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Price
\$545 each

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Pros
Very compact detached capsule design with clever mounting options.
Excellent build quality
Clear and quiet
Filter and pad provide further flexibility.
Good range of supplied accessories.

Cons
Swivel mount can be a bit fiddly.
Comes supplied in soft case only.

Summary
A well thought out, quality microphone system aimed at live, location, film and broadcasting applications where a low-profile, flexibly-mounted solution is required at an affordable price.