



review

RØDE NT2000

Condenser Microphone

BY MATT
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A newcomer from Australia offers surprising controllability

RØDE Microphones of Australia has been importing microphones into the US for quite some time. From the price-busting NT1 to the affordable tube classic NTV, RØDE has broken down barriers and surprised a lot of people. RØDE's latest mic, the NT2000, brings us another great surprise: continuously variable mic controls, including polar pattern.

Before we get into the novel new features RØDE has built into the NT2000, let's cover the basics.

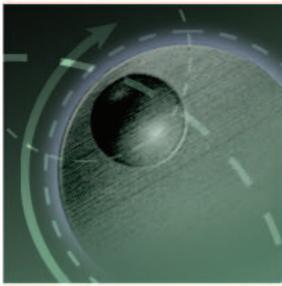
The basics

The NT2000 is a large-diaphragm multipattern condenser microphone. The one-inch, dual diaphragms feature a 20 Hz to 20 KHz frequency response (no deviation given) and can handle 157 dB SPL with the pad fully engaged. The mic can operate on either 24 or 48 volts DC phantom power. The NT2000 is a transformerless design, and the mic includes a heavy-duty spider-type shockmount and a pretty serious carrying case that looks like it could survive having a truck drive over it.

The NT2000 is over a foot long, quite hefty, and has a very rugged look to it. The machining of the body seems to be of a very high quality. A glance inside the mic shows a blue PCB with that "built by robots" look, superclean and flawless.

The most unusual thing you'll see on the NT2000's body is three small dials, one each for polar pattern, bass rolloff, and pad. From top to bottom, the first knob is the polar pattern adjustment. The knob swings from omni at the farthest left to figure-8 at the farthest right, with cardioid at the detent in the middle, and an endless variation of choices in between. The second knob selects the frequency at which the bass cut kicks in, from 20 Hz to 150 Hz. The bass cut is -3 dB at the selected frequency, and slopes off from there at 6 dB/octave. The third knob is the pad control, starting at -0 dB at the far left to -10 dB at the far right.

When you take a look at the included frequency response graphs (omni and cardioid), there is a bump at 12 kHz, nearly 2 dB, and in cardioid mode, a 2 dB bump at about 4 kHz. At first listen (just with my own voice), I did notice that the mic is a bit bright, but nothing to find offensive, just typical for a large-diaphragm condenser mic. When listening, there seems to be a slight rolloff in the low bass, which is confirmed by the response graph.



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In Use

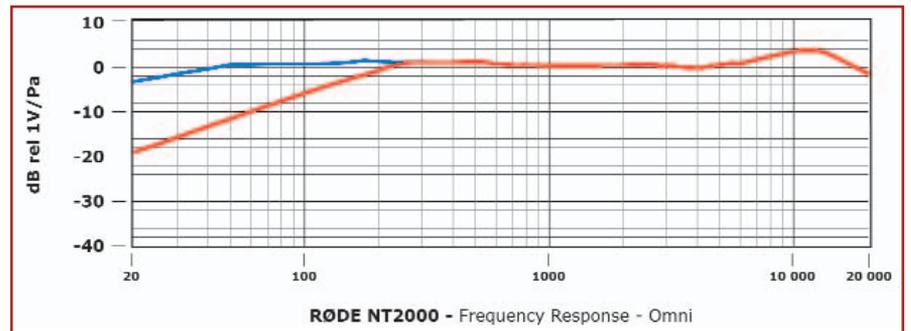
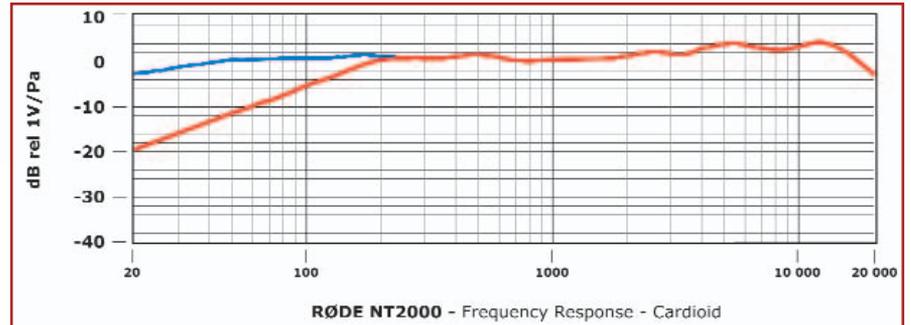
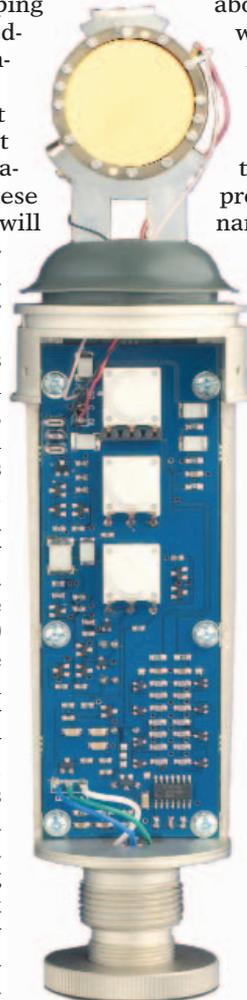
When you first pick up this hefty mic, you want to start twiddling those knobs. My perception was that they don't feel quite as solid as the rest of the mic, but they never let me down, and RØDE tells us that they are custom manufactured to the highest standards.

Adjusting these knobs creates some interesting results. The pad knob provides continuous level reduction up to -10 dB, in perfect silence, with no noticeable degradation in the audio quality. The filter provides a simple roll-off that becomes a deeper cut at higher frequencies as you move the knob. It too is completely silent and provides a lot of versatility, from reducing breath noises and P-pops at the halfway mark, to a very noticeable bass cut at the 150 Hz setting, one that would be very useful for dampening proximity effect or for keeping bass instruments from bleeding into the mic for "all-in-one-room" sessions.

The pattern adjustment knob is probably the most unusual and interesting feature you'll find on a mic these days. While plenty of mics will do cardioid, omni and figure-8, very few will let you get into the nooks and crannies in between.

The pattern knob provides a lot of options. Starting with a very well balanced omni, you can basically tune in more or less room sound as you head towards cardioid. At about 10 or 11 o'clock on the knob, you get a really nice wide cardioid, with a great sweet spot when the mic is aimed about 30 degrees off-center from the sound source. This was an awesome vocal sound for my voice, and should work really well in many vocal situations.

The cardioid setting has no surprises but as you head towards figure-8, you find some pretty interesting options. At about 2 o'clock you get a sound that is very much like a hand-held vocal mic with a hypercardioid



pattern. It is an instantly recognizable sound, and could be useful in emulating that effect, with the high fidelity provided by the NT2000.

As you move closer to figure-8, about 6 o'clock, you encounter a wonderfully convincing "Big Announcer Voice™" kind of sound, similar to an Electro-Voice RE20 or Shure SM7. Once at figure-8, you get the typical figure-8 sound, lots of proximity effect and a really narrow pattern, but one that works nicely for Mid-Side (M-S) work, which we'll discuss later.

The only issue I had with the pattern knob was that there are small clicks heard as the mic transfers from one pattern to another. If you turn the knob fast enough, you hear the clicks and you can hear the pattern change, slower than your knob turn. This is not really a significant issue, since rarely would you ever want to change the pattern on the fly, but it is something to be aware of.

Out and Recording

The first recordings I made with the NT2000 were with a drum kit, a nice Pearl kit, set up a little on the jazz side, with a solid front head on the kick drum. I first set up a pair of NT2000s as spaced overheads, about 18

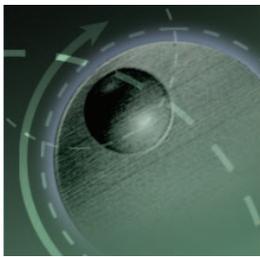
inches over the toms, 2 feet apart, aimed straight down, both set to a cardioid pattern.

The resulting recording was, to be completely honest, awesome. There was an incredibly satisfying balance of the elements of the kit, with a nice bit of room sound, and enough kick that a dedicated mic would have been used only for sweetening. I was truly blown away.

I also set up one of the NT2000s as a kick mic in cardioid. The kick mic sounded really good, no distortion at all, but was definitely more of a jazz sound than a pop sound. Finally I set the pair of NT2000s in M-S centered over the kit. The stereo field was really great, nice and wide; some of the impact I heard in the spaced-overheads recording was lost, but both were excellent and usable sounds.

I also recorded a grand piano, a hand-made German Schimmel. First I recorded the piano with the mics as a spaced pair, one over the low strings, one over the highs. The NT2000s captured a very dynamic and beautiful sound, a full and rich tone that a solo classical pianist would find inspiring. I also tried recording the piano in M-S and I was a bit disappointed. The stereo field was nice, but once again the amazing impact and dynamics that were found with the mics in cardioid was lost in M-S.

I recorded some electric guitar tracks, using my Les Paul with a Roland Blues Cube amp. The mic was placed about 2 inches off the grille cloth, about an inch below the center of the speaker. Both with clean sounds and distorted sounds, the recording with the



NT2000 was clear, present and, once again, the impact and dynamics of the sound were really amazing. This is a great guitar amp mic.

Finally I recorded my own voice with the NT2000. On vocals this mic is very present, with a bit of exaggerated sibilance, but for the most part it has a nice, even tone to the vocal. There really isn't too much P-popping or overbearing proximity effect in the cardioid mode, but if you want to add a bit, just dial it a little toward figure-8. As I mentioned previously, there is a really great sweet spot just off center when the mic is set to a wider cardioid.



So...

The NT2000 is an amazingly versatile mic, and sounds really good. It's pretty amazing to find a mic that has an expansive feature set like this one, that sounds great (and I mean *really* great—there are few mics I have found that can compare, even ones costing nearly \$3000) and doesn't break the bank. Once you consider that the multipattern ability of this mic could only be replicated with a system mic such as the BLUE Bottle and four or five mic heads in different patterns, it is truly a great deal.

Price: \$899

More from: RØDE Microphones US, LLC, P.O. Box 3279, Torrance, CA 90510. 877/328-7456 or 310/328-7456, fax 310/328 7180, www.rodemic.com.

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